THE

STRING OF PEARLS;

OR,

THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET.

A DOMESTIC ROMANCE.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY E. LLOYD, SALISBURY SQUARE, FLEET STREET.

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From A Rare Old Painting By Reading, In The British Museum.

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PREFACE.

THE ROMANCE OF THE STRING OF PEARLS having excited in the Literary world an almost unprecedented interest, it behoves the author to say a few words to his readers upon the completion of his labours.

In answer to the many inquiries that have been, from time to time, made regarding the fact of whether there ever was such a person as Sweeney Todd in existence, we can unhesitatingly say, that there certainly was such a man; and the record of his crimes is still to be found in the chronicles of criminality of this country.

The house in Fleet Street, which was the scene of Todd's crimes, is no more. A fire, which destroyed some half-dozen buildings on that side of the way, involved Todd's in destruction; but the secret passage, although, no doubt, partially blocked up with the re-building of St. Dunstan's Church, connecting the vaults of that edifice with the cellars of what was Todd's house in Fleet Street, still remains.

From the great patronage which this work has received from the reading public, the author has to express his deep and earnest thanks; and he begs to state, that if anything more than another could stimulate him to renewed exertion to please his numerous patrons, it is their kind and liberal appreciation of his past labours.

London, 1850.

The String of Pearls;

or, The Sailor's Gift.

A Romance of Peculiar Interest.

"And now, Tobias, listen to me, and treasure up every word I say." "Yes, sir." "I'll cut your throat from ear to ear, if you repeat one word of what passes in this shop, or dare to make any supposition, or draw any conclusion from anything you may see, or hear, or fancy you see or hear."

The Barber's lesson To His Apprentice.

The Barber's lesson To His Apprentice.

CHAPTER I.
THE STRANGE CUSTOMER AT SWEENEY TODD'S.

Before Fleet-street had reached its present importance, and when George the Third was young, and the two figures who used to strike the chimes at old St. Dunstan's church were in all their glory—being a great impediment to errand-boys on their progress, and a matter of gaping curiosity to country people—there stood close to the sacred edifice a small barber's shop, which was kept by a man of the name of Sweeney Todd.

How it was that he came by the name of Sweeney, as a Christian appellation, we are at a loss to conceive, but such was his name, as might be seen in extremely corpulent yellow letters over his shop window, by any who chose there to look for it.

Barbers by that time in Fleet-street had not become fashionable, and no more dreamt of calling themselves artists than of taking the tower by storm; moreover they were not, as they are now, constantly slaughtering fine fat bears, and yet, somehow people had hair on their heads just the same as they have at present, without the aid of that unctuous auxiliary. Moreover, Sweeney Todd, in common with those really primitive sort of times, did not think it at all necessary to have any waxen effigies of humanity in his window. There was no languishing young lady looking over the left shoulder in order that a profusion of auburn tresses might repose upon her lily neck, and great conquerors and great statesmen

were not then, as they are now, held up to public ridicule with dabs of rouge upon their cheeks, a quantity of gunpowder scattered in for beard, and some bristles sticking on end for eyebrows.

No. Sweeney Todd was a barber of the old school, and he never thought of glorifying himself on account of any extraneous circumstance. If he had lived in Henry the Eighth's palace, it would be all the same as Henry the Eighth's dog-kennel, and he would scarcely have believed human nature to be so green as to pay an extra sixpence to be shaven and shorn in any particular locality.

A long pole painted white, with a red stripe curling spirally round it, projected into the street from his doorway, and on one of the pains of glass in his window, was presented the following couplet:—

> "Easy shaving for a penny,
> As good as you will find any."

We do not put these lines forth as a specimen of the poetry of the age; they may have been the production of some young Templar; but if they were a little wanting in poetic fire, that was amply made up by the clear and precise manner in which they set forth what they intended.

The barber himself, was a long, low-jointed, ill-put-together sort of fellow, with an immense mouth, and such huge hands and feet, that he was, in his way, quite a natural curiosity; and, what was more wonderful, considering his trade, there never was seen such a head of hair as Sweeney Todd's. We know not what to compare it to; probably it came nearest to what one might suppose to be the appearance of a thick-set hedge, in which a quantity of small wire had got entangled. In truth, it was a most terrific head of hair; and as Sweeney Todd kept all his combs in it—some people said his scissors likewise—when he put his head out of the shop-door to see what sort of weather it was, he might have been mistaken for an Indian warrior with a very remarkable head-dress.

He had a short disagreeable kind of unmirthful laugh, which came in at all sorts of odd times when nobody else saw anything to laugh at at all, and which sometimes made people start again, especially when they were being shaved, and Sweeney Todd would stop short in that operation to indulge in one of those cachinatory effusions. It was evident that the remembrance of some very strange and out-of-the-way joke must occasionally flit across him, and then he gave his hyena-like laugh, but it was so short, so sudden, striking upon the ear for a moment, and then gone, that people have been known to look up to the ceiling, and on the floor, and all round them, to know from whence it had come, scarcely supposing it possible that it proceeded from mortal lips.

Mr. Todd squinted a little, to add to his charms; and so we think that by this time the reader may, in his mind's eye, see the individual whom we wish to present to him. Some thought him a careless enough, harmless fellow, with not much sense in him, and at times they almost considered he was a little cracked; but there were others who shook their heads when they spoke of him; and while they could say nothing to his prejudice, except that they certainly considered he was odd, yet, when they came to consider what a great crime and misdemeanour it really is in this world, to be odd, we shall not be surprised at the ill-odour in which Sweeney Todd was held.

But for all that he did a most thriving business, and considered by his neighbours to be a very well-to-do sort of man, and decidedly, in city phraseology, warm.

It was so handy for the young students in the Temple to pop over to Sweeney Todd's to get their chins new rasped; so that from morning to night he drove a good business, and was evidently a thriving man.

There was only one thing that seemed in any way to detract from the great prudence of Sweeney Todd's character, and that was that he rented a large house, of which he occupied nothing but the shop and parlour, leaving the upper part entirely useless, and obstinately refusing to let it on any terms whatever.

Such was the state of things, A.D. 1785, as regarded Sweeney Todd.

The day is drawing to a close, and a small drizzling kind of rain is falling, so that there are not many passengers in the streets, and Sweeney Todd is sitting in his shop looking keenly in the face of a boy, who stands in an attitude of trembling subjection before him.

"You will remember," said Sweeney Todd, and he gave his countenance a most horrible twist as he spoke, "you will remember Tobias Ragg, that you are now my apprentice, that you have of me had board, washing, and lodging, with the exception that you don't sleep here, that you take your meals at home, and that your mother, Mrs. Ragg, does your washing, which she may very well do, being a laundress in the Temple, and making no end of money; as for lodging, you lodge here, you know, very comfortably in the shop all day. Now, are you not a happy dog?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy timidly.

"You will acquire a first-rate profession, quite as good as the law, which your mother tells me she would have put you to, only that a little weakness of the head-piece unqualified you. And now, Tobias, listen to me, and treasure up every word I say."

"Yes, sir."

"I'll cut your throat from ear to ear, if you repeat one word of what passes in this shop, or dare to make any supposition, or draw any conclusion from anything you may see, or hear, or fancy you see or hear. Now you understand me,—I'll cut your throat from ear to ear,—do you understand me?"

"Yes, sir, I won't say nothing. I wish, sir, as I may be made into veal pies at Lovett's in Bell-yard if I as much as says a word."

Sweeney Todd rose from his seat; and opening his huge mouth, he looked at the boy for a minute or two in silence, as if he fully intended swallowing him, but had not quite made up his mind where to begin.

"Very good," at length he said, "I am satisfied, I am quite satisfied; and mark me—the shop, and the shop only, is your place."

"Yes, sir."

"And if any customer gives you a penny, you can keep it, so that if you get enough of them you will become a rich man; only I will take care of them for you, and when I think you want them I will let you have them. Run out and see what's o'clock by St Dunstan's."

There was a small crowd collected opposite the church, for the figures were about to strike three-quarters past six; and among that crowd was one man who gazed with as much curiosity as anybody at the exhibition.

"Now for it!" he said, "they are going to begin; well, that is ingenious. Look at the fellow lifting up his club, and down it comes bang upon the old bell."

The three-quarters were struck by the figures; and then the people who had loitered to see it done, many of whom had day by day looked at the same exhibition for years past, walked away, with the exception of the man who seemed so deeply interested.

He remained, and crouching at his feet was a noble-looking dog, who looked likewise up at the figures; and who, observing his master's attention to be closely fixed upon them, endeavoured to show as great an appearance of interest as he possibly could.

"What do you think of that, Hector?" said the man.

The dog gave a short low whine, and then his master proceeded,—

"There is a barber's shop opposite, so before I go any farther, as I have got to see the ladies, although it's on a very melancholy errand, for I have got to tell them that poor Mark Ingestrie is no more, and Heaven knows what poor Johanna will say—I think I should know her by his description of her, poor fellow! It grieves me to think how he used to talk about her in the long night-watches, when all was still, and not a breath of air touched a curl upon his cheek. I could almost think I saw her sometimes, as he used to tell me of her soft beaming eyes, her little gentle pouting lips, and the dimples that played about her mouth. Well, well, it's of no use grieving; he is dead and gone, poor fellow, and the salt

water washes over as brave a heart as ever beat. His sweetheart, Johanna, though, shall have the string of pearls for all that; and if she cannot be Mark Ingestrie's wife in this world, she shall be rich and happy, poor young thing, while she stays in it, that is to say as happy as she can be; and she must just look forward to meeting him aloft, where there are no squalls or tempests.—And so I'll go and get shaved at once."

He crossed the road towards Sweeney Todd's shop, and, stepping down the low doorway, he stood face to face with the odd-looking barber.

The dog gave a low growl and sniffed the air.

"Why Hector," said his master, "what's the matter? Down, sir, down!"

"I have a mortal fear of dogs," said Sweeney Todd. "Would you mind him, sir, sitting outside the door and waiting for you, if it's all the same? Only look at him, he is going to fly at me!"

"Then you are the first person he ever touched without provocation," said the man; "but I suppose he don't like your looks, and I must confess I aint much surprised at that. I have seen a few rum-looking guys in my time, but hang me if ever I saw such a figure-head as yours. What the devil noise was that?"

"It was only me," said Sweeney Todd; "I laughed."

"Laughed! do you call that a laugh? I suppose you caught it of somebody who died of it. If that's your way of laughing, I beg you won't do it any more."

"Stop the dog! stop the dog! I can't have dogs running into my back parlour."

"Here, Hector, here!" cried his master; "get out!"

Most unwillingly the dog left the shop, and crouched down close to the outer door, which the barber took care to close, muttering something about a draught of air coming in, and then, turning to the apprentice boy, who was screwed up in a corner, he said,—

"Tobias, my lad, go to Leadenhall-street, and bring a small bag of the thick biscuits from Mr. Peterson's; say they are for me. Now, sir, I suppose you want to be shaved, and it is well you have come here, for there aint a shaving-shop, although I say it, in the city of London that ever thinks of polishing anybody off as I do."

"I tell you what it is, master barber: if you come that laugh again, I will get up and go. I don't like it, and there is an end of it."

"Very good," said Sweeney Todd, as he mixed up a lather. "Who are you? where did you come from? and where are you going?"

"That's cool, at all events. Damn it! what do you mean by putting the brush in my mouth? Now, don't laugh; and since you are so fond of asking questions, just answer me one."

"Oh, yes, of course: what is it, sir?"

"Do you know a Mr. Oakley, who lives somewhere in London, and is a spectacle-maker?"

"Yes, to be sure I do—John Oakley, the spectacle-maker, in Fore-street, and he has got a daughter named Johanna, that the young bloods call the Flower of Fore-street."

"Ah, poor thing! do they? Now, confound you! what are you laughing at now? What do you mean by it?"

"Didn't you say, 'Ah, poor thing?' Just turn your head a little a one side; that will do. You have been to sea, sir?"

"Yes, I have, and have only now lately come up the river from an Indian voyage."

"Indeed! where can my strop be? I had it this minute; I must have laid it down somewhere. What an odd thing that I can't see it! It's very extraordinary; what can have become of it? Oh, I recollect, I took it into the parlour. Sit still, sir, I shall not be gone a moment; sit still, sir, if you please. By the by, you can amuse yourself with the *Courier*, sir, for a moment."

Sweeney Todd walked into the back parlour and closed the door.

There was a strange sound suddenly, compounded of a rushing noise and then a heavy blow, immediately after which Sweeney Todd emerged from his parlour, and folding his arms, he looked upon *the vacant chair* where his customer had been seated, but the customer was *gone*, leaving not the slightest trace of his presence behind except his hat, and that Sweeney Todd immediately seized and thrust into a cupboard that was at one corner of the shop.

"What's that?" he said, "what's that? I thought I heard a noise."

"If you please, sir, I have forgot the money, and have run all the way back from St. Paul's churchyard."

In two strides Todd reached him, and clutching him by the arm he dragged him into the farther corner of the shop, and then he stood opposite to him, glaring him full in the face with such a demoniac expression that the boy was frightfully terrified.

"Speak!" cried Todd, "speak! and speak the truth, or your last hour has come. How long were you peeping through the door before you came in?"

"Peeping, sir?"

"Yes, peeping; don't repeat my words, but answer me at once, you will find it better for you in the end."

"I wasn't peeping, sir, at all."

Sweeney Todd drew a long breath as he then said, in a strange, shrieking sort of manner, which he intended, no doubt, should be jocose,—

"Well, well, very well; if you did peep, what then? it's no matter; I only wanted to know, that's all; it was quite a joke, wasn't it—quite funny, though rather odd, eh? Why don't you laugh, you dog? Come, now, there is no harm done. Tell me what you thought about it at once, and we will be merry over it—very merry."

"I don't know what you mean, sir," said the boy, who was quite as much alarmed at Mr. Todd's mirth as he was at his anger. "I don't know what you mean, sir; I only just come back because I hadn't any money to pay for the biscuits at Peterson's."

"I mean nothing at all," said Todd, suddenly turning upon his heel; "what's that scratching at the door?"

Tobias opened the shop-door, and there stood the dog, who looked wistfully round the place, and then gave a howl which seriously alarmed the barber.

"It's the gentleman's dog, sir," said Tobias, "its the gentleman's dog, sir, that was looking at old St. Dunstan's clock, and came in here to be shaved. It's funny, aint it, sir, that the dog didn't go away with his master?"

"Why don't you laugh if it's funny? Turn out the dog, Tobias; we'll have no dogs here; I hate the sight of them; turn him out—turn him out."

"I would, sir, in a minute; but I'm afraid he wouldn't let me, somehow. Only look, sir—look; see what he is at now! did you ever see such a violent fellow, sir? why he will have down the cupboard door."

"Stop him—stop him! the devil is in the animal! stop him I say!"

The dog was certainly getting the door open, when Sweeney Todd rushed forward to stop him! but that he was soon admonished of the danger of doing, for the dog gave him a grip of the leg, which made him give such a howl, that he precipitately retreated, and left the animal to do its pleasure. This consisted in forcing open the cupboard door, and seizing upon the hat which Sweeney Todd had thrust therein, and dashing out of the shop with it in triumph.

"The devil's in the beast," muttered Todd, "he's off! Tobias, you said you saw the man who owned that fiend of a cur looking at St. Dunstan's church."

"Yes, sir, I did see him there. If you recollect, you sent me to see the time, and the figures were just going to strike three quarters past six; and before I came away, I heard him say that Mark Ingestrie was dead, and Johanna should have the string of pearls. Then I came in, and then, if you recollect, sir, he came in, and the odd thing, you know, to me, sir, is that he didn't take his dog with him, because you know, sir—"

"Because what?" shouted Todd.

"Because people generally do take their dogs with them, you know, sir; and may I be made into one of Lovett's pies, if I don't—"

"Hush, some one comes; it's old Mr. Grant, from the Temple. How do you do, Mr. Grant? glad to see you looking so well, sir. It does one's heart good to see a gentlemen of your years looking so fresh and hearty. Sit down, sir; a little this way, if you please. Shaved, I suppose?"

"Yes, Todd, yes. Any news?"

"No, sir, nothing stirring. Everything very quiet, sir, except the high wind. They say it blew the king's hat off yesterday, sir, and he borrowed Lord North's. Trade is dull too, sir. I suppose people won't come out to be cleaned and dressed in a mizling rain. We haven't had anybody in the shop for an hour and a half."

"Lor' sir," said Tobias, "you forget the sea-faring gentleman with the dog, you know, sir."

"Ah! so I do," said Todd. "He went away, and I saw him get into some disturbance, I think, just at the corner of the market."

"I wonder I didn't meet him, sir," said Tobias, "for I came that way; and then it's so very odd leaving his dog behind him."

"Yes, very," said Todd. "Will you excuse me a moment, Mr. Grant? Tobias, my lad, I just want you to lend me a hand in the parlour."

Tobias followed Todd very unsuspectingly into the parlour; but when they got there and the door was closed, the barber sprang upon him like an enraged tiger, and, grappling him by the throat, he gave his head such

a succession of knocks against the wainscot, that Mr. Grant must have thought that some carpenter was at work. Then he tore a handful of his hair out, after which he twisted him round, and dealt him such a kick, that he was flung sprawling into a corner of the room, and then, without a word, the barber walked out again to his customer, and bolted his parlour door on the outside, leaving Tobias to digest the usage he had received at his leisure, and in the best way he could.

When he came back to Mr. Grant, he apologised for keeping him waiting, by saying,—

"It became necessary, sir, to teach my new apprentice a little bit of his business. I have left him studying it now. There is nothing like teaching young folks at once."

"Ah!" said Mr. Grant, with a sigh, "I know what it is to let young folks grow wild; for although I have neither chick nor child of my own, I had a sister's son to look to—a handsome, wild, harum-scarum sort of fellow, as like me as one pea is like another. I tried to make a lawyer of him, but it wouldn't do, and it's now more than two years ago he left me altogether; and yet there were some good traits about Mark."

"Mark, sir! Did you say Mark?"

"Yes, that was his name, Mark Ingestrie. God knows what's become of him."

"Oh!" said Sweeney Todd; he went on lathering the chin of Mr. Grant.

CHAPTER II
THE SPECTACLE-MAKER'S DAUGHTER.

"Johanna, Johanna, my dear, do you know what time it is? Johanna, I say, my dear, are you going to get up? Here's your mother has trotted out to Parson Lupin's, and you know I have got to go to Alderman Judd's house, in Cripplegate, the first thing, and I haven't had a morsel of breakfast yet. Johanna, my dear, do you hear me?"

These observations were made by Mr. Oakley, the spectacle-maker, at the door of his daughter Johanna's chamber, on the morning after the events we have just recorded at Sweeney Todd's; and presently, a soft sweet voice answered him, saying,—

"I am coming, father, I am coming: in a moment, father, I shall be down."

"Don't hurry yourself, my darling, I can wait."

The little old spectacle-maker descended the staircase again, and sat down in the parlour at the back of the shop, where, in a few moments, he was joined by Johanna, his only and his much-loved child.

She was indeed a creature of the rarest grace and beauty. Her age was eighteen, but she looked rather younger, and upon her face she had that sweetness and intelligence of expression which almost bids defiance to the march of time. Her hair was of a glossy blackness, and what was rare in conjunction with such a feature, her eyes were of a deep and heavenly blue. There was nothing of the commanding or of the severe style of beauty about her, but the expression of her face was all grace and

sweetness. It was one of those countenances which one could look at for a long summer's day, as upon the pages of some deeply interesting volume, which furnished the most abundant food for pleasant and delightful reflection.

There was a touch of sadness about her voice, which, perhaps, only tended to make it the more musical, although mournfully so, and which seemed to indicate that at the bottom of her heart there lay some grief which had not yet been spoken—some cherished aspiration of her pure soul, which looked hopeless as regards completion—some remembrance of a former joy, which had been turned to bitterness and grief; it was the cloud in the sunny sky—the shadow through which there still gleamed bright and beautiful sunshine, but which still proclaimed its presence.

"I have kept you waiting, father," she said, as she flung her arms about the old man's neck, "I have kept you waiting."

"Never mind, my dear, never mind. Your mother is so taken up with Mr. Lupin, that you know, this being Wednesday morning, she is off to his prayer meeting, and so I have had no breakfast; and really I think I must discharge Sam."

"Indeed, father! what has he done?"

"Nothing at all, and that's the very reason. I had to take down the shutters myself this morning, and what do you think for? He had the coolness to tell me he couldn't take down the shutters this morning, or sweep out the shop, because his aunt had the toothache."

"A poor excuse, father," said Johanna, as she bustled about and got the breakfast ready; "a very poor excuse."

"Poor indeed! but his month is up to-day, and I must get rid of him. But I suppose I shall have no end of bother with your mother, because his aunt belongs to Mr. Lupin's congregation; but as sure as this is the 20th day of August—"

"It is the 20th day of August," said Johanna, as she sunk into a chair and burst into tears. "It is, it is! I thought I could have controlled this, but I cannot, father, I cannot. It was that which made me late. I knew mother was out; I knew that I ought to be down attending upon you, and I was praying to Heaven for strength to do so because this was the 20th of August."

Johanna spoke these words incoherently, and amidst sobs, and when she had finished them, she leant her sweet face upon her small hands, and wept like a child.

The astonishment, not unmingled with positive dismay, of the old spectacle-maker, was vividly depicted on his countenance, and for some minutes he sat perfectly aghast, with his hands resting on his knees, and looking in the face of his beautiful child—that is to say, as much as he could see of it between those little taper fingers that were spread upon it —as if he were newly awakened from some dream.

"Good God, Johanna!" he said at length, "what is this? My dear child, what has happened? Tell me, my dear, unless you wish to kill me with grief."

"You shall know, father," she said. "I did not think to say a word about it, but considered I had strength enough of mind to keep my sorrows in my own breast, but the effort has been too much for me, and I have been compelled to yield. If you had not looked so kindly on me—if I did not know that you loved me as you do, I should easily have kept my secret, but, knowing that much, I cannot."

"My darling," said the old man, "you are right, there; I do love you. What would the world be to me without you? There was a time, twenty years ago, when your mother made up much of my happiness, but of late, what with Mr. Lupin, and psalm-singing, and tea-drinking, I see very little of her, and what little I do see is not very satisfactory. Tell me, my darling, what it is that vexes you, and I'll soon put it to rights. I don't belong to the city trainbands for nothing."

"Father, I know that your affection would do all for me that it is possible to do, but you cannot recall the dead to life; and if this day passes over and I see him not, nor hear from him, I know that, instead of finding a home for me whom he loved, he has in the effort to do so found a grave for himself. He said he would, he said he would."

Here she wrung her hands, and wept again, and with such a bitterness of anguish that the old spectacle-maker was at his wit's end, and knew not what on earth to do or say.

"My dear, my dear," he cried, "who is he? I hope you don't mean—"

"Hush, father, hush! I know the name that is hovering on your lips, but something seems even now to whisper to me he is no more, and, being so, speak nothing of him, father, but that which is good."

"You mean Mark Ingestrie."

"I do, and if he had a thousand faults, he at least loved me; he loved me truly and most sincerely."

"My dear," said the old spectacle-maker, "you know that I wouldn't for all the world say anything to vex you, nor will I; but tell me what it is that makes this day more than any other so gloomy to you."

"I will, father; you shall hear. It was on this day two years ago that we last met; it was in the Temple-garden, and he had just had a stormy interview with his uncle, Mr. Grant, and you will understand, father, that Mark Ingestrie was not to blame, because—"

"Well, well, my dear, you needn't say anything more upon that point. Girls very seldom admit their lovers are to blame, but there are two ways, you know, Johanna, of telling a story."

"Yes; but, father, why should Mr. Grant seek to force him to the study of a profession he so much disliked?"

"My dear, one would have thought that if Mark Ingestrie really loved you, and found that he might make you his wife, and acquire an honourable subsistence for you and himself—it seems a very wonderful

thing to me that he did not do so. You see, my dear, he should have liked you well enough to do something else that he did not like."

"Yes, but father, you know it is hard, when disagreements once arise, for a young ardent spirit to give in entirely; and so from one word, poor Mark, in his disputes with his uncle, got to another, when perhaps one touch of kindness or conciliation from Mr. Grant would have made him quite pliant in his hands."

"Yes, that's the way," said Mr. Oakley; "there is no end of excuses: but go on, my dear, go on, and tell me exactly how this affair now stands."

"I will, father. It was this day two years ago then that we met, and he told me that he and his uncle had at last quarrelled irreconcilably, and that nothing could possibly now patch up the difference between them. We had a long talk."

"Ah! no doubt of that."

"And at length he told me that he must go and seek his fortune—that fortune which he hoped to share with me. He said that he had an opportunity of undertaking a voyage to India, and that if he were successful he should have sufficient to return with, and commence some pursuit in London more congenial to his thoughts and habits than the law."

"Ah, well! what next?"

"He told me that he loved me."

"And you believed him."

"Father, you would have believed him had you heard him speak. His tones were those of such deep sincerity that no actor who ever charmed an audience with an unreal existence could have reached them. There are times and seasons when we know that we are listening to the majestic voice of truth, and there are tones which sink at once into the heart, carrying with them a conviction of their sincerity, which neither time nor circumstance can alter; and such were the tones in which Mark Ingestrie spoke to me."

"And so you suppose, Johanna, that it is easy for a young man who has not patience or energy enough to be respectable at home, to go abroad and make his fortune. Is idleness so much in request in other countries, that it receives such a rich reward, my dear?"

"You judge him harshly, father; you do not know him."

"Heaven forbid that I should judge any one harshly! and I will freely admit that you may know more of his real character than I can, who of course have only seen its surface; but go on, my dear, and tell me all."

"We made an agreement, father, that on that day two years he was to come to me or send me some news of his whereabouts; if I heard nothing of him I was to conclude he was no more, and I cannot help so concluding now."

"But the day has not yet passed."

"I know it has not, and yet I rest upon but a slender hope, father. Do you believe that dreams ever really shadow forth coming events?"

"I cannot say, my child; I am not disposed to yield credence to any supposed fact because I have dreamt it, but I must confess to having heard some strange instances where these visions of the night have come strictly true."

"Heaven knows but this may be one of them! I had a dream last night. I thought that I was sitting upon the sea-shore, and that all before me was nothing but a fathomless waste of waters. I heard the roar and the dash of the waves distinctly, and each moment the wind grew more furious and fierce, and I saw in the distance a ship—it was battling with the waves, which at one moment lifted it mountains high, and at another plunged it far down into such an abyss, that not a vestige of it could be seen but the topmost spars of the tall mast. And still the storm increased each moment in its fury, and ever and anon there came a strange sullen sound across the waters, and I saw a flash of fire, and knew that those in the ill-fated vessel were thus endeavouring to attract attention and some friendly aid. Father, from the first to the last I knew that Mark Ingestrie

was there—my heart told me so: I was certain he was there, and I was helpless—utterly helpless, utterly and entirely unable to lend the slightest aid. I could only gaze upon what was going forward as a silent and terrified spectator of the scene. And at last I heard a cry come over the deep—a strange, loud, wailing cry—which proclaimed to me the fate of the vessel. I saw its mass shiver for a moment in the blackened air, and then all was still for a few seconds, until there arose a strange, wild shriek, that I knew was the despairing cry of those who sank, never to rise again, in that vessel. Oh! that was a frightful sound—it was a sound to linger on the ears, and haunt the memory of sleep—it was a sound never to be forgotten when once heard, but such as might again and again be remembered with horror and affright."

"And all this was in your dream?"

"It was, father, it was."

"And you were helpless?"

"I was—utterly and entirely helpless."

"It was very sad."

"It was, as you shall hear. The ship went down, and that cry that I had heard was the last despairing one given by those who clung to the wreck with scarce a hope, and yet because it was their only refuge, for where else had they to look for the smallest ray of consolation? where else, save in the surging waters, were they to turn for safety? Nowhere! all was lost! all was despair! I tried to scream—I tried to cry aloud to Heaven to have mercy upon those brave and gallant souls who had trusted their dearest possession—life itself—to the mercy of the deep; and while I so tried to render so inefficient succour, I saw a small speck in the sea, and my straining eyes perceived that it was a man floating and clinging to a piece of the wreck, and I knew it was Mark Ingestrie."

"But, my dear, surely you are not annoyed at a dream?"

"It saddened me. I stretched out my arms to save him—I heard him pronounce my name, and call upon me for help. 'Twas all in vain; he battled with the waves as long as human nature could battle with them. He could do no more, and I saw him disappear before my anxious eyes."

"Don't say you saw him, my dear, say you fancy you saw him."

"It was such a fancy as I shall not lose the remembrance of for many a day."

"Well, well, after all, my dear, it's only a dream; and it seems to me, without at all adverting to anything that should give you pain as regards Mark Ingestrie, that you made a very foolish bargain; for only consider how many difficulties might arise in the way of his keeping faith with you. You know I have your happiness so much at heart that, if Mark had been a worthy man and an industrious one, I should not have opposed myself to your union; but, believe me, my dear Johanna, that a young man with great facilities for spending money, and none whatever for earning any, is just about the worst husband you could choose, and such a man was Mark Ingestrie. But come, we will say nothing of this to your mother; let the secret, if we may call it such, rest with me; and if you can inform me in what capacity and in what vessel he left England, I will not carry my prejudice so far against him as to hesitate about making what inquiry I can concerning his fate."

"I know nothing more, father; we parted, and never met again."

"Well, well! dry your eyes, Johanna, and, as I go to Alderman Judd's, I'll think over the matter, which, after all, may not be so bad as you think. The lad is a good-enough looking lad, and has, I believe, a good ability, if he would put it to some useful purpose; but if he goes scampering about the world in an unsettled manner, you are well rid of him, and as for his being dead, you must not conclude that by any means for somehow or another, like a bad penny, these fellows always come back."

There was more consolation in the kindly tone of the spectacle-maker than in the words he used; but, upon the whole, Johanna was well enough pleased that she had communicated the secret to her father, for

now, at all events, she had some one to whom she could mention the name of Mark Ingestrie, without the necessity of concealing the sentiment with which she did so; and when her father had gone, she felt that, by the mere relation of it to him, some of the terrors of her dream had vanished.

She sat for some time in a pleasing reverie, till she was interrupted by Sam, the shop-boy, who came into the parlour and said,—

"Please, Miss Johanna, suppose I was to go down to the docks and try and find out for you Mr. Mark Ingestrie. I say, suppose I was to do that. I heard it all, and if I do find him I'll soon settle him."

"What do you mean?"

"I means that I won't stand it; didn't I tell you, more than three weeks ago, as you was the object of my infections? Didn't I tell you that when aunt died, I should come in for the soap and candle business, and make you my missus?"

The only reply which Johanna gave to this was to rise and leave the room, for her heart was too full of grief and sad speculation to enable her to do now as she had often been in the habit of doing—viz., laugh at Sam's protestations of affection, so he was left to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy by himself.

"A thousand d——s!" said he, when he entered the shop: "I always suspected there was some other fellow, and now I know it I am ready to gnaw my head off that ever I consented to come here. Confound him! I hope he is at the bottom of the sea, and eat up by this time. Oh! I should like to smash everybody. If I had my way now I'd just walk into society at large, as they calls it, and let it know what one, two, three, slap in the eye, is—and down it would go."

Mr. Sam, in his rage, did upset a case of spectacles, which went down with a tremendous crash, and which, however good imitation of the manner in which society at large was to be knocked down, was not likely to be at all pleasing to Mr. Oakley.

"I have done it now," he said; "but never mind; I'll try the old dodge whenever I break anything; that is, I'll place it in old Oakley's way, and swear he did it. I never knew such an old goose; you may persuade him into anything; the idea, now, of his pulling down all the shutters this morning because I told him my aunt had the tooth-ache; that was a go, to be sure. But I'll be revenged of that fellow who has took away, I consider, Johanna from me; I'll let him know what a blighted heart is capable of. He won't live long enough to want a pair spectacles, I'll be bound, or else my name ain't Sam Bolt."

CHAPTER III.
A MAN IS LOST.

The earliest dawn of morning was glistening upon the masts, the cordage, and the sails of a fleet of vessels lying below Sheerness.

The crews were rousing themselves from their night's repose, and to make their appearance on the decks of the vessels, from which the night-watch had just been relieved.

A man-of-war, which had been the convoy of the fleet of merchantmen through the channel, fired a gun as the first glimpse of the morning sun fell upon her tapering masts. Then from a battery in the neighbourhood came another booming report, and that was answered by another farther off, and then another, until the whole chain of batteries that girded the coast, for it was a time of war, had proclaimed the dawn of another day.

The effect was very fine, in the stillness of the early morn, of this succession of reports; and as they died away in the distance like mimic thunder, some order was given on board the man-of-war, and, in a moment, the masts and cordage seemed perfectly alive with human beings clinging to them in various directions. Then, as if by magic, or as if the ship had been a living thing itself, and had possessed wings, which at the mere instigation of a wish, could be spread far and wide, there fluttered out such sheets of canvas as was wonderful to see; and, as they caught the morning light, and the ship moved from the slight breeze that sprang up from the shore, she looked, indeed, as if she

> "Walked the waters like a thing of life".

The various crews of the merchantmen stood upon the decks of their respective vessels, gazing after the ship-of-war, as she proceeded upon another mission similar to the one she had just performed in protecting the commerce of the country.

As she passed one vessel, which had been, in point of fact, actually rescued from the enemy, the crew, who had been saved from a foreign prison, cheered lustily.

There wanted but such an impulse as this, and then every merchant-vessel that the man-of-war passed took up the gladsome shout, and the crew of the huge vessel were not slow in their answer, for three deafening cheers—such as had frequently struck terror into the hearts of England's enemies—awakened many an echo from the shore.

It was a proud and a delightful sight—such a sight as none but an Englishman can thoroughly enjoy—to see that vessel so proudly stemming the waste of waters. We say none but an Englishman can enjoy it, because no other nation has ever attempted to achieve a great maritime existence without being most signally defeated, and leaving us still, as we shall ever be, masters of the seas.

These proceedings were amply sufficient to arouse the crews of all the vessels, and over the taffrail of one in particular, a large-sized merchantman, which had been trading in the Indian seas, two men were leaning. One of them was the captain of the vessel, and the other a passenger, who intended leaving that morning. They were engaged in earnest conversation, and the captain, as he shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked along the surface of the river, said, in reply to some observation from his companion,—

"I'll order my boat the moment Lieutenant Thornhill comes on board; I call him Lieutenant, although I have no right to do so, because he has held that rank in the king's service, but when quite a young man was cashiered for fighting a duel with his superior officer."

"The service has lost a good officer," said the other.

"It has, indeed, a braver man never stepped, nor a better officer; but you see they have certain rules in the service, and everything is sacrificed to maintain them. I can't think what keeps him; he went last night and said he would pull up to the Temple stairs, because he wanted to call upon somebody by the water-side, and after that he was going to the city to transact some business of his own, and that would have brought him nearer here, you see; and there are plenty of things coming down the river."

"He's coming," cried the other; "don't be impatient; you will see him in a few minutes."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because I see his dog—there, don't you see, swimming in the water, and coming towards the ship."

"I cannot imagine—I can see the dog, certainly; but I can't see Thornhill, nor is there any boat at hand. I know not what to make of it. Do you know my mind misgives me that something has happened amiss? The dog seem exhausted. Lend a hand there to Mr. Thornhill's dog, some of you. Why, it's a hat he has in his mouth."

The dog made towards the vessel; but without the assistance of the seamen—with the whole of whom he was an immense favourite—he certainly could not have boarded the vessel; and when he reached the deck, he sank down upon it in a state of complete exhaustion, with the hat still in his grasp.

As the animal lay, panting, upon the deck, the sailors looked at each other in amazement, and there was but one opinion among them all now, and that was that something very serious had unquestionably happened to Mr. Thornhill.

"I dread," said the captain, "an explanation of this occurrence. What on earth can it mean? That's Thornhill's hat, and here is Hector. Give the dog some meat and drink directly—he seems thoroughly exhausted."

The dog ate sparingly of some food that was put before him; and then, seizing the hat again in his mouth, he stood by the side of the ship and howled piteously; then he put down the hat for a moment, and, walking up to the captain, he pulled him by the skirt of the coat.

"You understand him," said the captain to the passenger; "something has happened to Thornhill, I'll be bound; and you see the object of the dog is to get me to follow him to see what it's about."

"Think you so? It is a warning, if it be such at all, that I should not be inclined to neglect; and if you will follow the dog, I will accompany you; there may be more in it than we think of, and we ought not to allow Mr. Thornhill to be in want of any assistance that we can render him, when we consider what great assistance he has been to us. Look how anxious the poor beast is."

The captain ordered a boat to be launched at once, and manned by four stout rowers. He then sprang into it, followed by the passenger, who was a Colonel Jeffery, of the Indian army, and the dog immediately followed them, testifying by his manner great pleasure at the expedition they were undertaking, and carrying the hat with him, which he evidently showed an immense disinclination to part with.

The captain had ordered the boat to proceed up the river towards the Temple stairs, where Hector's master had expressed his intention of proceeding, and, when the faithful animal saw the direction in which they were going, he lay down in the bottom of the boat perfectly satisfied, and gave himself up to that repose, of which he was evidently so much in need.

It cannot be said that Colonel Jeffery suspected that anything of a very serious nature had happened; indeed, their principal anticipation, when they came to talk it over, consisted in the probability that Thornhill had, with an impetuosity of character they knew very well he possessed, interfered to redress what he considered some street grievance, and had got himself into the custody of the civil power in consequence.

"Of course," said the captain, "Master Hector would view that as a very serious affair, and finding himself denied access to his master, you see he has come off to us, which was certainly the most prudent thing he could do, and I should not be at all surprised if he takes us to the door of some watch-house, where we shall find our friend snug enough."

The tide was running up; and that Thornhill had not saved the turn of it, by dropping down earlier to the vessel, was one of the things that surprised the captain. However, they got up quickly, and as at that hour there was not much on the river to impede their progress, and as at that time the Thames was not a thoroughfare for little stinking steam-boats, they soon reached the ancient Temple stairs.

The dog, who had until then seemed to be asleep, suddenly sprung up, and seizing the hat again in his mouth, rushed again on shore, and was closely followed by the captain and colonel.

He led them through the temple with great rapidity, pursuing with admirable tact the precise path that his master had taken towards the entrance to the Temple, in Fleet-street, opposite Chancery-lane. Darting across the road then, he stopped with a low growl at the shop of Sweeney Todd—a proceeding which very much surprised those who followed him, and caused them to pause to hold a consultation ere they proceeded further. While this was proceeding, Todd suddenly opened the door, and aimed a blow at the dog with an iron bar, but the latter dexterously avoided it, and, but that the door was suddenly closed again, he would have made Sweeney Todd regret such an interference.

"We must inquire into this," said the captain; "there seems to be mutual ill-will between that man and the dog."

They both tried to enter the barber's shop, but it was fast on the inside; and, after repeated knockings, Todd called from within, saying,—

"I won't open the door while that dog is there. He is mad, or has a spite against me—I don't know nor care which—it's a fact, that's all I am aware of."

"I will undertake," said the captain, "that the dog shall do you no harm; but open the door, for in we must come, and will."

"I will take your promise," said Sweeney Todd; "but mind you keep it, or I shall protect myself, and take the creature's life; so if you value it, you had better hold it fast."

The captain pacified Hector as well as he could, and likewise tied one end of a silk handkerchief round his neck, and held the other firmly in his grasp, after which Todd, who seemed to have some means from within of seeing what was going on, opened the door, and admitted his visitors.

"Well, gentlemen, shaved, or cut, or dressed, I am at your service; which shall I begin with?"

"The

The captain, the colonel, and Sweeney.

The dog never took his eyes off Todd, but kept up a low growl from the first moment of his entrance.

"It's rather a remarkable circumstance," said the captain, "but this is a very sagacious dog, you see, and he belongs to a friend of ours, who has most unaccountably disappeared."

"Has he really?" said Todd. "Tobias! Tobias!"

"Yes, sir."

"Run to Mr. Phillips's, in Cateaton-street, and get me six-pennyworth of figs, and don't say that I don't give you the money this time when you go a message. I think I did before, but you swallowed it; and when you come back, just please to remember the insight into business I gave you yesterday."

"Yes," said the boy, with a shudder, for he had a great horror of Sweeney Todd, as well he might, after the severe discipline he had received at his hands, and away he went.

"Well, gentlemen," said Todd, "what is it you require of me?"

"We want to know if any one having the appearance of an officer in the navy came to your house?"

"Yes—a rather good-looking man, weather-beaten, with a bright blue eye, and rather fair hair."

"Yes, yes! the same."

"Oh! to be sure, he came here, and I shaved him and polished him off."

"What do you mean by polishing him off?"

"Brushing him up a bit, and making him tidy; he said he had got somewhere to go in the city, and asked me the address of a Mr. Oakley, a spectacle-maker. I gave it him, and then he went away; but as I was standing at my door about five minutes afterwards, it seemed to me, as well as I could see the distance, that he got into some row near the market."

"Did this dog come with him?"

"A dog came with him, but whether it was that dog or not I don't know."

"And that's all you know of him?"

"You never spoke a truer word in your life," said Sweeney Todd, as he diligently stropped a razor upon his great horny hand.

This seemed something like a complete fix; and the captain looked at Colonel Jeffery, and the colonel at the captain, for some moments, in complete silence. At length the latter said,—

"It's a very extraordinary thing that the dog should come here if he missed his master somewhere else. I never heard of such a thing."

"Nor I either," said Ford. "It is extraordinary; so extraordinary that if I had not seen it, I would not have believed. I dare say you will find him in the next watch-house."

The dog had watched the countenance of all parties during this brief dialogue, and twice or thrice he had interrupted it by a strange howling cry.

"I'll tell you what it is," said the barber; "if that beast stays here, I'll be the death of him. I hate dogs—detest them; and I tell you, as I told you before, if you value him at all, keep him away from me."

"You say you directed the person you describe to us where to find a spectacle maker named Oakley. We happen to know that he was going in search of such a person, and as he had property of value about him, we will go there and ascertain if he reached his destination."

"It is in Fore-street—a little shop with two windows; you cannot miss it."

The dog when he saw they were about to leave, grew furious; and it was with the greatest difficulty they succeeded, by main force, in getting him out of the shop, and dragging him some short distance with them, but then he contrived to get free of the handkerchief that held him, and darting back, he sat down at Sweeney Todd's door, howling most piteously.

They had no resource but to leave him, intending fully to call as they came back from Mr. Oakley's; and, as they looked behind them, they saw that Hector was collecting a crowd round the barber's door, and it was a singular thing to see a number of persons surrounding the dog, while he to all appearance, appeared to be making efforts to explain something to the assemblage. They walked on until they reached the spectacle-maker's, there they paused; for they all of a sudden recollected that the mission that Mr. Thornhill had to execute there was of a very delicate nature, and one by no means to be lightly executed, or even so much as mentioned, probably, in the hearing of Mr. Oakley himself.

"We must not be so hasty," said the colonel.

"But what am I to do? I sail to-night; at least I have to go round to Liverpool with my vessel."

"Do not then call at Mr. Oakley's at all at present; but leave me to ascertain the fact quietly and secretly."

"My anxiety for Thornhill will scarcely permit me to do so; but I suppose I must, and if you write me a letter to the Royal Oak Hotel, at Liverpool, it will be sure to reach me, that is to say, unless you find Mr. Thornhill himself, in which case I need not by any means give you so much trouble."

"You may depend upon me. My friendship for Mr. Thornhill, and gratitude, as you know, for the great service he has rendered to us all, will induce me to do my utmost to discover him; and, but that I know he set his heart upon performing the message he had to deliver accurately and well, I should recommend that we at once go into this house of Mr. Oakley's, only that the fear of compromising the young lady—who is in the case, and who will have quite enough to bear, poor thing, of her own grief—restrains me."

After some more conversation of a similar nature, they decided that this should be the plan adopted. They made an unavailing call at the watch-house of the district, being informed there that no such person, nor any one answering the description of Mr. Thornhill had been engaged in any disturbance, or apprehended by any of the constables; and this only involved the thing in greater mystery than ever, so they went back to try and recover the dog, but that was a matter easier to be desired and determined upon than executed, for threats and persuasions were alike ineffectual.

Hector would not stir an inch from the barber's door. There he sat with the hat by his side, a most melancholy and strange-looking spectacle, and a most efficient guard was he for that hat, and it was evident, that while he chose to exhibit the formidable row of teeth he did occasionally, when anybody showed a disposition to touch it, it would remain sacred. Some people, too, had thrown a few copper coins into the hat, so that

Hector, if his mind had been that way inclined, was making a very good thing of it; but who shall describe the anger of Sweeney Todd, when he found that he was so likely to be so beleaguered?

He doubted, if, upon the arrival of the first customer to his shop, the dog might dart in and take him by storm; but that apprehension went off at last, when a young gallant came from the Temple to have his hair dressed, and the dog allowed him to pass in and out unmolested, without making any attempt to follow him. This was something, at all events; but whether or not it insured Sweeney Todd's personal safety, when he himself should come out, was quite another matter.

It was an experiment, however, which he must try. It was quite out of the question that he should remain a prisoner much longer in his own place, so, after a time, he thought he might try the experiment, and that it would be best done when there were plenty of people there, because if the dog assaulted him, he would have an excuse for any amount of violence he might think proper to use upon the occasion.

It took some time, however, to screw his courage to the sticking-place; but at length, muttering deep curses between his clenched teeth, he made his way to the door, and carried in his hand a long knife, which he thought a more efficient weapon against the dog's teeth than the iron bludgeon he had formerly used.

"I hope he will attack me," said Todd, to himself as he thought; but Tobias, who had come back from the place where they sold the preserved figs, heard him, and after devoutly in his own mind wishing that the dog would actually devour Sweeney, said aloud—

"Oh dear, sir; you don't wish that, I'm sure!"

"Who told you what I wished, or what I did not? Remember, Tobias, and keep your own counsel, or it will be the worse for you, and your mother too—remember that."

The boy shrunk back. How had Sweeney Todd terrified the boy about his mother! He must have done so, or Tobias would never have shrunk as he did.

Then that rascally barber, who we begin to suspect of more crimes than fall ordinarily to the share of man, went cautiously out of his shop door: we cannot pretend to account for why it was so, but, as faithful recorders of facts, we have to state that Hector did not fly at him, but with a melancholy and subdued expression of countenance he looked up in the face of Sweeney Todd; then he whined piteously, as if he would have said, "Give me my master, and I will forgive you all that you have done; give me back my beloved master, and you shall see that I am neither revengeful nor ferocious."

This kind of expression was as legibly written in the poor creature's countenance as if he had actually been endowed with speech, and uttered the words themselves.

This was what Sweeney Todd certainly did not expect, and, to tell the truth, it staggered and astonished him a little. He would have been glad of an excuse to commit some act of violence, but he had now none, and as he looked in the faces of the people who were around, he felt quite convinced that it would not be the most prudent thing in the world to interfere with the dog in any way that savoured of violence.

"Where's the dog's master?" said one.

"Ah, where indeed?" said Todd; "I should not wonder if he had come to some foul end!"

"But I say, old soap-suds," cried a boy; "the dog says you did it."

There was a general laugh, but the barber was by no means disconcerted, and he shortly replied.

"Does he? he is wrong then."

Sweeney Todd had no desire to enter into anything like a controversy with the people, so he turned again and entered his own shop, in a distant corner of which he sat down, and folding his great gaunt-looking

arms over his chest, he gave himself up to thought, and if we may judge from the expression of his countenance, those thoughts were of a pleasant anticipatory character, for now and then he gave such a grim sort of smile as might well have sat upon the features of some ogre.

And now we will turn to another scene, of a widely different character.

CHAPTER IV.
THE PIE-SHOP, BELL-YARD.

Hark! twelve o'clock at mid-day is cheerily proclaimed by St. Dunstan's church, and scarcely have the sounds done echoing throughout the neighbourhood, and scarce has the clock of Lincoln's-inn done chiming in with its announcement of the same hour, when Bell-yard, Temple-bar, becomes a scene of commotion.

What a scampering of feet is there, what a laughing and talking, what a jostling to be first; and what an immense number of manoeuvres are resorted to by some of the throng to distance others!

And mostly from Lincoln's-inn do these persons, young and old, but most certainly a majority of the former, come bustling and striving, although from the neighbouring legal establishments likewise there came not a few; the Temple contributes its numbers, and from the more distant Gray's-inn there came a goodly lot.

Now Bell-yard is almost choked up, and a stranger would wonder what could be the matter, and most probably stand in some doorway until the commotion was over.

Is it a fire? is it a fight? or anything else sufficiently alarming and extraordinary to excite the junior members of the legal profession to such a species of madness? No, it is none of these, nor is there a fat cause to be run for, which, in the hands of some clever practitioner, might become quite a vested interest. No, the enjoyment is purely one of a

physical character, and all the pacing and racing—all this turmoil and trouble—all this pushing, jostling, laughing, and shouting, is to see who will get first to Lovett's pie-shop.

Yes, on the left-hand side of Bell-yard, going down from Carey-street, was at the time we write of, one of the most celebrated shops for the sale of veal and pork pies that ever London produced. High and low, rich and poor, resorted to it; its fame had spread far and wide; it was because the first batch of these pies came up at twelve o'clock that there was such a rush of the legal profession to obtain them.

Their fame had spread even to great distances, and many persons carried them to the suburbs of the city as quite a treat to friends and relations there residing. And well did they deserve their reputation, those delicious pies! there was about them a flavour never surpassed, and rarely equalled; the paste was of the most delicate construction, and impregnated with the aroma of a delicious gravy that defies description. Then the small portions of meat which they contained were so tender, and the fat and the lean so artistically mixed up, that to eat one of Lovett's pies was such a provocative to eat another, that many persons who came to lunch stayed to dine, wasting more than an hour, perhaps, of precious time, and endangering—who knows to the contrary?—the success of some law-suit thereby.

The counter in Lovett's shop was in the shape of a horseshoe, and it was the custom of the young bloods from the Temple and Lincoln's-inn to set in a row upon its edge while they partook of the delicious pies, and chatted gaily about one concern and another.

Many an appointment for the evening was made at Lovett's pie shop, and many a piece of gossiping scandal was there first circulated. The din of tongues was prodigious. The ringing laugh of the boy who looked upon the quarter of an hour he spent at Lovett's as the brightest of the whole twenty-four, mingled gaily with the more boisterous mirth of his seniors; and, oh! with what rapidity the pies disappeared.

They were brought up on large trays, each of which contained about a hundred, and from these trays they were so speedily transferred to the mouths of Mrs. Lovett's customers that it looked quite like a work of magic.

And now we have let out some portion of the secret. There was a Mistress Lovett; but possibly our reader guessed as much, for what but a female hand, and that female buxom, young, and good-looking, could have ventured upon the production of those pies. Yes, Mrs. Lovett was all that; and every enamoured young scion of the law, as he devoured his pie, pleased himself with the idea that the charming Mrs. Lovett had made that pie especially for him, and that fate or predestination had placed it in his hands.

And it was astonishing to see with what impartiality and with what tact the fair pastry-cook bestowed her smiles upon her admirers, so that none could say he was neglected, while it was extremely difficult for any one to say he was preferred.

This was pleasant, but at the same time it was provoking to all except Mrs. Lovett, in whose favour it got up a kind of excitement that paid extraordinarily well, because some of the young fellows thought, that he who consumed the most pies, would be in the most likely way to receive the greatest number of smiles from the lady.

Acting upon this supposition, some of her more enthusiastic admirers went on consuming the pies until they were almost ready to burst. But there were others, again, of a more philosophic turn of mind, who went for the pies only, and did not care one jot for Mrs. Lovett.

These declared that her smile was cold and uncomfortable—that it was upon her lips, but had no place in her heart—that it was the set smile of a ballet-dancer, which is about one of the most unmirthful things in existence.

Then there were some who went even beyond this, and, while they admitted the excellence of the pies, and went every day to partake of them, swore that Mrs. Lovett had quite a sinister aspect, and that they

could see what a merely superficial affair her blandishments were, and that there was

> "A lurking devil in her eye,"

that, if once roused, would be capable of achieving some serious things, and might not be so easily quelled again.

By five minutes past twelve Mrs. Lovett's counter was full, and the savoury steam of the hot pies went out in fragrant clouds into Bell-yard, being sniffed up by many a poor wretch passing by who lacked the means of making one in the throng that were devouring the dainty morsels within.

"Why, Tobias Ragg," said a young man, with his mouth full of pie, "where have you been since you left Mr. Snow's in Paper-buildings? I have not seen you for some days."

"No," said Tobias, "I have gone into another line; instead of being a lawyer, and helping to shave the clients, I am going to shave the lawyers now. A twopenny pork, if you please, Mrs. Lovett. Ah! who would be an emperor, if he couldn't get pies like these?—eh, Master Clift?"

"Well, they are good; of course we know that, Tobias; but do you mean to say you are going to be a barber?"

"Yes, I am with Sweeney Todd, the barber of Fleet-street, close to St. Dunstan's."

"The deuce you are! well, I am going to a party to-night, and I'll drop in and get dressed and shaved, and patronise your master."

Tobias put his mouth close to the ear of the young lawyer, and in a fearful sort of whisper said the one word—"Don't."

"Don't! what for?"

Tobias made no answer; and, throwing down his twopence, scampered out of the shop as fast as he could. He had only sent a message by Sweeney Todd in the neighbourhood; but, as he heard the clock strike

twelve, and two penny pieces were lying at the bottom of his pocket, it was not in human nature to resist running into Lovett's and converting them into a pork pie.

"What an odd thing!" thought the young lawyer. "I'll just drop in at Sweeney Todd's now on purpose, and ask Tobias what he means. I quite forgot, too, while he was here, to ask him what all that riot was about a dog at Todd's door."

"A veal!" said a young man, rushing in; "a twopenny veal, Mrs. Lovett." When he got it he consumed it with voracity, and then noticing an acquaintance in the shop, he whispered to him,—

"I can't stand it any more. I have cut the spectacle-maker—Johanna is faithless, and I know not what to do."

"Have another pie."

"But what's a pie to Johanna Oakley? You know, Dilki, that I only went there to be near the charmer. Damn the shutters and curse the spectacles! She loves another, and I'm a desperate individual! I should like to do some horrible and desperate act. Oh, Johanna, Johanna! you have driven me to the verge of what do you call it—I'll take another veal, if you please, Mrs. Lovett."

"Well, I was wondering how you got on," said his friend Dilki, "and thinking of calling upon you."

"Oh! it was all right—it was all right at first; she smiled upon me."

"You are quite sure she didn't laugh at you?"

"Sir! Mr. Dilki!"

"I say, are you sure that instead of smiling upon you she was not laughing at you!"

"Am I sure? Do you wish to insult me, Mr. Dilki? I look upon you as a puppy, sir—a horrid puppy."

"Very good; now I am convinced that the girl has been having a bit of fun at your expense.—Are you not aware, Sam, that your nose turns up so much that it's enough to pitch you head over heels. How do you suppose that any girl under forty-five would waste a word upon you? Mind, I don't say this to offend you in any way, but just quietly, by way of asking a question."

Sam looked daggers, and probably he might have attempted some desperate act in the pie-shop, if at the moment he had not caught the eye of Mrs. Lovett, and he saw by the expression of that lady's face, that anything in the shape of a riot would be speedily suppressed, so he darted out of the place at once to carry his sorrows and his bitterness elsewhere.

It was only between twelve and one o'clock that such a tremendous rush and influx of visitors came to the pie-shop, for although there was a good custom the whole day, and the concern was a money-making one from morning till night, it was at that hour principally that the great consumption of pies took place.

Tobias knew from experience that Sweeney Todd was a skilful calculator of the time it ought to take to go to different places, and accordingly since he had occupied some portion of that most valuable of all commodities at Mrs. Lovett's, he arrived quite breathless at his master's shop.

There sat the mysterious dog with the hat, and Tobias lingered for a moment to speak to the animal. Dogs are great physiognomists; and as the creature looked into Tobias's face he seemed to draw a favourable conclusion regarding him, for he submitted to a caress.

"Poor fellow!" said Tobias. "I wish I knew what had become of your master, but it made me shake like a leaf to wake up last night and ask myself the question. You shan't starve, though, if I can help it. I haven't much for myself, but you shall have some of it."

As he spoke, Tobias took from his pocket some not very tempting cold meat, which was intended for his own dinner, and which he had wrapped up in not the cleanest of cloths. He gave a piece to the dog, who took it with a dejected air, and then crouched down at Sweeney Todd's door again.

Just then, as Tobias was about to enter the shop, he thought he heard from within, a strange shrieking sort of sound. On the impulse of the moment he recoiled a step or two, and then, from some other impulse, he dashed forward at once, and entered the shop.

The first object that presented itself to his attention, lying upon a side table, was a hat with a handsome gold-headed walking cane lying across it.

The arm-chair in which customers usually sat to be shaved was vacant, and Sweeney Todd's face was just projected into the shop from the back parlour, and wearing a most singular and hideous expression.

"Well, Tobias," he said, as he advanced, rubbing his great hands together, "well, Tobias! so you could not resist the pie-shop?"

"How does he know?" thought Tobias. "Yes, sir, I have been to the pie-shop, but I didn't stay a minute."

"Hark ye, Tobias! the only thing I can excuse in the way of delay upon an errand is, for you to get one of Mrs. Lovett's pies; that I can look over, so think no more about it. Are they not delicious, Tobias?"

"Yes, sir, they are; but some gentleman seems to have left his hat and stick."

"Yes," said Sweeney Todd, "he has;" and lifting the stick he struck Tobias a blow with it that felled him to the ground. "Lesson the second to Tobias Ragg, which teaches him to make no remarks about what does not concern him. You may think what you like, Tobias Ragg, but you shall say only what I like."

"I won't endure it," cried the boy; "I won't be knocked about in this way, I tell you, Sweeney Todd, I won't."

"You won't! have you forgotten your mother?"

"You say you have a power over my mother; but I don't know what it is, and I cannot and will not believe it; I'll leave you, and, come of it what may, I'll go to sea or anywhere rather than stay in such a place as this."

"Oh, you will, will you? Then, Tobias, you and I must come to some explanation. I'll tell you what power I have over your mother, and then perhaps you will be satisfied. Last winter, when the frost had continued eighteen weeks, and you and your mother were starving, she was employed to clean out the chambers of a Mr. King, in the Temple, a cold-hearted, severe man, who never forgave anything in all his life, and never will."

"I remember," said Tobias; "we were starving and owed a whole guinea for rent; but mother borrowed it and paid it, and after that got a situation where she now is."

"Ah, you think so. The rent was paid; but, Tobias, my boy, a word in your ear—she took a silver candlestick from Mr. King's chambers to pay it. I know it. I can prove it. Think of that, Tobias, and be discreet."

"Have mercy upon us," said the boy; "they would take her life!"

"Her life!" screamed Sweeney Todd; "ay, to be sure they would; they would hang her—hang her, I say; and now mind, if you force me by any conduct of your own, to mention this thing, you are your mother's executioner. I had better go and be deputy hangman at once, and turn her off."

"Horrible, horrible!"

"Oh, you don't like that? Indeed, that don't suit you, Master Tobias? Be discreet then, and you have nothing to fear. Do not force me to show a power which will be as complete as it is terrific."

"I will say nothing—I will think nothing."

"'Tis well; now go and put that hat and stick in yonder cupboard. I shall be absent for a short time; and if any one comes, tell them I am called out, and shall not return for an hour or perhaps longer, and mind you take good care of the shop."

Sweeney Todd took off his apron, and put on an immense coat with huge lapels, and then, clapping a three-cornered hat on his head, and casting a strange withering kind of look at Tobias, he sallied forth into the street.

CHAPTER V
THE MEETING IN THE TEMPLE.

Alas! poor Johanna Oakley—thy day has passed away and brought with it no tidings of him you love; and oh! what a weary day, full of fearful doubts and anxieties, has it been!

Tortured by doubts, hopes, and fears, that day was one of the most wretched that poor Johanna had ever passed. Not even two years before, when she had parted with her lover, had she felt such an exquisite pang of anguish as now filled her heart, when she saw the day gliding away and the evening creeping on apace, without word or token from Mark Ingestrie.

She did not herself know, until all the agony of disappointment had come across her, how much she had counted upon hearing something from him on that occasion; and when the evening deepened into night, and hope grew so slender that she could no longer rely upon it for the least support, she was compelled to proceed to her own chamber, and, feigning indisposition to avoid her mother's questions—for Mrs. Oakley was at home, and making herself and everybody else as uncomfortable as possible—she flung herself on her humble couch and gave way to a perfect passion of tears.

"Oh, Mark, Mark!" she said, "why do you thus desert me, when I have relied so abundantly upon your true affection? Oh, why have you not sent me some token of your existence, and of your continued love? the merest slightest word would have been sufficient, and I should have been happy."

She wept then such bitter tears as only such a heart as her's can know, when it feels the deep and bitter anguish of desertion, and when the rock, upon which it supposed it had built its fondest hopes, resolves itself to a mere quicksand, in which becomes engulphed all of good that this world can afford to the just and the beautiful.

Oh, it is heartrending to think that such a one as she, Johanna Oakley, a being so full of all those holy and gentle emotions which should constitute the truest felicity, should thus feel that life to her had lost its greatest charms, and that nothing but despair remained.

"I will wait until midnight," she said; "and even then it will be a mockery to seek repose, and to-morrow I must myself make some exertion to discover some tidings of him."

Then she began to ask herself what that exertion could be, and in what manner a young and inexperienced girl, such as she was, could hope to succeed in her inquiries. And the midnight hour came at last, telling her that, giving the utmost latitude to the word day, it had gone at last, and she was left despairing.

She lay the whole of that night sobbing, and only at times dropping into an unquiet slumber, during which painful images were presented to her, all, however, having the same tendency, and pointing towards the presumed fact that Mark Ingestrie was no more.

But the weariest night to the weariest waker will pass away, and at length the soft and beautiful dawn stole into the chamber of Johanna Oakley, chasing away some of the more horrible visions of the night, but having little effect in subduing the sadness that had taken possession of her.

She felt that it would be better for her to make her appearance below, than to hazard the remarks and conjectures that her not doing so would give rise to, so all unfitted as she was to engage in the most ordinary intercourse, she crept down to the breakfast-parlour, looking more like the ghost of her former self than the bright and beautiful being we have represented her to the reader.

Her father understood what it was that robbed her cheeks of their bloom; and although he saw it with much distress, yet he fortified himself with what he considered were some substantial reasons for future hopefulness.

It had become part of his philosophy—it generally is a part of the philosophy of the old—to consider that those sensations of the mind that arise from disappointed affection are of the most evanescent character; and that, although for a time they exhibit themselves with violence, they, like grief for the dead, soon pass away, scarcely leaving a trace behind of their former existence.

And perhaps he was right as regards the greater number of those passions; but he was certainly wrong when he applied that sort of worldly-wise knowledge to his daughter Johanna. She was one of those rare beings whose hearts are not won by every gaudy flutterer who may buz the accents of admiration in their ears. No; she was qualified, eminently qualified, to love once, but only once; and, like the passion-flower, that blooms into abundant beauty once, and never afterwards puts forth a blossom, she allowed her heart to expand to the soft influence of affection, which, when crushed by adversity, was gone for ever.

"Really, Johanna," said Mrs. Oakley, in the true conventicle twang, "you look so pale and ill that I must positively speak to Mr. Lupin about you."

"Mr. Lupin, my dear," said the spectacle-maker, "may be all very well in his way, as a parson; but I don't see what he can have to do with Johanna looking pale."

"A pious man, Mr. Oakley, has to do with everything and everybody."

"Then he must be the most intolerable bore in existence; and I don't wonder at his being kicked out of some people's houses, as I have heard Mr. Lupin has been."

"And if he has, Mr. Oakley, I can tell you he glories in it. Mr. Lupin likes to suffer for the faith; and if he were to be made a martyr of to-morrow, I am quite certain it would give him a deal of pleasure."

"My dear, I am quite sure it would not give him half the pleasure it would me."

"I understand your insinuation, Mr. Oakley: you would like to have him murdered on account of his holiness; but, though you can say these kind of things at your own breakfast-table, you won't say as much to him when he comes to tea this afternoon."

"To tea, Mrs. Oakley! haven't I told you over and over again, that I will not have that man in my house?"

"And haven't I told you, Mr. Oakley, twice that number of times that he shall come to tea? and I have asked him now, and it can't be altered."

"But, Mrs. Oakley—"

"It's of no use, Mr. Oakley, your talking. Mr. Lupin is coming to tea, and come he shall; and if you don't like it, you can go out. There now, I am sure you can't complain, now you have actually the liberty of going out; but you are like the dog in the manger, Mr. Oakley, I know that well enough, and nothing will please you."

"A fine liberty, indeed, the liberty of going out of my own house to let somebody else into it that I don't like!"

"Johanna, my dear," said Mrs. Oakley, "I think my old complaint is coming on, of the beating of the heart, and the hysterics. I know what produces it—it's your father's brutality; and, just because Dr. Fungus said over and over again that I was to be perfectly quiet, your father seizes upon the opportunity like a wild beast, or a raving maniac, to try and make me ill."

Mr. Oakley jumped up, stamped his feet upon the floor and uttering something about the probability of his becoming a maniac in a very short time, rushed into his shop, and set to polishing the spectacles as if he were doing it for a wager.

This little affair between her father and mother, certainly had had the effect, for a time, of diverting attention from Johanna, and she was able to assume a cheerfulness she did not feel; but she had something of her father's spirit in her as regarded Mr. Lupin, and most decidedly objected to sitting down to any meal whatever with that individual, so that Mrs. Oakley was left in a minority of one upon the occasion, which perhaps, as she fully expected it, was no great matter after all.

Johanna went up stairs to her own room, which commanded a view of the street. It was an old-fashioned house, with a balcony in front, and as she looked listlessly out into Fore-street, which was far then from being the thoroughfare it is now, she saw standing in a doorway on the opposite side of the way a stranger, who was looking intently at the house, and who, when he caught her eye, walked instantly across to it, and cast something into the balcony of the first floor. Then he touched his cap, and walked rapidly from the street.

The thought immediately occurred to Johanna that this might possibly be some messenger from him concerning whose existence and welfare she was so deeply anxious. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that with the name of Mark Ingestrie upon her lips she should rush down to the balcony in intense anxiety to hear, and see if such was really the case.

When she reached the balcony she found lying in it a scrap of paper, in which a stone was wrapped up, in order to give it weight, so that it might be cast with a certainty into the balcony. With trembling eagerness she opened the paper, and read upon it the following words:—

"For news of Mark Ingestrie, come to the Temple-gardens one hour before sunset, and do not fear addressing a man who will be holding a white rose in his hand."

"He lives! he lives!" she cried. "He lives, and joy again becomes the inhabitant of my bosom! Oh, it is daylight now and sunshine compared to the black midnight of despair. Mark Ingestrie lives, and I shall be happy yet."

She placed the little scrap of paper carefully in her bosom, and then, with clasped hands and a delighted expression of countenance, she repeated the brief and expressive words it contained, adding,—

"Yes, yes, I will be there; the white rose is an emblem of his purity and affection, his spotless love, and that is why his messenger carries it. I will be there. One hour ay, two hours before sunset, I will be there. Joy, joy! he lives, he lives! Mark Ingestrie lives! Perchance, too, successful in his object, he returns to tell me that he can make me his, and that no obstacle can now interfere to frustrate our union. Time, time, float onwards on your fleetest pinions!"

She went to her own apartment, but it was not, as she had last gone to it, to weep; on the contrary, it was to smile at her former fears, and to admit the philosophy of the assertion that we suffer much more from a dread of those things that never happen than we do for actual calamities which occur in their full force to us.

"Oh, that this messenger," she said, "had come but yesterday! What hours of anguish I should have been spared! But I will not complain; it shall not be said that I repine at present joy because it did not come before. I will be happy when I can; and, in the consciousness that I shall soon hear blissful tidings of Mark Ingestrie, I will banish every fear."

The impatience which she now felt brought its pains and its penalties with it, and yet it was quite a different description of feeling to any she had formerly endured, and certainly far more desirable than the absolute anguish that had taken possession of her upon hearing nothing of Mark Ingestrie.

It was strange, very strange, that the thought never crossed her that the tidings she had to hear in the Temple Gardens from the stranger might be evil ones, but certainly such a thought did not occur to her, and she looked forward with joy and satisfaction to a meeting which she certainly had no evidence to know, might not be of the most disastrous character.

She asked herself over and over again if she should tell her father what had occurred, but as often as she thought of doing so she shrank from carrying out the mental suggestion, and all the natural disposition again to keep to herself the secret of her happiness returned to her in full force.

But yet she was not so unjust as not to feel that it was treating her father but slightingly to throw all her sorrows into his lap, as it were, and then to keep from him everything of joy appertaining to the same circumstances.

This was a thing that she was not likely to continue doing, and so she made up her mind to relieve her conscience from the pang it would otherwise have had, by determining to tell him, after the interview in the Temple Gardens, what was its result; but she could not make up her mind to do so beforehand; it was so pleasant and so delicious to keep the secret all to herself, and to feel that she alone knew that her lover had so closely kept faith with her as to be only one day behind his time in sending to her, and that day, perhaps, far from being his fault.

And so she reasoned to herself and tried to wile away the anxious hours, sometimes succeeding in forgetting how long it was still to sunset, and at others feeling as if each minute was perversely swelling itself out into ten times its usual proportion of time in order to become wearisome to her.

She had said that she would be at the Temple Gardens two hours before sunset instead of one, and she kept her word, for, looking happier than she had done for weeks, she tripped down the stairs of her father's house, and was about to leave it by the private staircase, when a strange gaunt-looking figure attracted her attention.

This was no other than the Rev. Mr. Lupin: he was a long strange-looking man, and upon this occasion he came upon what he called horseback, that is to say, he was mounted upon a very small pony, which seemed quite unequal to support his weight, and was so short that, if the reverend gentleman had not poked his legs out at an angle, they must inevitably have touched the ground.

"Praise the Lord!" he said: "I have intercepted the evil one. Maiden, I have come here at thy mother's bidding, and thou shalt remain and partake of the mixture called tea."

Johanna scarcely condescended to glance at him, but drawing her mantle close around her, which he actually had the impertinence to endeavour to lay hold of, she walked on, so that the reverend gentleman was left to make the best he could of the matter.

"Stop," he cried, "stop! I can well perceive that the devil has a strong hold of you: I can well perceive—the lord have mercy upon me! this animal hath some design against me as sure as fate."

This last ejaculation arose from the fact that the pony had flung up his heels behind in a most mysterious manner.

"I am afraid, sir," said a lad who was no more than our old acquaintance, Sam—"I am afraid, sir, that there is something the matter with the pony."

Up went the pony's heels again in the same unaccountable manner.

"God bless me!" said the reverend gentleman; "he never did such a thing before. I—there he goes again—murder! Young man, I pray you to help me to get down; I think I know you; you are the nephew of the goodly Mrs. Pump—truly this animal wishes to be the death of me."

At this moment the pony gave such a vigorous kick up behind, that Mr. Lupin was fairly pitched upon his head, and made a complete summerset, alighting with his heels in the spectacle-maker's passage; and it unfortunately happened that Mrs. Oakley at that moment, hearing the altercation, came rushing out, and the first thing she did was to fall sprawling over Mr. Lupin's feet.

Sam now felt it time to go; and as we dislike useless mysteries, we may as well explain that these extraordinary circumstances arose from the fact that Sam had brought from the haberdasher's opposite a halfpenny-worth of pins, and had amused himself by making a pincushion of the

hind quarters of the Reverend Mr. Lupin's pony, which, not being accustomed to that sort of thing, had kicked out vigorously in opposition to the same, and produced the results we have recorded.

Johanna Oakley was some distance upon her road before the reverend gentleman was pitched into her father's house in the manner we have described, so that she knew nothing of it, nor would she have cared if she had, for her mind was wholly bent upon the expedition she was proceeding on.

As she walked upon that side of the way of Fleet-street where Sweeney Todd's house and shop were situated, a feeling of curiosity prompted her to stop for a moment and look at the melancholy-looking dog that stood watching a hat at his door.

The appearance of grief upon the creature's face could not be mistaken, and, as she gazed, she saw the shop-door gently opened and a piece of meat thrown out.

"These are kind people," she said, "be they whom they may;" but when she saw the dog turn away with loathing, and herself observed that there was a white powder upon it, the idea that it was poisoned, and only intended for the poor creature's destruction, came instantly across her mind.

And when she saw the horrible-looking face of Sweeney Todd glaring at her from the partially-opened door, she could not doubt any further the fact, for that face was quite enough to give a warrant for any amount of villany whatever.

She passed on with a shudder, little suspecting, however, that that dog had anything to do with her fate, or the circumstances which made up the sum of her destiny.

It wanted a full hour to the appointed time of meeting when she reached the Temple-gardens, and partly blaming herself that she was so soon, while at the same time she would not for worlds have been away, she sat down on one of the garden-seats to think over the past, and to recall to

her memory with all the vivid freshness of young Love's devotion, the many gentle words which from time to time had been spoken to her two summers since by him whose faith she had never doubted, and whose image was enshrined at the bottom of her heart.

CHAPTER VI.
THE CONFERENCE, AND THE FEARFUL NARRATION IN THE GARDEN.

The Temple clock struck the hour of meeting, and Johanna looked anxiously around her for any one who should seem to her to bear the appearance of being such a person as she might suppose Mark Ingestrie would choose for his messenger.

She turned her eyes towards the gate, for she thought she heard it close, and then she saw a gentlemanly-looking man, attired in a cloak, and who was looking around him, apparently in search of some one.

When his eye fell upon her he immediately produced from beneath his cloak a white rose, and in another minute they met.

"I have the honour," he said, "of speaking to Miss Johanna Oakley?"

"Yes, sir; and you are Mark Ingestrie's messenger?"

"I am; that is to say, I am he who comes to bring you news of Mark Ingestrie, although I grieve to say I am not the messenger that was expressly deputed by him so to do."

"Oh! sir, your looks are sad and serious; you seem as if you would announce that some misfortune had occurred. Tell me that it is not so; speak to me at once, or my heart will break!"

"Compose yourself, lady, I pray you."

"I cannot—dare not do so, unless you tell me he lives. Tell me that Mark Ingestrie lives, and then I shall be all patience: tell me that, and you shall not hear a murmur from me. Speak the word at once—at once! It is cruel, believe me, it is cruel to keep me in this suspense."

"This is one of the saddest errands I ever came upon," said the stranger, as he led Johanna to a seat. "Recollect, lady, what creatures of accident and chance we are—recollect how the slightest circumstances will affect us, in driving us to the confines of despair, and remember by how frail a tenure the best of us hold existence."

"No more—no more!" shrieked Johanna, as she clasped her hands—"I know all now, and am desolate."

She let her face drop upon her hands, and shook as with a convulsion of grief.

"Mark, Mark!" she cried, "you have gone from me! I thought not this—I thought not this. Oh, Heaven! why have I lived so long as to have the capacity to listen to such fearful tidings? Lost—lost—all lost! God of Heaven! what a wilderness the world is now to me!"

"Let me pray you, lady, to subdue this passion of grief, and listen truly to what I shall unfold to you. There is much to hear and much to speculate upon; and if, from all that I have learnt, I cannot, dare not tell you that Mark Ingestrie lives, I likewise shrink from telling you he is no more."

"Speak again—say those words again! There is hope, then—oh, there is a hope!"

"There is a hope; and better is it that your mind should receive the first shock of the probability of the death of him whom you have so anxiously expected, and then afterwards, from what I shall relate to you, gather hope that it may not be so, than that from the first you should expect too much, and then have those expectations rudely destroyed."

"It is so—it is so; this is kind of you, and if I cannot thank you as I ought, you will know that it is because I am in a state of too great affliction so to do, and not from want of will; you will understand that—I am sure you

will understand that."

"Make no excuses to me. Believe me, I can fully appreciate all that you would say, and all that you must feel. I ought to tell you who I am, that you may have confidence in what I have to relate to you. My name is Jeffery, and I am a colonel in the Indian army."

"I am much beholden to you, sir; but you bring with you a passport to my confidence, in the name of Mark Ingestrie, which is at once sufficient. I live again in the hope that you have given me of his continued existence, and in that hope I will maintain a cheerful resignation that shall enable me to bear up against all you have to tell me, be it what it may, and with a feeling that through much suffering there may come joy at last. You shall find me very patient, ay, extremely patient—so patient that you shall scarcely see the havoc that grief has already made here."

She pressed her hands upon her breast as she spoke, and looked in his face with such an expression of tearful melancholy that it was quite heartrending to witness it; and he, although not used to the melting mood, was compelled to pause for a few moments ere he could proceed in the task he had set himself.

"I will be as brief," he said, "as possible, consistent with stating all that is requisite for me to state, and I must commence by asking you if you are aware under what circumstances it was that Mark Ingestrie was abroad?"

"I am aware of so much, that a quarrel with his uncle, Mr. Grant, was the great cause, and that his main endeavour was to better his fortunes, so that we might be happy, and independent of those who looked not with an eye of favour upon our projected union."

"Yes, but, what I meant was, were you aware of the sort of adventure he embarked in to the Indian seas?"

"No, I know nothing further; we met here on this spot, we parted at yonder gate, and we have never met again."

"Then I have something to tell you, in order to make the narrative clear and explicit."

They both sat upon the garden seat; and while Johanna fixed her eyes upon her companion's face, expressive as it was of the most generous emotions and noble feelings, he commenced relating to her the incidents which never left her memory, and in which she took so deep an interest.

"You must know," he said, "that what it was which so much inflamed the imagination of Mark Ingestrie, consisted in this. There came to London a man with a well-authenticated and extremely well put together report, that there had been discovered, in one of the small islands near the Indian seas, a river which deposited an enormous quantity of gold-dust in its progress to the ocean. He told his story so well, and seemed to be such a perfect master of all the circumstances connected with it, that there was scarcely room for a doubt upon the subject. The thing was kept quiet and secret; and a meeting was held of some influential men—influential on account of the money they possessed, among whom was one who had towards Mark Ingestrie most friendly feelings; so Mark attended the meeting with this friend of his, although he felt his utter incapacity, from want of resources, to take any part in the affair. But he was not aware of what his friend's generous intentions were in the matter until they were explained to him, and they consisted in this:—He, the friend, was to provide the necessary means for embarking in the adventure, so far as regarded taking a share in it, and he told Mark Ingestrie that, if he would go personally on the expedition, he should share in the proceeds with him, be they what they might. Now, to a young man like Ingestrie, totally destitute of personal resources, but of ardent and enthusiastic temperament, you can imagine how extremely tempting such an offer was likely to be. He embraced it at once with the greatest pleasure, and from that moment he took an interest in the affair of the closest and most powerful description. It seized completely hold of his imagination, presenting itself to him in the most tempting colours;

and from the description that has been given me of his enthusiastic disposition, I can well imagine with what kindness and impetuosity he would enter into such an affair."

"You know him well?" said Johanna, gently.

"No, I never saw him. All that I say concerning him is from the description of another who did know him well, and who sailed with him in the vessel that ultimately left the port of London on the vague and wild adventure I have mentioned."

"That one, be he who he may, must have known Mark Ingestrie well, and have enjoyed much of his confidence to be able to describe him so accurately."

"I believe that such was the case; and it is from the lips of that one, instead of from mine, that you ought to have heard what I am now relating. That gentleman, whose name was Thornhill, ought to have made to you this communication; but by some strange accident it seems he has been prevented, or you would not be here listening to me upon a subject which would have come better from his lips."

"And was he to have come yesterday to me?"

"He was."

"Then Mark Ingestrie kept his word; and but for the adverse circumstances which delayed his messenger, I should yesterday have heard what you are now relating to me. I pray you go on, sir, and pardon this interruption."

"I need not trouble you with all the negotiations, the trouble, and the difficulty that arose before the expedition could be started fairly—suffice it to say, that at length, after much annoyance and trouble, it was started, and a vessel was duly chartered and manned for the purpose of proceeding to the Indian seas in search of the treasure, which was reported to be there for the first adventurer who had the boldness to seek it."

"It was a gallant vessel. I saw it many a mile from England ere it sunk beneath the waves, never to rise again."

"Sunk!"

"Yes; it was an ill-fated ship, and it did sink; but I must not anticipated—let me proceed in my narrative with regularity. The ship was called the Star; and if those who went with it looked upon it as the star of their destiny, they were correct enough, and it might be considered an evil star for them, inasmuch as nothing but disappointment and bitterness became their ultimate portion. And Mark Ingestrie, I am told, was the most hopeful man on board. Already in imagination he could fancy himself homeward-bound with the vessel, ballasted and crammed with the rich produce of that shining river. Already he fancied what he could do with his abundant wealth, and I have not a doubt but that, in common with many who went on that adventure, he enjoyed to the full the spending of the wealth he should obtain in imagination—perhaps, indeed, more than if he had obtained it in reality. Among the adventurers was one Thornhill, who had been a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and between him and young Ingestrie there arose a remarkable friendship—a friendship so strong and powerful, that there can be no doubt that they communicated to each other all their hopes and fears; and if anything could materially tend to beguile the tedium of such a weary voyage as those adventurers had undertaken, it certainly would be the free communication and confidential intercourse between two such kindred spirits as Thornhill and Mark Ingestrie. You will bear in mind, Miss Oakley, that in making this communication to you, I am putting together what I myself heard at different times, so as to make it for you a distinct narrative, which you can have no difficulty in comprehending, because, as I before stated, I never saw Mark Ingestrie, and it was only once, for about five minutes, that I saw the vessel in which he went upon his perilous adventure—for perilous it turned out to be—to the Indian seas. It was from Thornhill I got my information during the many weary and monotonous hours consumed in a home-bound voyage from India. It appears that without accident or cross of any description the Star

reached the Indian ocean, and the supposed immediate locality of the spot where the treasure was to be found, and there she was spoken with by a vessel homeward-bound from India, called the Neptune. It was evening, and the sun had sunk in the horizon with some appearances that betokened a storm. I was on board that Indian vessel; we did not expect anything serious, although we made every preparation for rough weather, and as it turned out, it was well indeed we did, for never within the memory of the oldest seamen, had such a storm ravished the coast. A furious gale, which it was impossible to withstand, drove us southward; and but for the utmost precautions, aided by courage and temerity on the part of the seamen, such as I had never before witnessed in the merchant-service, we escaped with trifling damage, but we were driven at least 200 miles out of our course; and instead of getting, as we ought to have done, to the Cape by a certain time, we were an immense distance eastward of it. It was just as the storm, which lasted three nights and two days, began to abate, that towards the horizon we saw a dull red light; and as it was not in a quarter of the sky where any such appearance might be imagined, nor were we in a latitude where electro-phenomena might be expected, we steered toward it, surmising what turned out afterwards to be fully correct."

"It was a ship on fire!" said Johanna.

"It was."

"Alas! alas! I guessed it. A frightful suspicion from the first crossed my mind. It was a ship on fire, and that ship was—"

The Star was bound upon its adventurous course, although driven far out of it by adverse winds and waves. After about half an hour's sailing we came within sight distinctly of a blazing vessel. We could hear the roar of the flames, and through our glasses we could see them curling up the cordage, and dancing from mast to mast, like fiery serpents, exulting in the destruction they were making. We made all sail, and strained every inch of canvas to reach the ill-fated vessel, for distances at sea that look small are in reality very great, and an hour's hard sailing in a fair

wind, with every stitch of canvas set, would not do more than enable us to reach that ill-fated bark; but fancy in an hour what ravages the flames might make! The vessel was doomed. The fiat had gone forth that it was to be among the things that had been; and long before we could reach the spot upon which it floated idly on the now comparatively calm waters, we saw a bright shower of sparks rush up into the air. Then came a loud roaring sound over the surface of the deep, and all was still—the ship had disappeared, and the water closed over it for ever."

"But how knew you," said Johanna, as she clasped her hands, and the pallid expression of her countenance betrayed the deep interest she took in the narration, "how knew you that the ship was the Star? might it not have been some other ill-fated vessel that met with so dreadful a fate?"

"I will tell you: although we had seen the ship go down, we kept on our course, straining every effort to reach the spot, with the hope of picking up some of the crew, who surely had made an effort by the boats to leave the burning vessel. The captain of the Indiaman kept his glass at his eye, and presently he said to me,—'There is a floating piece of wreck, and something clinging to it; I know not if there be a man, but what I can perceive seems to me to be the head of a dog.' I looked through the glass myself, and saw the same object; but as we neared it, we found it was a large piece of the wreck, with a dog and a man supported by it, who were clinging with all the energy of desperation. In ten minutes more we had them on board the vessel—the man was the Lieutenant Thornhill I have before mentioned, and the dog belonged to him. He related to us that the ship, we had seen burning was the Star; and that it had never reached its destination, and that he believed all had perished but himself and the dog; for, although one of the boats had been launched, so desperate a rush was made into it by the crew that it had swamped, and all perished. Such was his own state of exhaustion, that, after he had made this short statement, it was some days before he left his hammock; but when he did, and began to mingle with us, we found an intelligent, cheerful companion—such a one, indeed, as we were glad to have on board, and in confidence he related to the captain and myself the object of the

voyage of the Star, and the previous particulars with which I have made you acquainted. And then, during a night-watch, when the soft and beautiful moonlight was more than usually inviting, and he and I were on the deck, enjoying the coolness of the night, after the intense heat of the day in the tropics, he said to me,—'I have a very sad mission to perform when I get to London. On board our vessel was a young man named Mark Ingestrie; and some short time before the vessel in which we were went down, he begged of me to call upon a young lady named Johanna Oakley, the daughter of a spectacle-maker in London, providing I should be saved and he perish; and of the latter event, he felt so strong a presentiment that he gave me a string of pearls, which I was to present to her in his name; but where he got them I have not the least idea, for they are of immense value.' Mr. Thornhill showed me the pearls, which were of different sizes, roughly strung together, but of great value; and when we reached the river Thames, which was only three days since, he left us with his dog, carrying his string of pearls with him, to find out where you reside."

"Alas! he never came."

"No; from all the inquiries we can make, and all the information we can learn, it seems he disappeared somewhere about Fleet-street."

"Disappeared!"

"Yes; we can trace him to the Temple-stairs, and from thence to the barber' shop, kept by a man named Sweeny Todd; but beyond there no information of him can be obtained."

"Sweeny Todd!"

"Yes; and what makes the affair more extraordinary, is, that neither force nor persuasion will induce Thornhill's dog to leave the place."

"I saw it—I saw the creature, and it looked imploringly, although kindly, in my face; but little did I think, when I paused a moment to look upon that melancholy but faithful animal, that it held a part in my destiny. Oh!

Mark Ingestrie, Mark Ingestrie, dare I hope that you live when all else have perished?"

"I have told you all that I can tell you, and, according as your own judgment may dictate to you, you can encourage hope, or extinguish it for ever. I have kept back nothing from you which can make the affair worse or better—I have added nothing; but you have it simply as it was told to me."

"He is lost—he is lost."

"I am one, lady, who always thinks certainty of any sort preferable to suspense; and although, while there is no positive news of death, the continuance of life ought fairly to be assumed, yet you must perceive, from a review of all the circumstances, upon how very slender a foundation all our hopes must rest."

"I have no hope—I have no hope—he is lost to me for ever! It were madness to think he lived. Oh, Mark, Mark! and is this the end of all our fond affection? did I indeed look my last upon that face, when on this spot we parted?"

"The uncertainty," said Colonel Jeffery, wishing to withdraw as much as possible from a consideration of her own sorrows, "the uncertainty, too, that prevails with regard to the fate of poor Mr. Thornhill, is a sad thing. I much fear that those precious pearls he had, have been seen by some one who has not scrupled to obtain possession of them by his death."

"Yes, it would seem so indeed; but what are pearls to me? Oh! would that they had sunk to the bottom of that Indian sea, from whence they had been plucked. Alas, alas! it has been their thirst for gain that has produced all these evils. We might have been poor here, but we should have been happy. Rich we ought to have been, in contentment; but now all is lost, and the world to me can present nothing that is to be desired, but one small spot large enough to be my grave."

She leant upon the arm of the garden-seat, and gave herself up to such a passion of tears that Colonel Jeffery felt he dared not interrupt her. There is something exceeding sacred about real grief which awes the beholder, and it was with an involuntary feeling of respect that Colonel Jeffery stepped a few paces off, and waited until that burst of agony had passed away. It was during those brief moments that he overheard some words uttered by one who seemed likewise to be suffering from that prolific source of all affliction, disappointed affection. Seated at some short distance was a maiden, and one not young enough to be called a youth, but still not far enough advanced in existence to have had all his better feelings crushed by an admixture with the cold world, and he was listening while the maiden spoke.

"It is the neglect," she said, "which touched me to the heart. But one word spoken or written, one message of affection, to tell me that the memory of a love I thought would be eternal, still lingered in your heart, would have been a world of consolation; but it came not, and all was despair."

"Listen to me," said her companion, "and if ever in this world you can believe that one who truly loves can be cruel to be kind, believe that I am that one. I yielded for a time to the fascination of a passion which should never have found a home within my heart; but yet it was far more of a sentiment than a passion, inasmuch as never for one moment did an evil thought mingle with its pure aspirations.

"It was a dream of joy, which for a time obliterated a remembrance that ought never to have been forgotten; but when I was rudely awakened to the fact that those whose opinions were of importance to your welfare and your happiness knew nothing of love, but in its grossest aspect, it became necessary at once to crush a feeling, which, in its continuance, could shadow forth nothing but evil."

"You may not imagine, and you may never know—for I cannot tell the heart-pangs that it has cost me to persevere in a line of conduct which I felt was due to you—whatever heart-pangs it might cost me. I have been

content to imagine that your affection would turn to indifference, perchance to hatred; that a consciousness of being slighted would arouse in your defence all a woman's pride, and that thus you would be lifted above regret. Farewell for ever! I dare not love you honestly and truly; and better is it thus to part than to persevere in a delusive dream that can but terminate in degradation and sadness."

"Do you hear those words?" whispered Colonel Jeffery to Johanna. "You perceive that others suffer, and from the same cause, the perils of affection."

"I do. I will go home, and pray for strength to maintain my heart against this sad affliction."

"The course of true love never yet ran smooth; wonder not, therefore, Johanna Oakley, that yours has suffered such a blight. It is the great curse of the highest and noblest feelings of which humanity is capable, that while, under felicitous circumstances, they produce to us an extraordinary amount of happiness; when anything adverse occurs, they are most prolific sources of misery. Shall I accompany you?"

Johanna felt grateful for the support of the colonel's arm towards her own home, and as they passed the barber's shop they were surprised to see that the dog and the hat were gone.

CHAPTER VII.
THE BARBER AND THE LAPIDARY.

It is night; and a man, one of the most celebrated lapidaries in London, but yet a man frugal withal, although rich, is putting up the shutters of his shop.

This lapidary is an old man; his scanty hair is white, and his hands shake as he secures the fastenings, and then, over and over again, feels and shakes each shutter, to be assured that his shop is well secured.

This shop of his is in Moorfields, then a place very much frequented by dealers in bullion and precious stones. He was about entering his door, just having cast a satisfied look upon the fastening of his shop, when a tall, ungainly-looking man stepped up to him. This man had a three-cornered hat, much too small for him, perched upon the top of his great hideous-looking head, while the coat he wore had ample skirts enough to have made another of ordinary dimensions.

Our readers will have no difficulty in recognising Sweeney Todd, and well might the little old lapidary start as such a very unprepossessing-looking personage addressed him.

"You deal," he said, "in precious stones."

"Yes, I do," was the reply; "but it's rather late. Do you want to buy or sell?"

"To sell."

"Humph! Ah, I dare say it's something not in my line; the only order I get is for pearls, and they are not in the market."

"And I have nothing but pearls to sell," said Sweeney Todd; "I mean to keep all my diamonds, my garnets, topazes, brilliants, emeralds, and rubies."

"The deuce you do! Why, you don't mean to say you have any of them? Be off with you! I am too old to joke with, and am waiting for my supper."

"Will you look at the pearls I have?"

"Little seed pearls, I suppose; they are of no value, and I don't want them, we have plenty of those. It's real, genuine, large pearls we want. Pearls worth thousands."

"Will you look at mine?"

"No; good night!"

"Very good; then I will take them to Mr. Coventry up the street. He will, perhaps, deal with me for them if you cannot."

The lapidary hesitated. "Stop," he said; "what's the use of going to Mr. Coventry? he has not the means of purchasing what I can pay present cash for. Come in, come in; I will, at all events, look at what you have for sale."

Thus encouraged, Sweeney Todd entered the little, low, dusky shop, and the lapidary having procured a light, and taken care to keep his customer outside the counter, put on his spectacles, and said—

"Now, sir, where are your pearls?"

"There," said Sweeney Todd, as he laid a string of twenty-four pearls before the lapidary.

The old man's eyes opened to an enormous width, and he pushed his spectacles right upon his forehead as he glared in the face of Sweeney Todd with undisguised astonishment. Then down came his spectacles again, and taking up the string of pearls he rapidly examined every one of them, after which, he exclaimed,—

"Real, real, by Heaven! All real!"

Then he pushed his spectacles up again to the top of his head, and took another long stare at Sweeney Todd.

"I know they are real," said the latter. "Will you deal with me or will you not?"

"Will I deal with you? Yes; I am not quite sure they are real. Let me look again. Oh, I see, counterfeits; but so well done, that really for the curiosity of the thing, I will give fifty pounds for them."

"I am fond of curiosities," said Sweeney Todd, "and as they are not real, I will keep them; they will do for a present to some child or another."

"What give those to a child? you must be mad—that is to say, not mad, but certainly indiscreet. Come, now, at a word, I'll give you one hundred pounds for them."

"Hark ye," said Sweeney Todd, "it neither suits my inclination nor my time to stand here chaffing with you. I know the value of the pearls, and, as a matter of ordinary and every-day business, I will sell them to you so that you may get a handsome profit."

"What do you call a handsome profit?"

"The pearls are worth twelve thousand pounds, and I will let you have them for ten. What do you think of that for an offer?"

"What odd noise was that?"

"Oh, it was only I who laughed. Come, what do you say, at once; are we to do business or are we not?"

"Hark ye, my friend; since you do know the value of your pearls, and this is to be a downright business transaction, I think I can find a customer who will give eleven thousand pounds for them, and if so, I have no objection to give you eight thousand pounds."

"Give me the eight thousand pounds," said Sweeney Todd, "and let me go. I hate bargaining."

"Stop a bit; there are some rather important things to consider. You must know, my friend, that a string of pearls of this value are not be bought like a few ounces of old silver of anybody who might come with it. Such a string of pearls as these are like a house, or an estate, and when they change hands, the vendor must give every satisfaction as to how he came by them, and prove how he can give to the purchaser a good right and title to them."

"Pshaw!" said Sweeney Todd, "who will question you, you are well known to be in the trade, and to be continually dealing in such things?"

"That's all very fine; but I don't see why I should give you the full value of an article without evidence as to how you came by it."

"In other words you mean, you don't care how I came by them, provided I sell them to you at a thief's price, but if I want their value you mean to be particular."

"My good sir, you may conclude what you like. Show me that you have a right to dispose of the pearls, and you need go no further than my shop for a customer."

"I am no disposed to take that trouble, so I shall bid you good night, and if you want any pearls again, I would certainly advise you not to be so wonderfully particular where you get them."

Sweeney Todd strode towards the door, but the lapidary was not going to part with him so easy, so springing over his counter with an agility one would not have expected from so old a man, he was at the door in a moment, and shouted at the top of his lungs—

"Stop thief! Stop thief! Stop him! There he goes! The big fellow with the three-cornered hat! Stop thief! Stop thief!"

These cries, uttered with great vehemence as they were, could not be totally ineffectual, but they roused the whole neighbourhood, and before Sweeney Todd had proceeded many yards a man made an attempt to collar him, but was repulsed by such a terrific blow in the face, that another person, who had run half-way across the road with a similar

object, turned and went back again, thinking it scarcely prudent to risk his own safety in apprehending a criminal for the good of the public. Having got rid thus of one of his foes, Sweeney Todd, with an inward determination to come back some day and be the death of the old lapidary, looked anxiously about for some court down which he could plunge, and so get out of sight of the many pursuers who were sure to attack him in the public streets. His ignorance of the locality, however, was a great bar to such a proceeding, for the great dread he had was, that he might get down some blind alley, and so be completely caged, and at the mercy of those who followed him. He pelted on at a tremendous speed, but it was quite astonishing to see how the little old lapidary ran after him, falling down every now and then, and never stopping to pick himself up, as people say, but rolling on and getting on his feet in some miraculous manner, that was quite wonderful to behold, particularly in one so aged and so apparently unable to undertake any active exertion. There was one thing, however, he could not continue doing, and that was to cry "stop thief!" for he had lost his wind, and was quite incapable of uttering a word. How long he would have continued the chase is doubtful, but his career was suddenly put an end to, as regards that, by tripping his foot over a projecting stone in the pavement, and shooting headlong down a cellar which was open. But abler persons than the little old lapidary had taken up the chase, and Sweeney Todd was hard pressed; and, although he ran very fast, the provoking thing was, that in consequence of the cries and shouts of his pursuers, new people took up the chase, who were fresh and vigorous and close to him. There is something awful in seeing a human being thus hunted by his fellows; and although we can have no sympathy with such a man as Sweeney Todd, because, from all that has happened, we begin to have some very horrible suspicion concerning him, still, as a general principle, it does not decrease the fact, that it is a dreadful thing to see a human being hunted through the streets. On he flew at the top of his speed, striking down whoever opposed him, until at last many who could have outrun him gave up the chase, not liking to encounter the knock-down blow

which such a hand as his seemed capable of inflicting. His teeth were set, and his breathing became short and laborious, just as a man sprung out at a shop-door and succeeded in laying hold of him.

"I have got you, have I?" he said.

Sweeney Todd uttered not a word, but, putting forth an amount of strength that was perfectly prodigious, he seized the man by a great handful of his hair, and by his clothes behind, and flung him through a shop-window, smashing glass, framework, and everything in its progress. The man gave a shriek, for it was his own shop, and he was a dealer in fancy goods of the most flimsy texture, so that the smash with which he came down among his stock-in-trade, produced at once what the haberdashers are so delighted with in the present day, namely, a ruinous sacrifice. This occurrence had a great effect upon Sweeney Todd's pursuers; it taught them the practical wisdom of not interfering with a man possessed evidently of such tremendous powers of mischief, and consequently, as just about this period the defeat of the little lapidary took place, he got considerably the start of his pursuers. He was by no means safe. The cry of "stop thief!" still sounded in his ears, and on he flew, panting with the exertion he made, till he heard a man behind him, say,—

"Turn into the second court on your right, and you will be safe—I'll follow you. They shan't nab you, if I can help it."

Sweeney Todd had not much confidence in human nature—it was not likely he would; but, panting and exhausted as he was, the voice of any one speaking in friendly accents was welcome, and, rather impulsively than from reflection, he darted down the second court to his right.

CHAPTER VIII.
THE THIEVES' HOME.

In a very few minutes Sweeney Todd found that this court had no thoroughfare, and therefore there was no outlet or escape, but he immediately concluded that something more was to be found than was at first sight to be seen, and casting a furtive glance beside him in the direction in which he had come, rested his hand upon a door which stood close by. The door gave way, and Sweeney Todd, hearing, as he imagined, a noise in the street, dashed in, and closed the door, and then he, heedless of all consequences, walked to the end of a long dirty passage, and, pushing open a door, descended a short flight of steps, to the bottom of which he had scarcely got, when the door which faced him at the bottom of the steps opened by some hand, and he suddenly found himself in the presence of a number of men seated round a large table. In an instant all eyes were turned towards Sweeney Todd, who was quite unprepared for such a scene, and for a minute he knew not what to say; but, as indecision was not Sweeney Todd's characteristic, he at once advanced to the table and sat down. There was some surprise evinced by the persons who were seated in that room, of whom there were many more than a score, and much talking was going on among them, which did not appear to cease on his entrance. Those who were near him looked hard at him, but nothing was said for some minutes, and Sweeney Todd looked about to understand, if he could, how he was placed, though it could not be much a matter of doubt as to the character of the individuals present.

Their looks were often an index to their vocations, for all grades of the worst of characters were there, and some of them were by no means complimentary to human nature, for there were some of the most desperate characters that were to be found in London. Sweeney Todd gave a glance around him, and at once satisfied himself of the desperate nature of the assembly into which he had thrust himself. They were dressed in various fashions, some after the manner of the city—some more gay, and some half military, while not a few wore the garb of countrymen; but there was in all that an air of scampish, off-hand behaviour, not unmixed with brutality.

"Friend," said one, who sat near him, "how came you here; are you known here?"

"I came here, because I found the door open, and I was told by some one to come here, as I was pursued."

"Pursued?"

"Ay, some one running after me, you know."

"I know what being pursued is," replied the man, "and yet I know nothing of you."

"That is not at all astonishing," said Sweeney, "seeing that I never saw you before, nor you me; but that makes no difference. I'm in difficulties, and I suppose a man may do his best to escape the consequences?"

"Yes, he may, yet that is no reason why he should come here; this is the place for free friends, who know and aid one another."

"And such I am willing to be; but at the same time I must have a beginning. I cannot be initiated without some one introducing me. I have sought protection, and I have found it; if there be any objection to my remaining here any longer, I will leave."

"No, no," said a tall man on the other side of the table, "I have heard what you have said, and we do not usually allow any such things; you have come here unasked, and now we must have a little explanation—

our own safety may demand it; at all events we have our customs, and they must be complied with."

"And what are your customs?" demanded Todd.

"This: you must answer the question which we shall propound unto you; now answer truly what we shall ask of you."

"Speak," said Todd, "and I will answer all that you propose to me, if possible."

"We will not tax you too hardly, depend upon it: who are you?"

"Candidly, then," said Todd, "that's a question I do not like to answer, nor do I think it is one that you ought to ask. It is an inconvenient thing to name oneself—you must pass by that inquiry."

"Shall we do so?" inquired the interrogator of those around him, and gathering his cue from their looks, he, after a brief space, continued—

"Well, we will pass over that, seeing it is not necessary, but you must tell us what you are—cutpurse, footpad, or what not?"

"I am neither."

"Then tell us in your own words," said the man, "and be candid with us. What are you?"

"I am an artificial pearl-maker—or sham pearl-maker, whichever way you please to call it."

"A sham pearl-maker! that may be an honest trade for all we know, and that will hardly be your passport to our house, friend sham pearl-maker!"

"That may be as you say," replied Todd, "but I will challenge any man to equal me in my calling. I have made pearls that would pass with almost a lapidary, and which would pass with nearly all the nobility."

"I begin to understand you, friend; but I would wish to have some proof of what you say; we may hear a very good tale, and yet none of it shall be true; we are not men to be made dupes of, besides, there are enough to

take vengeance, if we desire it."

"Ay, to be sure there is," said a gruff voice from the other end of the table, which was echoed from one to the other, till it came to the top of the table.

"Proof! proof! proof!" now resounded from one end of the room to the other.

"My friends," said Sweeney Todd, rising up, and advancing to the table, and thrusting his hand into his bosom and drawing out the string of twenty-four pearls, "I challenge you, or any one, to make a set of artificial pearls equal to these; they are my make, and I'll stand to it in any reasonable sum, that you cannot bring a man who shall beat me in my calling."

"Just hand them to me," said the man who had made himself interrogator.

Sweeney Todd threw the pearls on the table carelessly, and then said—

"There, look at them well, they'll bear it, and I reckon, though there may be some good judges amongst you, that you cannot any of you tell them from real pearls, if you had not been told so."

"Oh, yes, we know pretty well," said the man, "what these things are, we have now and then a good string in our possession, and that helps us to judge of them. Well, this is certainly a good imitation."

"Let me see it," said a fat man: "I was bred a jeweller, and I might say born, only I couldn't stick to it; nobody likes working for years upon little pay, and no fun with the gals. I say, hand it here!"

"Well," said Todd, "if you or anybody ever produced as good an imitation, I'll swallow the whole string; and knowing there's poison in the composition, it would not be a comfortable thing to think of."

"Certainly not," said the big man, "certainly not, but hand them over, and I'll tell you all about it."

The pearls were given into his hands; and Sweeney Todd felt some misgivings about his precious charge, and yet he showed it not, for he turned to the man who sat beside him, saying—

"If he can tell true pearls from them, he knows more than I think he does, for I am a maker, and have often had the true pearl in my hand."

"And I suppose," said the man, "you have tried your hand at putting the one for the other, and so doing your confiding customers."

"Yes, yes, that is the dodge, I can see very well," said another man, winking at the first; "and a good one too, I have known them do so with diamonds."

"Yes, but never with pearls; however, there are some trades that it is desirable to know."

"You're right."

The fat man now carefully examined the pearls, set them down on the table, and looked hard at them.

"There now, I told you I could bother you. You are not so good a judge that you would not have known, if you had not been told they were sham pearls, but what they were real."

"I must say, you have produced the best imitations I have ever seen. Why you ought to make your fortune in a few years—a handsome fortune!"

"So I should, but for one thing."

"And what is that?"

"The difficulty," said Todd, "of getting rid of them; if you ask anything below their value, you are suspected, and you run the chance of being stopped and losing them at the least, and perhaps entail a prosecution."

"Very true; but there is risk in everything; we all run risks; but then the harvest!"

"That may be," said Todd, "but this is peculiarly dangerous. I have not the means of getting introduction to the nobility themselves, and if I had I should be doubted, for they would say a working man cannot come honestly by such valuable things, and then I must concoct a tale to escape the Mayor of London."

"Ha!—ha!—ha!"

"Well, then, you can take them to a goldsmith."

"There are not many of them who would do so: they would not deal in them; and, moreover, I have been to one or two of them; as for a lapidary, why, he is not so easily cheated."

"Have you tried?"

"I did, and had to make the best of my way out, pursued as quickly as they could run, and I thought at one time I must have been stopped, but a few lucky turns brought me clear, when I was told to turn up this court; and I came in here."

"Well," said one man, who had been examining the pearls, "and did the lapidary find out they were not real?"

"Yes, he did; and he wanted to stop me and the string together, for trying to impose upon him; however, I made a rush at the door, which he tried to shut, but I was the stronger man, and here I am."

"It has been a close chance for you," said one.

"Yes, it just has," replied Sweeney, taking up the string of pearls, which he replaced in his clothes, and continued to converse with some of those around him.

Things now subsided into their general course; and little notice was taken of Sweeney. There was some drink on the board, of which all partook. Sweeney had some, too, and took the precaution of emptying his pockets before them all, and gave them a share of his money to pay his footing. This was policy, and they all drank to his success, and were very good companions. Sweeney, however, was desirous of getting out as

soon as he could, and more than once cast his eyes towards the door; but he saw there were eyes upon him, and dared not excite suspicion, for he might undo all that he had done. To lose the precious treasure he possessed would be maddening; he had succeeded to admiration in inducing the belief that what he showed them was merely a counterfeit; but he knew so well that they were real, and that a latent feeling that they were humbugged might be hanging about; and that the first suspicious movement he would be watched, and some desperate attempt made to make him give them up. It was with no small violence to his own feelings that he listened to their conversation, and appeared to take an interest in their proceedings.

"Well," said one, who sat next him, "I'm just off for the north-road."

"Any fortune there?"

"Not much; and yet I mustn't complain: these last three weeks, the best I have had has been two sixties."

"Well, that would do very well."

"Yes, the last man I stopped was a regular looby Londoner; he appeared like a don, complete tip-top man of fashion; but, Lord! when I came to look over him, he hadn't as much as would carry me twenty-four miles on the road."

"Indeed! don't you think he had any hidden about him?—they do do so now."

"Ah, ah!" returned another, "well said, old fellow; 'tis a true remark, that we can't always judge a man from appearances. Lor! bless me, now, who'd 'a thought your swell cove proved to be out o' luck? Well, I'm sorry for you; but you know 'tis a long lane that has no turning, as Mr. Somebody says—so, perhaps, you'll be more fortunate another time. But come, cheer up, whilst I relate an adventure that occurred a little time ago; 'twas a slice of good luck, I assure you, for I had no difficulty in bouncing my victim, out of a good swag of tin; for you know farmers returning from market are not always too wary and careful, especially as

the lots of wine they take at the market dinners make the cosy old boys ripe and mellow for sleep. Well, I met one of these jolly gentlemen, mounted on horseback, who declared he had nothing but a few paltry guineas about him; however, that would not do—I searched him, and found a hundred and four pounds secreted about his person."

"Where did you find it?"

"About him. I tore his clothes to ribands. A pretty figure he looked upon horseback, I assure you. By Jove, I could hardly help laughing; in fact, I did laugh at him, which so enraged him, that he immediately threatened to horse-whip me, and yet he dared not defend his money; but I threatened to shoot him, and that soon brought him to his senses."

"I should imagine so. Did you ever have a fight for it?" inquired Sweeney Todd.

"Yes, several times. Ah! it's by no means an easy life, you may depend. It is free, but dangerous. I have been fired at six or seven times."

"So many?"

"Yes. I was near York once, when I stopped a gentleman; I thought him an easy conquest, but not as he turned out, for he was a regular devil."

"Resisted you?"

"Yes, he did. I was coming along when I met him, and I demanded his money. 'I can keep it myself,' he said, 'and do not want any assistance to take care of it.'"

"But I want it," said I; "your money or your life."

"You must have both, for we are not to be parted," he said, presenting his pistol at me; "and then I had only time to escape from the effect of the shot. I struck the pistol up with my riding-whip, and the bullet passed by my temples, and almost stunned me. I cocked and fired; he did the same, but I hit him, and he fell. He fired, however, but missed me. I was down upon him; he begged hard for life."

"Did you give it him?"

"Yes; I dragged him to the side of the road, and then left him. Having done so much, I mounted my horse and came away as fast as I could, and then I made for London, and spent a merry day or two there."

"I can imagine you must enjoy your trips into the country, and then you must have still greater relish for the change when you come to London—the change is so great and so entire."

"So it is; but have you never any run of luck in your line? I should think you must at times succeed in tricking the public."

"Yes, yes," said Todd, "now and then we do—but I tell you it is only now and then; and I have been afraid of doing too much. In small sums I have been a gainer; but I want to do something grand. I tried it on, but at the same time I have failed."

"That is bad; but you may have more opportunities by and by. Luck is all chance."

"Yes," said Todd, "that is true, but the sooner the better, for I am growing impatient."

Conversation now went on; each man speaking of his exploits, which were always some species of rascality and robbery, accompanied by violence generally; some were midnight robbers and breakers into people's houses; in fact, all the crimes that could be imagined. This place was, in fact, a complete house of rendezvous for thieves, cutpurses, highwaymen, footpads, and burglars of every grade and description—a formidable set of men of the most determined and desperate appearance. Sweeney Todd hardly knew how to rise and leave the place, though it was now growing very late, and he was most anxious to get safe out of the den he was in; but how to do that, was a problem yet to be solved.

"What is the time?" he muttered to the man next to him.

"Past midnight," was the reply.

"Then I must leave here," he answered, "for I have work that I must be at in a very short time, and I shall not have too much time."

So saying he watched his opportunity, and rising, walked up to the door, which he opened and went out; after that he walked up the five steps that led to the passage, and this latter had hardly been gained when the street-door opened, and another man came in at the same moment, and met him face to face.

"What do you do here?"

"I am going out," said Sweeney Todd.

"You are going back; come back with me."

"I will not," said Todd. "You must be a better man than I am, if you make me; I'll do my best to resist your attack, if you intend one."

"That I do," replied the man; and he made a determined rush upon Sweeney, who was scarcely prepared for such a sudden onslaught, and was pushed back till he came to the head of the stairs, where a struggle took place, and both rolled down the steps. The door was thrown open, and every one rushed out to see what was the matter, but it was some moments before they could make it out.

"What does he do here?" said the first, as soon as he could speak, and pointing to Sweeney Todd.

"It's all right."

"All wrong, I say."

"He's a sham-pearl maker, and has shown us a string of sham pearls that are beautiful."

"Psha!"

"I will insist upon seeing them; give them to me," he said, "or you do not leave this place."

"I will not," said Sweeney.

"You must. Here, help me—but I don't want help, I can do it by myself."

As he spoke, he made a desperate attempt to collar Sweeney and pull him to the earth, but he had miscalculated his strength when he imagined that he was superior to Todd, who was by far the more powerful man of the two, and resisted the attack with success. Suddenly, by an Herculean effort, he caught his adversary below the waist, and lifting him up, he threw him upon the floor with great force; and then, not wishing to see how the gang would take this—whether they would take the part of their companion or of himself he knew not—he thought he had an advantage in the distance, and he rushed up stairs as fast as he could, and reached the door before they could overtake him to prevent him. Indeed, for more than a minute they were irresolute what to do; but they were somehow prejudicial in favour of their companion, and they rushed up after Sweeney just as he had got to the door. He would have had time to escape them, but, by some means, the door became fast, and he could not open it, exert himself how he would. There was no time to lose; they were coming to the head of the stairs, and Sweeney had hardly time to reach the stairs, to fly upwards, when he felt himself grasped by the throat. This he soon released himself from; for he struck the man who seized him a heavy blow, and he fell backwards, and Todd found his way up to the first floor, but he was closely pursued. Here was another struggle; and again Sweeney Todd was the victor, but he was hard pressed by those who followed him—fortunately for him there was a mop left in a pail of water, this he seized hold of, and, swinging it over his head, he brought it full on the head of the first man who came near him. Dab it came, soft and wet, and splashed over some others who were close at hand. It is astonishing what an effect a new weapon will sometimes have. There was not a man among them, who would not have faced danger in more ways than one, that would not have rushed headlong upon deadly and destructive weapons, but who were quite awed when a heavy wet mop was dashed into their faces. They were completely paralysed for a moment; indeed, they began to look upon it as something between a joke and a serious matter and either would have been taken just as they might be termed.

"Get the pearls!" shouted the man who had first stopped him; "seize the spy! seize him—secure him—rush at him! You are men enough to hold one man!"

Sweeney Todd saw matters were growing serious, and he plied his mop most vigorously upon those who were ascending, but they had become somewhat used to the mop, and it had lost much of its novelty, and was by no means a dangerous weapon. They rushed on, despite the heavy blows showered by Sweeney, and he was compelled to give way stair after stair. The head of the mop came off, and then there remained but the handle, which formed an efficient weapon, and which made fearful havoc on the heads of the assailants; and despite all that their slouched hats could do in the way of protecting them, yet the staff came with a crushing effect. The best fight in the world cannot last for ever; and Sweeney again found numbers were not to be resisted for long; indeed, he could not have physical energy enough to sustain his own efforts, supposing he had received no blows in return. He turned and fled as he was forced back to the landing, and then came to the next stair-head, and again he made a desperate stand. This went on for stair after stair, and continued for more than two or three hours. There were moments of cessation when they all stood still and looked at each other.

"Fire upon him!" said one.

"No, no; we shall have the authorities down upon us, and then all will go wrong."

"I think we had much better have let it alone in the first place, as he was in, for you may be sure this won't make him keep a secret; we shall all be split upon as sure as fate."

"Well, then, rush upon him, and down with him. Never let him out! On to him! Hurrah!"

Away they went, but they were resolutely met by the staff of Sweeney Todd, who had gained new strength by the short rest he had had.

"Down with the spy!"

This was shouted out by the men, but as each of them approached, they were struck down, and at length, finding himself on the second floor landing, and being fearful that some one was descending from above, he rushed into one of the inner rooms. In an instant he had locked the doors, which were strong and powerful.

"Now," he muttered, "for means to escape."

He waited a moment to wipe the sweat from his brow, and then he crossed the floor to the windows, which were open. They were the old-fashioned bay-windows, with the heavy ornamental work which some houses possessed, and overhung the low door-ways, and protected them from the weather.

"This will do," he said, as he looked down to the pavement—"this will do. I will try this descent, if I fall."

The people on the other side of the door were exerting all their force to break it open, and it had already given one or two ominous creaks, and a few minutes more would probably let them into the room. The streets were clear—no human being was moving about, and there were faint signs of the approach of morning. He paused a moment to inhale the fresh air, and then he got outside of the window. By means of the sound oaken ornaments, he contrived to get down to the drawing-room balcony, and then he soon got down into the street. As he walked slowly away, he could hear the crash of the door, and a slight cheer, as they entered the room; and he could imagine to himself the appearance of the faces of those who entered, when they found the bird had flown, and the room was empty. Sweeney Todd had not far to go; he soon turned into Fleet-street, and made for his own house. He looked about him, but there were none near him; he was tired and exhausted, and right glad was he when he found himself at his own door. Then stealthily he put the key into the door, and slowly entered the house.

CHAPTER IX.
JOHANNA AT HOME, AND THE RESOLUTION.

Johanna Oakley would not allow Colonel Jeffery to accompany her all the way home, and he, appreciating the scruples of the young girl, did not press his attention upon her, but left her at the corner of Fore-street, after getting from her a half promise that she would meet him again on that day week, at the same hour, in the Temple-gardens.

"I ask this of you, Johanna Oakley," he said, "because I have resolved to make all the exertion in my power to discover what has become of Mr. Thornhill, in whose fate I am sure I have succeeded in interesting you, although you care so little for the string of pearls which he has in trust for you."

"I do, indeed, care little for them," said Johanna, "so little, that it may be said to amount to nothing."

"But still they are yours, and you ought to have the option of disposing of them as you please. It is not well to despise such gifts of fortune; for if you can yourself do nothing with them, there are surely some others whom you may know, upon whom they would bestow great happiness."

"A string of pearls, great happiness?" said Johanna, inquiringly.

"Your mind is so occupied by your grief that you quite forget such strings are of great value. I have seen those pearls, Johanna, and can assure you that they are in themselves a fortune."

"I suppose," she said sadly, "it is too much for human nature to expect two blessings at once. I had the fond, warm heart that loved me without the fortune, that would have enabled us to live in comfort and affluence; and now, when that is perchance within my grasp, the heart, that was by far the more costly possession, and the richest jewel of them all, lies beneath the wave with its bright influences, and its glorious and romantic aspirations, quenched for ever."

"You will meet me then, as I request of you, to hear if I have any news for you?"

"I will endeavour so to do. I have all the will; but Heaven knows if I may have the power."

"What mean you, Johanna?"

"I cannot tell what a week's anxiety may do; I know not but a sick bed may be my resting-place, until I exchange it for the tomb. I feel even now my strength fail me, and that I am scarcely able to totter to my home. Farewell, sir! I owe you my best thanks, as well for the trouble you have taken, as for the kindly manner in which you have detailed to me what has passed."

"Remember," said Colonel Jeffery, "that I bid you adieu, with the hope of meeting you again."

It was thus they parted, and Johanna proceeded to her father's house. Who now that had met her and had chanced not to see that sweet face, which could never be forgotten, would have supposed her to be the once gay and sprightly Johanna Oakley? Her steps were sad and solemn, and all the juvenile elasticity of her frame seemed like one prepared for death; and she hoped that she would be able to glide, silently and unobserved, to her own little bed-chamber—that chamber where she had slept since she was a child, and on the little couch, on which she had so often laid down to sleep that holy and calm slumber which such hearts as hers can only know. But she was doomed to be disappointed, for the Rev. Mr. Lupin was still there, and as Mrs. Oakley had placed before that pious individual a great assortment of creature comforts, and among the

rest some mulled wine, which seemed particularly to agree with him, he showed no disposition to depart. It unfortunately happened that this wine, of which the reverend gentleman partook with such a holy relish, was kept in a cellar, and Mrs. Oakley had had occasion twice to go down to procure a fresh supply, and it was on a third journey for the same purpose that she encountered poor Johanna, who had just let herself in at the private door.

"Oh! you have come home, have you?" said Mrs. Oakley; "I wonder where you have been to, gallivanting; but I suppose I may wonder long enough before you will tell me. Go into the parlour, I want to speak to you."

Now poor Johanna had quite forgotten the very existence of Mr. Lupin—so, rather than explain to her mother, which she knew would beget more questions, she wished to go to bed at once, notwithstanding it was an hour before the usual time for so doing. She walked unsuspectingly into the parlour, and as Mr. Lupin was sitting, the slightest movement of his chair closed the door, so she could not escape. Under any other circumstances probably Johanna would have insisted upon leaving the apartment; but a glance at the countenance of the pious individual was quite sufficient to convince her that he had been sacrificing sufficiently to Bacchus to be capable of any amount of effrontery, so that she dreaded passing him, more especially as he swayed his arms about like the sails of a windmill. She thought at least that when her mother returned she would rescue her; but in that hope she was mistaken, and Johanna had no more idea of the extent to which religious fanaticism will carry its victim, than she had of the manners and customs of the inhabitants of the moon. When Mrs. Oakley did return, she had some difficulty in getting into the apartment, inasmuch as Mr. Lupin's chair occupied so large a portion of it; but when she did obtain admission, and Johanna said—

"Mother, I beg of you to protect me against this man, and allow me a free passage from the apartment!"

Mrs. Oakley affected to lift up her hands in amazement, as she said—

"How dare you speak so disrespectfully of a chosen vessel? How dare you, I say, do such a thing—it's enough to drive any one mad to see the young girls now-a-days!"

"Don't snub her—don't snub the virgin," said Mr. Lupin; "she don't know the honour yet that's intended her."

"She don't deserve it," said Mrs. Oakley, "she don't deserve it."

"Never mind, madam—never mind; we—we—we don't get all what we deserve in this world."

"Take a drop of something, Mr. Lupin; you have got the hiccups."

"Yes; I—I rather think I have a little. Isn't it a shame that anybody so intimate with the Lord should have the hiccups? What a lot of lights you have got burning, Mrs. Oakley!"

"A lot of lights, Mr. Lupin! Why, there is only one; but perhaps you allude to the lights of the gospel?"

"No; I—I don't, just at present; damn the lights of the gospel—that is to say, I mean damn all backsliders! But there is a lot of lights, and no mistake, Mrs. Oakley. Give me a drop of something, I'm as dry as dust."

"There is some more mulled wine, Mr. Lupin; but I am surprised that you think there is more than one light."

"It's a miracle madam, in consequence of my great faith. I have faith in s—s—s—six lights, and here they are."

"Do you see that, Johanna?" exclaimed Mrs. Oakley, "are you not convinced now of the holiness of Mr. Lupin?"

"I am convinced of his drunkenness, mother, and entreat of you to let me leave the room at once."

"Tell her of the honour," said Mr. Lupin—"tell her of the honour."

"I don't know, Mr. Lupin; but don't you think it would be better to take some other opportunity?"

"Very well, then, this is the opportunity."

"If it's your pleasure, Mr. Lupin, I will. You must know, then, Johanna, that Mr. Lupin has been kind enough to consent to save my soul, on condition that you marry him, and I am quite sure you can have no reasonable objection; indeed, I think it's the least you can do, whether you have any objection or not."

"Well put," said Mr. Lupin, "excellently well put."

"Mother," said Johanna, "if you are so far gone in superstition, as to believe this miserable drunkard ought to come between you and heaven, I am so lost as not to be able to reject the offer with more scorn and contempt than ever I thought I could have entertained for any human being; but hypocrisy never, to my mind, wears so disgusting a garb as when it attires itself in the outward show of religion."

"This conduct is unbearable," cried Mrs. Oakley; "am I to have one of the Lord's saints under my own roof?"

"If he were ten times a saint, mother, instead of being nothing but a miserable, drunken profligate, it would be better that he should be insulted ten times over, than that you should permit your own child to have passed through the indignity of having to reject such a proposition as that which has just been made. I must claim the protection of my father; he will not suffer one, towards whom he has ever shown an affection, the remembrance of which sinks deep into my heart, to meet with so cruel an insult beneath his roof."

"That's right, my dear," cried Mr. Oakley, at that moment pushing open the parlour-door. "That's right, my dear; you never spoke truer words in all your life."

A faint scream came from Mrs. Oakley, and the Rev. Mr. Lupin immediately seized upon the fresh jug of mulled wine, and finished it at a draught.

"Get behind me, Satan," he said. "Mr. Oakley, you will be damned if you say a word to me."

"It's all the same, then," said Mr. Oakley; "for I'll be damned if I don't. Then, Ben! Ben! come—come in, Ben."

"I'm a coming," said a deep voice, and a man about six feet four inches in height, and nearly two-thirds of that amount in width, entered the parlour. "I'm a coming, Oakley, my boy. Put on your blessed spectacles, and tell me which is the fellow."

"I could have sworn it," said Mrs. Oakley, as she gave the table a knock with her fist,—"I could have sworn when you came in, Oakley—I could have sworn, you little snivelling, shrivelled-up wretch, you'd no more have dared to come into this parlour as never was with those words in your mouth, than you'd have dared to have flown, if you hadn't had your cousin, Big Ben, the beef-eater, from the Tower, with you."

"Take it easy, ma'am," said Ben, as he sat down in a chair, which immediately broke all to pieces with his weight. "Take it easy, ma'am; the devil—what's this?"

"Never mind, Ben," said Mr. Oakley, "it's only a chair; get up."

"A cheer," said Ben; "do you call that a cheer? but never mind—take it easy."

"Why, you big, bullying, idle, swilling and guttling ruffian!"

"Go on, marm, go on."

"You good-for-nothing lump of carrion; a dog wears his own coat, but you wear your master's, you great stupid, overgrown, lurking hound. You parish-brought-up wild beast, go and mind your lions and elephants in the Tower, and don't come into honest people's houses, you cut-throat, bullying, pickpocketing wretch."

"Go on, marm, go on."

This was a kind of dialogue that could not last, and Mrs. Oakley sank down exhausted, and then Ben said—

"I tell you what, marm, I considers you—I looks upon you, marm, as a female wariety of that ere animal as is very useful and sagacious, marm."

There was no mistake in this allusion, and Mrs. Oakley was about to make some reply, when the Rev. Mr. Lupin rose from his chair, saying—

"Bless you all! I think I'll go home."

"Not yet, Mr. Tulip," said Ben; "you had better sit down again—we've got something to say to you."

"Young man, young man, let me pass. If you do not, you will endanger your soul."

"I aint got none," said Ben; "I'm only a beef-eater, and don't pretend to such luxuries."

"The heathen!" exclaimed Mrs. Oakley, "the horrid heathen! but there's one consolation, and that is, that he will be fried in his own fat for everlasting."

"Oh, that's nothing," said Ben; "I think I shall like it, especially if it's any pleasure to you. I suppose that's what you call a Christian consolation. Will you sit down, Mr. Tulip?"

"My name aint Tulip, but Lupin; but if you wish it, I don't mind sitting down, of course."

The beef-eater, with a movement of his foot, kicked away the reverend gentleman's chair, and down he sat with a dab upon the floor.

"My dear," said Mr. Oakley to Johanna, "you go to bed, and then your mother can't say you have anything to do with this affair. I intend to rid my house of this man. Good night, my dear, good night."

Johanna kissed her father on the cheek, and then left the room, not at all sorry that so vigorous a movement was about being made for the suppression of Mr. Lupin. When she was gone, Mrs. Oakley spoke, saying—

"Mr. Lupin, I bid you good night, and, of course, after the rough treatment of these wretches, I can hardly expect you to come again. Good night, Mr. Lupin, good night."

"That's all very well, marm," said Ben, "but before this ere wild beast of a parson goes away, I want to admonish him. He don't seem to be wide awake, and I must rouse him up."

Ben took hold of the reverend gentleman's nose, and gave it such an awful pinch, that when he took his finger and thumb away, it was perfectly blue.

"Murder! oh, murder! my nose! my nose!" shrieked Mr. Lupin, and at that moment Mrs. Oakley, who was afraid to attack Ben, gave her husband such an open-handed whack on the side of his head, that the little man reeled again, and saw a great many more lights than the Rev. Mr. Lupin had done under the influence of the mulled wine.

"Very good," said Ben; "now we are getting into, the thick of it."

Big Ben Compels Mr. Lupin To Do Penance.

Big Ben Compels Mr. Lupin To Do Penance.

With this Ben took from his pocket a coil of rope, one end of which was a noose, and that he dexterously threw over Mrs. Oakley's head.

"Murder!" she shrieked. "Oakley, are you going to see me murdered before your eyes?"

"There is such a singing in my ears," said Mr. Oakley, "that I can't see anything."

"This is the way," said Ben, "we manages the wild beastesses when they shuts their ears to all sorts of argument. Now, marm, if you please, a little this way."

Ben looked about until he found a strong hook in the wall, over which, in consequence of his great height, he was enabled to draw the rope, and then the other end of it he tied securely to the leg of a heavy secretaire that was in the room, so that Mrs. Oakley was well secured.

"Murder!" she cried. "Oakley, are you a man, that you stand by and see me treated in this way by this big brute?"

"I can't see anything," said Mr. Oakley; "there is such a singing in my ears; I told you so before—I can't see anything."

"Now, ma'am, you may just say what you like," said Ben; "it won't matter a bit, any more than the grumbling of a bear with a sore head; and as for you, Mr. Tulip, you'll just get down on your knees, and beg Mr. Oakley's pardon for coming and drinking his tea without his leave, and having the infernal impudence to speak to his daughter."

"Don't do it, Mr. Lupin," cried Mrs. Oakley—"don't do it."

"You hear," said Ben, "what the lady advises. Now, I am quite different; I advise you to do it—for, if you don't, I shan't hurt you, but it strikes me I shall be obliged to fall on you and crush you."

"I think I will," said Mr. Lupin: "the saints were always forced to yield to the Philistines."

"If you call me any names," said Ben, "I'll just wring your neck,"

"Young man, young man, let me exhort you. Allow me to go, and I will put up prayers for your conversion."

"Confound your impudence! what do you suppose the beasts in the Tower would do, if I was converted? Why, that 'ere tiger, we have had lately, would eat his own tail, to think as I had turned out such an ass. Come, I can't waste any more of my precious time; and if you don't get down on your knees directly, we'll see what we can do."

"I must," said Mr. Lupin, "I must, I suppose;" and down he flopped on his knees.

"Very good; now repeat after me.—I am a wolf that stole sheeps' clothing."

"Yes; 'I am a wolf that stole sheeps' clothing'—the Lord forgive me."

"Perhaps he may, and perhaps he mayn't. Now go on—all that's wirtuous is my loathing."

"Oh dear, yes—'all that's wirtuous is my loathing.'"

"Mr. Oakley, I have offended."

"Yes; I am a miserable sinner, Mr. Oakley, I have offended."

"And asks his pardon, on my bended—"

"Oh dear, yes—I asks his pardon on my bended—The Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!"

"Knees—I won't do so no more."

"Yes,—knees, I won't do so no more."

"As sure as I lies on this floor."

"Yes,—as sure as I lies on this floor.—Death and the devil, you've killed me!"

Ben took hold of the reverend gentleman by the back of the neck, and pressed his head down upon the floor, until his nose, which had before been such a sufferer, was nearly completely flattened with his face.

"Now you may go;" said Ben.

Mr. Lupin scrambled to his feet; but Ben followed him into the passage, and did not yet let him go, until he had accelerated his movements by two hearty kicks. And then the victorious beef-eater returned to the parlour.

"Why, Ben," said Mr. Oakley, "you are quite a poet."

"I believe you, Oakley, my boy," said Ben, "and now let us be off, and have a pint round the corner."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Oakley, "and leave me here, you wretches?"

"Yes," said Ben, "unless you promises never to be a female variety of a useful animal again, and begs pardon of Mr. Oakley, for giving him all this trouble; as for me, I'll let you off cheap, you shall only give me a kiss, and say you loves me."

"If I do, may I be—"

"Damned, you mean."

"No, I don't; choked I was going to say."

"Then you may be choked, for you have nothing to do but to let your legs go from under you, and you will be hung as comfortable as possible—come along, Oakley."

"Mr. Oakley—stop, stop—don't leave me here. I am sorry."

"That's enough," said Mr. Oakley; "and now, my dear, bear in mind one thing from me—I intend from this time forward to be master in my own house. If you and I are to live together, we must do so on very different terms to what we have been living, and if you won't make yourself agreeable, Lawyer Hutchins tells me that I can turn you out and give you a maintenance; and, in that case, I'll have my sister Rachel home to mind house for me; so now you know my determination, and what you have to expect. If you wish to begin, well, do so at once, by getting something nice and tasty for Ben's supper."

Mrs. Oakley made the required promise, and being released, she set about preparations for the supper in real earnest, but whether was really subdued or not we shall, in due time, see.

CHAPTER X.
THE COLONEL AND HIS FRIEND.

Colonel Jeffery was not at all satisfied with the state of affairs, as regarded the disappointment of Mr. Thornhill, for whom he entertained a sincere regard, both on account of the private estimation in which he held him, and on account of actual services rendered to Thornhill by him. Not to detain Johanna Oakley in the Temple-gardens, he had stopped his narrative, completely at the point when what concerned her had ceased, and had said nothing of much danger which the ship "Neptune" and its crew and passengers had gone through, after Mr. Thornhill had been taken on board with his dog. The fact is, the storm which he had mentioned was only the first of a series of gales of wind that buffeted the ship about for some weeks, doing it much damage, and enforcing almost the necessity of putting in somewhere for repairs. But a glance at the map will be sufficient to show that, situated as the "Neptune" was, the nearest port at which they could at all expect assistance, was the British Colony, at the Cape of Good Hope; but such was the contrary nature of the winds and waves, that just upon the evening of a tempestuous day, they found themselves bearing down close in shore, on the eastern coast of Madagascar. There was much apprehension that the vessel would strike on a rocky shore; but the water was deep, and the vessel rode well; there was a squall, and they let go both anchors to secure the vessel, as they were so close in shore, lest they should be driven in and stranded. It was fortunate they had so secured themselves, for the gale while it lasted blew half a hurricane, and the ship lost some of her mast, and some other trifling damage, which,

however, entailed upon them the necessity of remaining there a few days, to cut timber to repair their masts, and to obtain a few supplies. There is but little to interest a general reader in the description of a gale. Order after order was given until the masts and spars went one by one, and then the orders for clearing the wreck were given. There was much work to be done, and but little pleasure in doing it, for it was wet and miserable while it lasted, and there was the danger of being driven upon a lee shore, and knocked to pieces upon the rocks. This danger was averted, and they anchored safe at a very short distance from the shore in comparative security.

"We are safe now," remarked the captain, as he gave his second in command charge of the deck, and approached Mr. Thornhill and Colonel Jeffery.

"I am happy it is so," replied Jeffery.

"Well, captain," said Mr. Thornhill, "I am glad we have done with being knocked about; we are anchored, and the water here appears smooth enough."

"It is so, and I dare say it will remain so; it is a beautiful basin of water—deep and good anchorage; but you see it is not large enough to make a fine harbour."

"True; but it is rocky."

"It is, and that may make it sometimes dangerous, though I don't know that it would be so in some gales. The sea may beat in at the opening, which is deep enough for anything to enter—even Noah's ark would enter easily enough."

"What will you do now?"

"Stay here a day or so, and send boats ashore to cut some pine trees, to refit the ship with masts."

"You have no staves, then?"

"Not enough for such a purpose; and we never do go out stored with such things."

"You obtain them wherever you may go to."

"Yes, any part of the world will furnish them in some shape or other."

"When you send ashore, will you permit me to accompany the boat's crew?" said Jeffery.

"Certainly; but the natives of this country are violent and intractable, and should you get into any row with them, there is every probability of your being captured, or some bodily injury done you."

"But I will take care to avoid all that."

"Very well, colonel, you shall be welcome to go."

"I must beg the same permission," said Mr. Thornhill, "for I should much like to see the country, as well as to have some acquaintance with the natives themselves."

"By no means trust yourself alone with them," said the captain, "for if you live you will have cause to repent it—depend upon what I say."

"I will," said Thornhill; "I will go nowhere but where the boat's company goes."

"You will be safe then."

"But do you apprehend any hostile attack from the natives?" inquired Colonel Jeffery.

"No, I do not expect it; but such things have happened before to-day, and I have seen them when least expected, though I have been on this coast before, and yet I never met with any ill-treatment; but there have been many who have touched on this coast, who have had a brush with the natives and come off second best, the natives generally retiring when the ship's company muster strong in number, and calling out the chiefs, who come down in great force, that we may not conquer them."

The next morning the boats were ordered out to go ashore with crews, prepared for cutting timber, and obtaining such staves as the ship was in want of. With these boats old Thornhill and Colonel Jeffery went both of them on board, and after a short ride they reached the shore of Madagascar. It was a beautiful country, and one in which vegetables appear luxuriant and abundant, and the party in search of timber for shipbuilding purposes soon came to some lordly monarchs of the forest, which would have made vessels of themselves. But this was not what was wanted; but where the trees grew thicker and taller, they began to cut some tall pine-trees down. This was the wood they most desired; in fact, it was exactly what they wanted; but they hardly got through a few such trees, when the natives came down upon them, apparently to reconnoitre. At first they were quiet and tractable enough, but anxious to see and inspect everything, being very inquisitive and curious. However, that was easily borne, but at length they became more numerous, and began to pilfer all they could lay their hands upon, which, of course brought resentment, and, after some time, a blow or two was exchanged. Colonel Jeffery was forward, and endeavouring to prevent some violence being offered to one of the wood-cutters; in fact, he was interposing himself between the two contending parties, and tried to restore order and peace, but several armed natives rushed suddenly upon him, secured him, and were hurrying him away to death before any one could stir in his behalf. His doom appeared certain, for, had they succeeded, they would have cruelly and brutally murdered him. However, just at that moment aid was at hand, and Mr. Thornhill, seeing how matters stood, seized a musket from one of the sailors, and rushed after the natives who had Colonel Jeffery. There were three of them, two others had gone on to apprise, it was presumed, the chiefs. When Mr. Thornhill arrived, they had thrown a blanket over the head of Jeffery; but Mr. Thornhill in an instant hurled one down with a blow from the butt-end of his musket, and the second met the same fate, as he turned to see what was the matter. The third, seeing the colonel free, and the musket levelled at his own head, immediately ran after the other two, to avoid any serious consequences to himself.

Thornhill Rescues Colonel Jeffery From The Savages.

Thornhill Rescues Colonel Jeffery From The Savages.

"Thornhill, you have saved my life," said Colonel Jeffery, excitedly.

"Come away, don't stop here—to the ship!—to the ship!" And as he spoke, they hurried after the crew and they succeeded in reaching the boats and the ship in safety; congratulating themselves not a little upon so lucky an escape from a people quite warlike enough to do mischief, but not civilized enough to distinguish when to do it.

When men are far away from home, and in foreign lands with the skies of other climes above them, their hearts become more closely knit together in those ties of brotherhood which certainly ought to actuate the whole universe, but which as certainly do not do so, except in very rare instances. One of these instances, however, would be found in the conduct of Colonel Jeffery and Mr. Thornhill, even under any circumstances, for they were most emphatically what might be termed kindred spirits; but when we come to unite to that fact the remarkable manner in which they had been thrown together, and the mutual services that they had it in their power to render to each other, we should not be surprised at the almost romantic friendship that arose between them. It was then that Thornhill made the colonel's breast the depository of all his thoughts and all his wishes, and a freedom of intercourse and a community of feeling ensued between them, which when it does take place between persons of really congenial dispositions, produces the most delightful results of human companionship. No one who has not endured the tedium of a sea voyage, can at all be aware of what a pleasant thing it is to have some one on board, in the rich stores of whose intellect and fancy one can find a never-ending amusement. The winds might now whistle through the cordage, and the waves toss the great ship on their foaming crests, still Thornhill and Jeffery were together, finding in the midst of danger, solace in each other's society, and each animating the other to the performance of deeds of daring that

astonished the crew. The whole voyage was one of the greatest peril, and some of the oldest seamen on board did not scruple, during the continuance of their night watches to intimate to their companions that the ship, in their opinion, would never reach England, and that she would founder somewhere along the long stretch of the African coast. The captain, of course, made every possible exertion to put a stop to such prophetic sayings, but when once they commenced, in a short time there is no such thing as completely eradicating them; and they, of course, produced the most injurious effect, paralysing the exertions of the crew in times of danger, and making them believe that they are in a doomed ship, and consequently all they can do is useless. Sailors are extremely superstitious on such matters, and there cannot be any reasonable doubt, but that some of the disasters that befel the Neptune on her homeward voyage from India, may be attributed to this feeling of fatality getting hold of the seamen, and inducing them to think that, let them try what they might, they could not save the ship. It happened that after they had rounded the Cape, a dense fog came on, such as had not been known on that coast for many a year; although the western shore of Africa at some seasons of the year is rather subject to such a species of vaporous exhalation. Every object was wrapped in the most profound gloom, and yet there was a strong eddy or current of the ocean, flowing parallel with the land, and as the captain hoped, rather off than on the shore. Still there was a suspicion that the ship was making lee-way, which must eventually bring it on shore, by some of the low promontories that were by the maps indicated to be upon the coast. In consequence of this fear, the greatest anxiety prevailed on board the vessel, and lights were left burning on all parts of the deck, while two men were continually engaged making soundings. It was about half-an-hour after midnight, as the chronometer indicated a storm, that suddenly the men, who were on watch on the deck, raised a loud cry of dismay. They had suddenly seen close on to the larboard bow, lights which must belong to some vessel that, like the Neptune, was encompassed in the fog, and a collision was quite inevitable, for neither ship had time to put about. The only doubt, which was a fearful and an

agonising one to have solved, was whether the stronger vessel was of sufficient bulk and power to run them down, or they it; and that fearful question was one which a few moments must settle. In fact, almost before the echo of that cry of horror which had come from the men, had died away, the vessels met. There was a hideous crash—one shriek of dismay and horror, and then all was still. The Neptune, with considerable damage, and some of her bulwarks stove in, sailed on; but the other ship went, with a surging sound, to the bottom of the sea. Alas! nothing could be done. The fog was so dense, that coupled, too, as it was with the darkness of the night, there could be no hope of rescuing one of the ill-fated crew of the ship; and the officers and seamen of the Neptune, although they shouted for some time, and then listened, to hear if any survivors of the ship that had been run down were swimming, no answer came to them; and when in about six hours more, they sailed out of the fog into a clear sunshine, where there was not so much as a cloud to be seen, they looked at each other like men newly awakened from some strange and fearful dream. They never discovered the name of the ship they had run down, and the whole affair remained a profound mystery. When the Neptune reached the port of London, the affair was repeated, and every exertion was made to obtain some information concerning the ill-fated ship that had met with so fearful a doom. Such were the circumstances which awakened all the liveliest feelings of gratitude on the part of Colonel Jeffery towards Mr. Thornhill; and hence was it that he considered it a sacred duty, now that he was in London, and had the necessary leisure to do so, to leave no stone unturned to discover what had become of him. After deep and anxious thought, and feeling convinced that there was some mystery which it was beyond his power to discover, he resolved upon asking the opinion of a friend, likewise in the army, a Captain Rathbone, concerning the whole of the facts. This gentleman, and a gentleman he was in the fullest acceptance of the term, was in London; in fact, he had retired from active service, and inhabited a small but pleasant house in the outskirts of the metropolis. It was one of those old-fashioned cottage residences, with all sorts of odd places and corners about it, and a thriving garden

full of fine old wood, such as are rather rare near to London, and which are daily becoming more rare, in consequence of the value of land immediately contiguous to the metropolis not permitting large pieces to remain attached to small residences. Captain Rathbone had an amiable family about him, such as he was and might well be proud of, and was living in as great a state of domestic felicity as this world could very well afford him. It was to this gentleman, then, that Colonel Jeffery resolved upon going to lay all the circumstances before him concerning the probable fate of poor Thornhill. This distance was not so great but that he could walk it conveniently, and he did so, arriving, towards the dusk of the evening, on the following day to that which had witnessed his deeply interesting interview with Johanna Oakley in the Temple-gardens. There is nothing on earth so delightfully refreshing, after a dusty and rather a long country walk, as to suddenly enter a well-kept and extremely verdant garden; and this was the case especially to the feelings of Colonel Jeffery, when he arrived at Lime Tree Lodge, the residence of Captain Rathbone. He met him with a most cordial and frank welcome—a welcome which he expected, but which was none the less delightful on that account; and, after sitting awhile with the family in the house, he and the captain strolled into the garden, and then Colonel Jeffery commenced his revelation. The captain, with very few interruptions, heard him to an end; and, when he concluded by saying—

"And now I am come to ask your advice upon all these matters;" the captain immediately replied, in his warm, off-hand manner—

"I am afraid you won't find my advice of much importance; but I offer you my active co-operation in anything you think ought to be done or can be done in this affair, which, I assure you deeply interests me, and gives me the greatest possible impulse to exertion. You have but to command me in the matter, and I am completely at your disposal."

"I was quite certain you would say as much. But, notwithstanding the manner in which you shrink from giving an opinion, I am anxious to know what you really think with regard to what are, you will allow, most extraordinary circumstances."

"The most natural thing in the world," said Captain Rathbone, "at the first flush of the affair, seemed to be, that we ought to look for your friend Thornhill at the point where he disappeared."

"At the barber's in Fleet-street?"

"Precisely. Did he leave the barber, or did he not?"

"Sweeney Todd says that he left him, and proceeded down the street towards the city, in pursuance of a direction he had given him to Mr. Oakley, the spectacle-maker, and that he saw him get into some sort of disturbance at the end of the market; but to put against that, we have the fact of the dog remaining by the barber's door, and his refusing to leave it on any amount of solicitation. Now the very fact that a dog could act in such a way proclaims an amount of sagacity that seems to tell loudly against the presumption that such a creature could make any mistake."

"It does. What say you, now, to go into town to-morrow morning, and making a call at the barber's, without proclaiming we have any special errand, except to be shaved and dressed? Do you think he would know you again?"

"Scarcely, in plain clothes. I was in my undress uniform when I called with the captain of the Neptune, so that his impression of me must be of decidedly a military character; and the probability is, that he would not know me at all in the clothes of a civilian. I like the idea of giving a call at the barber's."

"Do you think your friend Thornhill was a man likely to talk about the valuable pearls he had in his possession?"

"Certainly not."

"I merely ask you, because they might have offered a great temptation; and if he has experienced any foul play at the hands of the barber, the idea of becoming possessed of such a valuable treasure might have been the inducement."

"I do not think it probable, but it has struck me that, if we obtain any information whatever of Thornhill, it will be in consequence of these very pearls. They are of great value, and not likely to be overlooked; and yet, unless a customer be found for them, they are of no value at all; and nobody buys jewels of that character but from the personal vanity of making, of course, some public display of them."

"That is true; and so, from hand to hand, we might trace those pearls until we come to the individual who must have had them from Thornhill himself, and who might be forced to account most strictly for the manner in which they came into his possession."

After some more desultory conversation upon the subject, it was agreed that Colonel Jeffery should take a bed for the night at Lime Tree Lodge, and that, in the morning, they should both start for London, and, disguising themselves as respectable citizens, make some attempts, by talking about jewels and precious stones, to draw out the barber into a confession that he had something of the sort to dispose of; and, moreover, they fully intended to take away the dog, with the care of which Captain Rathbone charged himself. We may pass over the pleasant, social evening which the colonel passed with the amiable family of the Rathbones, and, skipping likewise a conversation of some strange and confused dreams which Jeffery had during the night concerning his friend Thornhill, we will presume that both the colonel and the captain have breakfasted, and that they have proceeded to London and are at the shop of a clothier in the neighbourhood of the Strand, in order to procure coats, wigs, and hats, that should disguise them for their visit to Sweeney Todd. Then, arm in arm, they walked towards Fleet-street, and soon arrived opposite the little shop within which there appears to be so much mystery.

"The dog, you perceive, is not here," said the colonel; "I had my suspicions, however, when I passed with Johanna Oakley that something was amiss with him, and I have no doubt but that the rascally barber has fairly compassed his destruction."

"If the barber be innocent," said Captain Rathbone, "you must admit that it would be one of the most confoundedly annoying things in the world to have a dog continually at his door assuming such an aspect of accusation, and in that case I can scarcely wonder at his putting the creature out of the way."

"No, presuming upon his innocence, certainly; but we will say nothing about all that, and remember we must come in as perfect strangers, knowing nothing of the affair of the dog, and presuming nothing about the disappearance of any one in this locality."

"Agreed, come on; if he should see us through the window, hanging about at all or hesitating, his suspicions will be at once awakened, and we shall do no good."

They both entered the shop and found Sweeney Todd wearing an extraordinary singular appearance, for there was a black patch over one of his eyes, which was kept in its place by a green riband that went round his head, so that he looked more fierce and diabolical than ever; and having shaved off a small whisker that he used to wear, his countenance, although to the full as hideous as ever, certainly had a different character of ugliness to that which had before characterised it, and attracted the attention of the colonel. That gentleman would hardly have known him again any where but in his own shop, and when we come to consider Sweeney Todd's adventures of the preceding evening, we shall feel not surprised that he saw the necessity of endeavouring to make as much change in his appearance as possible, for fear he should come across any of the parties who had chased him, and who, for all he knew to the contrary, might, quite unsuspectingly, drop in to be shaved in the course of the morning, perhaps to retail at that acknowledged mart for all sorts of gossip—a barber's shop—some of the very incidents which he has so well qualified himself to relate.

"Shaved and dressed, gentlemen?" said Sweeney Todd, as his customers made their appearance.

"Shaved only." said Captain Rathbone, who had agreed to be principal spokesman, in case Sweeney Todd should have any remembrance of the colonel's voice, and so suspect him.

"Pray be seated," said Sweeney Todd to Colonel Jeffery. "I'll soon polish off your friend, sir, and then I'll begin upon you. Would you like to see the morning paper, sir? it's at your service. I was just looking myself, sir, at a most mysterious circumstance, if it's true, but you can't believe, you know sir, all that is put in newspapers."

"Thank you—thank you," said the colonel.

Captain Rathbone sat down to be shaved, for he had purposely omitted that operation at home, in order that it should not appear a mere excuse to get into Sweeney Todd's shop.

"Why, sir," continued Sweeney Todd, "as I was saying, it is a most remarkable circumstance."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir, an old gentleman of the name of Fidler had been to receive a sum of money at the west-end of the town, and has never been heard of since; that was yesterday, sir, and here is a description of him in the papers of to-day. 'A snuff-coloured coat, and velvet smalls—black velvet, I should have said—silk stockings, and silver shoe-buckles, and a gold-headed cane, with W. D. F. upon it, meaning "William Dumpledown Fidler"—a most mysterious affair, gentlemen.'"

A sort of groan came from the corner of the shop, and, on the impulse of the moment, Colonel Jeffery sprang to his feet, exclaiming—

"What's that—what's that?"

"Oh, it's only my apprentice, Tobias Ragg. He has got a pain in his stomach from eating too many of Lovett's pork pies. Aint that it, Tobias, my bud?"

"Yes, sir," said Tobias with another groan.

"Oh, indeed," said the colonel, "it ought to make him more careful for the future."

"It's to be hoped it will, sir; Tobias, do you hear what this gentleman says: it ought to make you more careful in future. I am too indulgent to you, that's the fact. Now, sir, I believe you are as clean shaved as ever you were in your life."

"Why, yes," said Captain Rathbone, "I think that will do very well; and now, Mr. Green"—addressing the colonel by that assumed named—"and now, Mr. Green, be quick, or we shall be too late for the duke, and so lose the sale of some of our jewels."

"We shall indeed," said the colonel, "if we don't mind. We sat too long over our breakfast at the inn, and his grace is too rich and too good a customer to lose—he don't mind what price he gives for things that take his fancy, or the fancy of his duchess."

"Jewel merchants, gentlemen, I presume," said Sweeney Todd.

"Yes, we have been in that line for some time; and by one of us trading in one direction, and the other in another, we manage extremely well, because we exchange what suits our different customers, and keep up two distinct connexions."

"A very good plan," said Sweeney Todd. "I'll be as quick as I can with you, sir. Dealing in jewels is better than shaving."

"I dare say it is."

"Of course, it is, sir; here have I been slaving for some years in this shop, and not done much good—that is to say, when I talk of not having done much good, I admit I have made enough to retire upon quietly and comfortably, and I mean to do so very shortly. There you are, sir, shaved with celerity you seldom meet with, and as clean as possible, for the small charge of one penny. Thank you, gentlemen—there's your change; good morning."

They had no resource but to leave the shop; and when they had gone Sweeney Todd, as he stropped the razor he had been using upon his hand, gave a most diabolical grin, muttering—

"Clever—very ingenious—but it won't do. Oh dear, no, not at all! I am not so easily taken in—diamond merchants, ah! ah! and no objection, of course, to deal in pearls—a good jest that, truly, a capital jest. If I had been accustomed to be so easily defeated, I had not now been here a living man. Tobias, Tobias, I say."

"Yes, sir," said the lad, dejectedly.

"Have you forgotten your mother's danger in case you breathe a syllable of anything that has occurred here, or that you think has occurred here, or so much as dream of?"

"No," said the boy, "indeed I have not. I never can forget it, if I were to live a hundred years."

"That's well, prudent, excellent, Tobias. Go out now, and if those two persons who were here last, waylay you in the street, let them say what they will, and do you reply to them as shortly as possible; but be sure you come back to me quickly and report what they do say. They turned to the left, towards the city—now be off with you."

"It's of no use," said Colonel Jeffery to the captain; "the barber is either too cunning for me, or he is really innocent of all participation in the disappearance of Thornhill."

"And yet there are suspicious circumstances. I watched his countenance when the subject of jewels was mentioned, and I saw a sudden change come over it; it was but momentary, but still it gave me a suspicion that he knew something which caution alone kept within the recesses of his breast. The conduct of the boy, too, was strange; and then again, if he has the string of pearls, their value would give him all the power to do what he says he is about to do—viz., to retire from business with an independence."

"Hush! There, did you see that lad?"

"Yes; why it's the barber's boy."

"It is the same lad he called Tobias—shall we speak to him?"

"Let's make a bolder push, and offer him an ample reward for any information he may give us."

"Agreed, agreed."

They both walked up to Tobias, who was listlessly walking along the streets, and when they reached him, they were both struck with the appearance of care and sadness that was upon the boy's face. He looked perfectly haggard and careworn—an expression sad to see upon the face of one so young; and, when the colonel accosted him in a kindly tone, he seemed so unnerved that tears immediately darted to his eyes, although at the same time he shrank back as if alarmed.

"My lad," said the colonel, "you reside, I think, with Sweeney Todd, the barber. Is he not a kind master to you, that you seem so unhappy?"

"No, no—that is, I mean yes, I have nothing to tell. Let me pass on."

"What is the meaning of this confusion?"

"Nothing, nothing."

"I say, my lad, here is a guinea for you, if you will tell us what became of the man of a sea-faring appearance, who came with a dog to your master's house, some days since, to be shaved."

"I cannot tell you," said the boy, "I cannot tell you what I do not know."

"But, you have some idea, probably. Come, we will make it worth your while, and thereby protect you from Sweeney Todd. We have the power to do so, and all the inclination; but you must be quite explicit with us, and tell us frankly what you think, and what you know concerning the man in whose fate we are interested."

"I know nothing, I think nothing," said Tobias. "Let me go, I have nothing to say, except that he was shaved, and went away."

"But how came he to leave his dog behind him?"

"I cannot tell. I know nothing."

"It is evident that you do know something, but hesitate either from fear or some other motive to tell it; as you are inaccessible to fair means, we must resort to others, and you shall at once come before a magistrate, who will force you to speak out."

"Do with me what you will," said Tobias, "I cannot help it. I have nothing to say to you, nothing whatever. Oh, my poor mother, if it were not for you—"

"What then?"

"Nothing! nothing! nothing!"

It was but a threat of the colonel to take the boy before a magistrate, for he had really no grounds for so doing; and if the boy chose to keep a secret, if he had one, not all the magistrates in the world could force words from his lips that he felt not inclined to utter; and so, after one more effort, they felt that they must leave him.

"Boy," said the colonel, "you are young, and cannot well judge of the consequences of particular lines of conduct; you ought to weigh well what you are about, and hesitate long before you determine keeping dangerous secrets: we can convince you that we have the power of completely protecting you from all that Sweeney Todd could possibly attempt. Think again, for this is an opportunity of saving yourself perhaps from much future misery, that may never arise again."

"I have nothing to say," said the boy, "I have nothing to say."

He uttered these words with such an agonized expression of countenance, that they were both convinced he had something to say, and that, too, of the first importance—a something which would be valuable to them in the way of information, extremely valuable probably, and yet which they felt the utter impossibility of wringing from him. They were compelled to leave him, and likewise with the additional mortification, that, far from making any advance in the matter, they had

placed themselves and their cause in a much worse position, in so far as they had awakened all Sweeney Todd's suspicions if he were guilty, and yet advanced not one step in the transaction. And then, to make the matter all the more perplexing, there was still the possibility that they might be altogether upon a wrong scent, and that the barber of Fleet-street had no more to do with the disappearance of Mr. Thornhill than they had themselves.

CHAPTER XI.
THE STRANGER AT LOVETT'S.

Towards the dusk of the evening of that day, after the last batch of pies at Lovett's had been disposed of, there walked into the shop a man most miserably clad, and who stood for a few moments staring with weakness and hunger at the counter before he spoke. Mrs. Lovett was there, but she had no smile for him, and instead of its usual bland expression, her countenance wore an aspect of anger, as she forestalled what the man had to say, by exclaiming—

"Go away, we never give anything to beggars."

There came a flush of colour for the moment across the features of the stranger, and then he replied—

"Mistress Lovett, I do not come to ask alms of you, but to know if you can recommend me to any employment?"

"Recommend you! recommend a ragged wretch like you?"

"I am a ragged wretch, and, moreover, quite destitute. In better times I have sat at your counter, and paid cheerfully for what I wanted, and then one of your softest smiles has ever been at my disposal. I do not say this as a reproach to you, because the cause of your smile was well known to be a self-interested one, and when that cause had passed away, I can no longer expect it; but I am so situated, that I am willing to do anything for a mere subsistence."

"Oh, yes, and then when you get into a better case again, I have no doubt but you have quite sufficient insolence to make you unbearable; besides, what employment can we have but pie-making, and we have a man already who suits us very well with the exception that he, as you would do if we were to exchange him, has grown insolent, and fancies himself master of the place."

The Stranger At Mrs. Lovett's pie Shop.

The Stranger At Mrs. Lovett's Pie Shop.

"Well, well," said the stranger, "of course, there is always sufficient argument against the poor and destitute to keep them so. If you will assert that my conduct will be the nature you describe, it is quite impossible for me to prove the contrary."

He turned and was about to leave the shop, but Mrs. Lovett called after him saying—

"Come in again in two hours."

He paused a moment or two, and then, turning his emaciated countenance upon her, said—

"I will if my strength permit me—water from the pumps in the street is but a poor thing for a man to subsist upon for twenty-four hours."

"You may take one pie."

The half-famished, miserable-looking man seized upon a pie, and devoured it in an instant.

"My name," he said, "is Jarvis Williams; I'll be here, never fear, Mrs. Lovett, in two hours; and, notwithstanding all you have said, you shall find no change in my behaviour because I may be well kept and better clothed; but if I should feel dissatisfied with my situation, I will leave it, and no harm done."

So saying, he walked from the shop, and when he was gone, a strange expression came across the countenance of Mrs. Lovett, and she said in a low tone to herself—

"He might suit for a few months, like the rest, and it is clear that we must get rid of the one we have; I must think of it."

There is a cellar of vast extent, and of dim and sepulchral aspect—some rough red tiles are laid upon the floor, and pieces of flint and large jagged stones have been hammered into the earthen walls to strengthen them; while here and there rough huge pillars made by beams of timber rise perpendicularly from the floor, and prop large flat pieces of wood against the ceiling, to support it. Here and there gleaming lights seem to be peeping out from furnaces, and there is a strange hissing, simmering sound going on, while the whole air is impregnated with a rich and savoury vapour. This is Lovett's pie manufactory beneath the pavement of Bell-yard and at this time a night-batch of some thousands is being made for the purpose of being sent by carts the first thing in the morning all over the suburbs of London. By the earliest dawn of day a crowd of itinerant hawkers of pies would make their appearance, carrying off a large quantity to regular customers who had them daily, and no more thought of being without them, than of forbidding the milkman or the baker to call at their residences. It will be seen and understood, therefore, that the retail part of Mrs. Lovett's business, which took place principally between the hours of twelve and one, was by no means the most important or profitable portion of a concern which was really of immense magnitude, and which brought in a large yearly income. To stand in the cellar when this immense manufacture of what, at first sight, would appear such a trivial article was carried on, and to look about as far as the eye could reach, was by no means to have a sufficient idea of the extent of the place; for there were as many doors in different directions and singular low-arched entrances to different vaults, which all appeared as black as midnight, that one might almost suppose the inhabitants of all the surrounding neighbourhood had, by common

consent given up their cellars to Lovett's pie factory. There is but one miserable light, except the occasional fitful glare that comes from the ovens where the pies are stewing, hissing, and spluttering in their own luscious gravy. There is but one man, too, throughout all the place, and he is sitting on a low three-legged stool in one corner, with his head resting upon his hands, and gently rocking to and fro, as he utters scarcely audible moans. He is but lightly clad; in fact, he seems to have but little on him except a shirt and a pair of loose canvas trousers. The sleeves of the former are turned up beyond his elbows, and on his head he has a white night-cap. It seems astonishing that such a man, even with the assistance of Mrs. Lovett, could make so many pies as are required in a day; but then, system does wonders, and in those cellars there are various mechanical contrivances for kneading the dough, chopping up the meat, &c., which greatly reduced the labour. But what a miserable object is that man—what a sad and soul-striken wretch he looks! His face is pale and haggard, his eyes deeply sunken; and, as he removes his hands from before his visage, and looks about him, a more perfect picture of horror could not have been found.

"I must leave to-night," he said, in coarse accents—"I must leave to-night. I know too much—my brain is full of horrors. I have not slept now for five nights, nor dare I eat anything but the raw flour. I will leave to-night if they do not watch me too closely. Oh! if I could but get into the streets—if I could but once again breathe the fresh air! Hush! what's that? I thought I heard a noise."

He rose, and stood trembling and listening; but all was still, save the simmering and hissing of the pies, and then he resumed his seat with a deep sigh.

"All the doors fastened upon me," he said, "what can it mean? It's very horrible, and my heart dies within me. Six weeks only have I been here—only six weeks. I was starving before I came. Alas, alas! how much better to have starved! I should have been dead before now, and spared all this agony."

"Skinner!" cried a voice, and it was a female one—"Skinner, how long will the ovens be?"

"A quarter of an hour—a quarter of an hour, Mrs. Lovett. God help me!"

"What is that you say?"

"I said, God help me!—surely a man may say that without offence."

A door slammed shut, and the miserable man was alone again.

"How strangely," he said, "on this night my thoughts go back to early days, and to what I once was. The pleasant scenes of my youth recur to me. I see again the ivy-mantled porch, and the pleasant village green. I hear again the merry ringing laughter of my playmates, and there, in my mind's eye, appears to me the bubbling stream, and the ancient mill, the old mansion-house, with its tall turrets, and its air of silent grandeur. I hear the music of the birds, and the winds making rough melody among the trees. 'Tis very strange that all those sights and sounds should come back to me at such a time as this, as if just to remind me what a wretch I am."

He was silent for a few moments, during which he trembled with emotion; then he spoke again, saying—

"Thus the forms of those whom I once knew, and many of whom have gone already to the silent tomb, appear to come thronging round me. They bend their eyes momentarily upon me, and, with settled expressions, show acutely the sympathy they feel for me. I see her, too, who first, in my bosom, lit up the flame of soft affection. I see her gliding past me like the dim vision of a dream, indistinct, but beautiful; no more than a shadow—and yet to me most palpable. What am I now—what am I now?"

He resumed his former position, with his head resting upon his hands; he rocked himself slowly to and fro, uttering those moans of a tortured spirit, which we have before noticed. But see, one of the small arch doors open, in the gloom of those vaults, and a man, in a stooping posture, creeps in—a half-mask is upon his face, and he wears a cloak; but both

his hands are at liberty. In one of them he carries a double-headed hammer, with a powerful handle, of about ten inches in length. He has probably come out of a darker place than the one into which he now so cautiously creeps, for he shades the light from his eyes, as if it were suddenly rather too much for him, and then he looks cautiously round the vault, until he sees the crouched-up figure of the man whose duty it is to attend the ovens. From that moment he looks at nothing else; but advances towards him, steadily and cautiously. It is evident that great secresy is his object, for he is walking on his stocking soles only; and it is impossible to hear the slightest sounds of his foot-steps. Nearer and nearer he comes, so slowly, and yet so surely, towards him, who still keeps up the low moaning sound, indicative of mental anquish. Now he is close to him, and he bends over him for a moment, with a look of fiendish malice. It is a look which, despite his mask, glances full from his eyes, and then grasping the hammer tightly, in both hands, he raises it slowly above his head, and gives it a swinging motion through the air. There is no knowing what induced the man that was crouching on the stool to rise at that moment; but he did so, and paced about with great quickness. A sudden shriek burst from his lips, as he beheld so terrific an apparition before him; but, before he could repeat the word, the hammer descended, crushing into his skull, and he fell lifeless, without a moan.

"And so, Mr. Jarvis Williams, you have kept your word," said Mrs. Lovett to the emaciated, care-worn stranger, who had solicited employment of her, "and so, Jarvis Williams, you have kept your word, and come for employment?"

"I have, madam, and hope that you can give it to me: I frankly tell you that I would seek for something better, and more congenial to my disposition, if I could; but who would employ one presenting such a wretched appearance as I do? You see that I am all in rags, and I have told you that I have been half starved, and therefore it is only some common and ordinary employment that I can hope to get, and that made me come to you."

"Well, I don't see why we should not make a trial of you, at all events, so if you like to go down into the bakehouse, I will follow you, and show you what you have to do. You remember that you have to live entirely upon the pies, unless you like to purchase for yourself anything else, which you may do if you can get the money. We give none, and you must likewise agree never to leave the bakehouse."

"Never to leave it?"

"Never, unless you leave it for good, and for all; if upon those conditions you choose to accept the situation, you may, and if not, you can go about your business at once, and leave it alone."

"Alas, madam, I have no resource; but you spoke of having a man already."

"Yes; but he has gone to his friends; he has gone to some of his very oldest friends, who will be quite glad to see him, so now say the word:—are you willing or are you not, to take the situation?"

"My poverty and my destitution consent, if my will be averse, Mrs. Lovett; but, of course, I quite understand that I leave when I please."

"Oh, of course, we never think of keeping anybody many hours after they begin to feel uncomfortable. If you be ready, follow me."

"I am quite ready, and thankful for a shelter. All the brightest visions of my early life have long since faded away, and it matters little or indeed nothing what now becomes of me; I will follow you, madam, freely, upon the conditions you have mentioned."

Mrs. Lovett lifted up a portion of the counter which permitted him to pass behind it, and then he followed her into a small room, which was at the back of the shop. She then took a key from her pocket, and opened an old door which was in the wainscoting, and immediately behind which was a flight of stairs. These she descended, and Jarvis Williams followed her, to a considerable depth, after which she took an iron bar from behind another door, and flung it open, showing her new assistant the interior of that vault which we have already very briefly described.

"These," she said, "are the ovens, and I will proceed to show you how you can manufacture the pies, feed the furnaces, and make yourself generally useful. Flour will be always let down through a trap-door from the upper shop, as well as everything required for making the pies but the meat, and that you will always find ranged upon shelves either in lumps or steaks, in a small room through this door, but it is only at particular times you will find the door open; and whenever you do so, you had better always take out what meat you think you will require for the next batch."

"I understand all that, madam," said Williams, "but how does it get there?"

"That's no business of yours; so long as you are supplied with it, that is sufficient for you; and now I will go through the process of making one pie, so that you may know how to proceed, and you will find with what amazing quickness they can be manufactured if you set about them in the proper manner."

She then showed him how a piece of meat thrown into a machine became finely minced up, by merely turning a handle; and then how flour and water and lard were mixed up together, to make the crust of the pies, by another machine, which threw out the paste thus manufactured in small pieces, each just large enough for a pie. Lastly, she showed him how a tray, which just held a hundred, could be filled, and, by turning a windlass, sent up to the shop, through a square trap-door, which went right up to the very counter.

"And now," she said, "I must leave you. As long as you are industrious you will go on very well, but as soon as you begin to be idle, and neglect the orders which are sent to you by me, you will get a piece of information which will be useful, and which if you be a prudent man will enable you to know what you are about."

"What is that? you may as well give it to me now."

"No; we seldom find there is occasion for it at first, but, after a time, when you get well fed, you are pretty sure to want it."

So saying she left the place, and he heard the door by which he had entered, carefully barred after her. Suddenly then he heard her voice again, and so clearly and distinctly, too, that he thought she must have come back again; but upon looking up at the door, he found that that arose from her speaking through a small grating at the upper part of it, to which her mouth was closely placed.

"Remember your duty," she said, "and I warn you, that any attempt to leave here will be as futile as it will be dangerous."

"Except with your consent, when I relinquish the situation."

"Oh, certainly—certainly, you are quite right there, everybody who relinquishes the situation goes to his old friends, whom he has not seen for many years, perhaps."

"What a strange manner of talking she has!" said Jarvis Williams to himself, when he found he was alone. "There seems to be some singular and hidden meaning in every word she utters. What can she mean by a communication being made to me, if I neglect my duty! It is very strange; and what a singular looking place this is! I think it would be quite unbearable if it were not for the delightful odour of the pies, and they are indeed delicious—perhaps more delicious to me, who has been famished so long, and have gone through so much wretchedness; there is no one here but myself, and I am hungry now—frightfully hungry, and whether the pies be done or not, I'll have half a dozen of them at any rate, so here goes."

He opened one of the ovens, and the fragrant steam that came out was perfectly delicious, and he sniffed it up with a satisfaction such as he had never felt before, as regards anything that was eatable.

"Is it possible," he said "that I shall be able to make such delicious pies? At all events one can't starve here, and if it be a kind of imprisonment, it's a pleasant one. Upon my soul, they are nice, even half-cooked—delicious! I'll have another half-dozen, there are lots of them—delightful! I can't keep the gravy from running out of the corners of my mouth. Upon my soul, Mrs. Lovett, I don't know where you get your meat, but

it's all as tender as young chickens, and the fat actually melts away in one's mouth. Ah, these are pies, something like pies!—they are positively fit for the gods!"

Mrs. Lovett's new man ate twelve threepenny pies, and then he thought of leaving off. It was a little drawback not to have anything to wash them down with but cold water; but he reconciled himself to this.

"For," as he said, "after all it would be a pity to take the flavour of such pies out of one's mouth—indeed it would be a thousand pities, so I won't think of it, but just put up with what I have got and not complain. I might have gone further and fared worse with a vengeance, and I cannot help looking upon it as a singular piece of good fortune that made me think of coming here in my deep distress to try and get something to do. I have no friends and no money; she whom I loved is faithless, and here I am, master of as many pies as I like, and to all appearance monarch of all I survey; for there really seems to be no one to dispute my supremacy. To be sure my kingdom is rather a gloomy one; but then I can abdicate it when I like, and when I am tired of those delicious pies, if such a thing be possible, which I really very much doubt, I can give up my situation, and think of something else. If I do that, I will leave England for ever; it's no place for me after the many disappointments I have had. No friend left me—my girl false—not a relation but who would turn his back upon me! I will go somewhere where I am unknown and can form new connexions, and perhaps make new friendships of a more permanent and stable character than the old ones, which have all proved so false to me; and, in the meantime, I'll make and eat pies as fast as I can."

CHAPTER XII.
THE RESOLUTION COME TO BY JOHANNA OAKLEY.

The beautiful Johanna—when in obedience to the command of her father she left him, and begged him (the beef-eater) to manage matters with the Rev. Mr. Lupin—did not proceed directly up stairs to her apartment, but lingered on the staircase to hear what ensued; and if anything in her dejected state of mind could have given her amusement, it would certainly have been the way in which the beef-eater exacted a retribution from the reverend personage, who was not likely again to intrude himself into the house of the spectacle-maker. But when he was gone, and she heard that a sort of peace had been patched up with her mother—a peace which, from her knowledge of the high contracting parties, she conjectured would not last long—she returned to her room, and locked herself in; so that if any attempt were made to get her down to partake of the supper, it might be supposed she was asleep, for she felt herself totally unequal to the task of making one in any party, however much she might respect the individual members that composed it. And she did respect Ben the beef-eater; for she had a lively recollection of much kindness from him during her early years, and she knew that he had never come to the house when she was a child without bringing her some token of his regard in the shape of a plaything, or some little article of doll's finery, which at that time was very precious. She was not wrong in her conjectures that Ben would make an attempt to get her down stairs, for her father came up at the beef-eater's request, and tapped at her door. She thought the best plan, as indeed it was, would be to make

no answer, so that the old spectacle-maker concluded at once what she wished him to conclude, namely, that she had gone to sleep; and he walked quietly down the stairs again, glad that he had not disturbed her, and told Ben as much. Now, feeling herself quite secure from interruption for the night, Johanna did not attempt to seek repose, but set herself seriously to reflect upon what had occurred. She almost repeated to herself, word for word, what Colonel Jeffery had told her; and, as she revolved the matter over and over again in her brain, a strange thought took possession of her, which she could not banish, and which, when once it found a home within her breast, began to gather probability from every slight circumstance that was in any way connected with it. This thought, strange as it may appear, was, that the Mr. Thornhill, of whom Colonel Jeffery spoke in terms of such high eulogium, was no other than Mark Ingestrie himself. It is astonishing, when once a thought occurs to the mind, that makes a strong impression, how, with immense rapidity, a rush of evidence will appear to come to support it. And thus it was with regard to this supposition of Johanna Oakley. She immediately remembered a host of little things which favoured the idea, and among the rest, she fully recollected that Mark Ingestrie had told her he meant to change his name when he left England; for that he wished her and her only to know anything of him, or what had become of him; and that his intention was to baffle inquiry, in case it should be made, particularly by Mr. Grant, towards whom he felt a far greater amount of indignation, than the circumstances at all warranted him in feeling. Then she recollected all that Colonel Jeffery had said with regard to the gallant and noble conduct of this Mr. Thornhill, and, girl like, she thought that those high and noble qualities could surely belong to no one but her own lover, to such an extent; and that, therefore, Mr. Thornhill and Mark Ingestrie must be one and the same person. Over and over again, she regretted she had not asked Colonel Jeffery for a personal description of Mr. Thornhill, for that would have settled all her doubts at once, and the idea that she had it still in her power to do so, in consequence of the appointment he had made with her for that day week brought her some consolation.

"It must have been he," she said; "his anxiety to leave the ship, and get here by the day he mentions, proves it; besides, how improbable it is, that at the burning of the ill-fated vessel, Ingestrie should place in the hands of another what he intended for me, when that other was quite as likely, and perhaps more so, to meet with death as Mark himself."

Thus she reasoned, forcing herself each moment into a stronger belief of the identity of Thornhill with Mark Ingestrie, and so certainly narrowing her anxieties to a consideration of the fate of one person instead of two.

"I will meet Colonel Jeffery," she said, "and ask him if this Mr. Thornhill had fair hair, and a soft and pleasing expression about the eyes, that could not fail to be remembered. I will ask him how he spoke, and how he looked; and get him, if he can, to describe to me even the very tones of his voice; and then I shall be sure, without the shadow of a doubt, that it is Mark. But then, oh! then comes the anxious question, of what has been his fate?"

When poor Johanna began to consider the multitude of things that might have happened to her lover during his progress from Sweeney Todd's, in Fleet-street, to her father's house, she became quite lost in a perfect maze of conjecture, and then her thoughts always painfully reverted back to the barber's shop where the dog had been stationed; and she trembled to reflect for a moment upon the frightful danger to which that string of pearls might have subjected him.

"Alas! alas!" she cried, "I can well conceive that the man whom I saw attempting to poison the dog would be capable of any enormity. I saw his face but for a moment, and yet it was one never again to be forgotten. It was a face in which might be read cruelty and evil passions; besides, the man who would put an unoffending animal to a cruel death, shows an absence of feeling, and a baseness of mind, which make him capable of any crime he thinks he can commit with impunity. What can I do—oh! what can I do to unravel this mystery?"

No one could have been more tenderly and gently brought up than Johanna Oakley, but yet, inhabitive of her heart, was a spirit and a determination which few indeed could have given her credit for, by merely looking on the gentle and affectionate countenance which she ordinarily presented. But it is no new phenomenon in the history of the human heart to find that some of the most gentle and loveliest of human creatures are capable of the highest efforts of perversion; and when Johanna Oakley told herself, which she did, she was determined to devote her existence to a discovery of the mystery that enveloped the fate of Mark Ingestrie, she likewise made up her mind that the most likely man for accomplishing that object should not be rejected by her on the score of danger, and she at once set to work considering what those means should be. This seemed an endless task, but still she thought that if, by any means whatever, she could get admittance to the barber's house, she might be able to come to some conclusion as to whether or not it was there where Thornhill, whom she believed to be Ingestrie, had been stayed in his progress.

"Aid me Heaven," she cried, "in the adoption of some means of action on the occasion. Is there any one with whom I dare advise? Alas! I fear not, for the only person in whom I have put my whole heart is my father, and his affection for me would prompt him at once to interpose every possible obstacle to my proceeding, for fear danger should come of it. To be sure, there is Arabella Wilmot, my old school fellow and bosom friend, she would advise me to the best of her ability, but I much fear she is too romantic and full of odd, strange actions, that she has taken from books, to be a good adviser; and yet what can I do? I must speak to some one, if it be but in case any accident happening to me, my father may get news of it, and I know of no one else whom I can trust but Arabella."

After some little more consideration, Johanna made up her mind that on the following morning she would go to the house of her old school friend, which was in the immediate vicinity, and hold a conversation with her.

"I shall hear something," she said, "at least of a kindly and a consoling character; for what Arabella may want in calm and steady judgment, she fully compensates for in actual feeling, and what is most of all, I know I can trust her word implicitly, and that my secret will remain as safely locked in her breast as if it were in my own."

It was something to come to a conclusion to ask advice, and she felt that some portion of her anxiety was lifted from her mind by the mere fact that she had made so firm a mental resolution, that neither danger nor difficulty should deter her from seeking to know the fate of her lover. She retired to rest now with a greater hope, and while she is courting repose, notwithstanding the chance of the discovered images that fancy may present to her in her slumbers, we will take a glance at the parlour below, and see how far Mrs. Oakley is conveying out the pacific intention she had so tacitly expressed, and how the supper is going forward, which, with not the best grace in the world, she is preparing for her husband, who for the first time in his life had begun to assert his rights, and for big Ben, the beef-eater, whom she as cordially disliked as it was possible for any woman to detest any man. Mrs. Oakley by no means preserved her taciturn demeanour, for after a little she spoke, saying—

"There's nothing tasty in the house; suppose I run over the way to Waggarge's, and get some of those Epping sausages with the peculiar flavour."

"Ah, do," said Mr. Oakley, "they are beautiful, Ben, I can assure you."

"Well, I don't know," said Ben the beef-eater, "sausages are all very well in their way, but you need such a plaguey lot of them; for if you only eat them one at a time, how soon will you get through a dozen or two."

"A dozen or two," said Mrs. Oakley; "why, there are only five to a pound."

"Then," said Ben, making a mental calculation, "then, I think, ma'am, that you ought not to get more than nine pounds of them, and that will be a matter of forty-five mouthfuls for us."

"Get nine pounds of them," said Mr. Oakley, "if they be wanted; I know Ben has an appetite."

"Indeed," said Ben, "but I have fell off lately, and don't take to my wittals as I used; you can order, missus, if you please, a gallon of half-and-half as you go along. One must have a drain of drink of some sort; and mind you don't be going to any expense on my account, and getting anything but the little snack I have mentioned, for ten to one I shall take supper when I get to the Tower; only human nature is weak, you know, missus, and requires something to be a continually a holding of it up."

"Certainly," said Mr. Oakley, "certainly, have what you like, Ben; just say the word before Mrs. Oakley goes out; is there anything else?"

"No, no," said Ben, "oh dear no, nothing to speak of; but if you should pass a shop where they sells fat bacon, about four or five pounds, cut into rashers, you'll find, missus, will help down the blessed sausages."

"Gracious Providence," said Mrs. Oakley, "who is to cook it?"

"Who is to cook it, ma'am? why the kitchen fire, I suppose; but mind ye if the man aint got any sausages, there's a shop where they sells biled beef at the corner, and I shall be quite satisfied if you brings in about ten or twelve pounds of that. You can make it up into about half a dozen sandwiches."

"Go, my dear, go at once," said Mr. Oakley, "and get Ben his supper. I am quite sure he wants it, and be as quick as you can."

"Ah," said Ben, when Mrs. Oakley was gone, "I didn't tell you how I was sarved last week at Mrs. Harveys. You know they are so precious genteel there that they don't speak above their blessed breaths for fear of wearing themselves out; and they sits down in a chair as if it were balanced only on one leg, and a little more one way or t'other would upset them. Then, if they sees a crumb a laying on the floor they rings the bell, and a poor half-starved devil of a servant comes and says, 'Did you ring, ma'am?' and then they says 'Yes, bring a dust-shovel and a broom, there is a crumb a laying there,' and then says I—'Damn you all,'

says I, 'bring a scavenger's cart, and half-dozen birch brooms, there's a cinder just fell out of the fire.' Then in course they gets shocked, and looks as blue as possible, and arter that, when they see as I aint agoing, one of them says 'Mr. Benjamin Blumergutts, would you like to take a glass of wine?' 'I should think so,' says I. Then he says, says he, 'which would you prefer, red or white?' says he. 'White,' says I, 'while you are screwing up your courage to pull out the red,' so out they pull it; and as soon as I got hold of the bottle, I knocked the neck of it off over the top bar of the fire-place, and then drank it all up. 'Now, damn ye,' says I, 'you thinks all this is mighty genteel and fine, but I don't, and consider you to be the blessedest set of humbugs ever I set my eyes on; and, if ever you catch me here again, I'll be genteel too, and I can't say more than that. Go to the devil, all of ye.' So out I went, only I met with a little accident in the hall, for they had got a sort of lamp hanging there, and somehow or 'nother, my head went bang into it, and I carried it out round my neck; but when I did get out, I took it off, and shied it slap in at the parlour window. You never heard such a smash in all your life. I dare say they all fainted away for about a week, the blessed humbugs."

"Well, I should not wonder," said Mr. Oakley, "I never go near them, because I don't like their foolish pomposity and pride, which, upon very slender resources, tries to ape what it don't at all understand; but here is Mrs. Oakley with the sausages, and I hope you will make yourself comfortable, Ben."

"Comfortable! I believe ye, I rather shall. I means it, and no mistake."

"I have brought three pounds," said Mrs. Oakley, "and told the man to call in a quarter of an hour, in case there is any more wanted."

"The devil you have; and the bacon, Mrs. Oakley, the bacon!"

"I could not get any—the man had nothing but hams."

"Lor', ma'am, I'd put up with a ham cut thick, and never have said a word about it. I am a angel of a temper, and if you did but know it. Hilloa, look, is that the fellow with the half-and half?"

"Yes, here it is—a pot."

"A what?"

"A pot, to be sure."

"Well, I never; you are getting genteel, Mrs. Oakley. Then give us a hold of it."

Ben took the pot, and emptied it at a draught, and then he gave a tap at the bottom of it with his knuckles, to signify that he had accomplished that feat, and then he said, "I tells you what, ma'am, if you takes me for a baby, it's a great mistake, and any one would think you did, to see you offering me a pot merely; it's an insult, ma'am."

"Fiddle-de-dee," said Mrs. Oakley; "it's a much greater insult to drink it all up, and give nobody a drop."

"Is it? I wants to know how you are to stop it, ma'am, when you gets it to your mouth? that's what I axes you—how are you to stop it, ma'am? You didn't want me to spew it back again, did you, eh, ma'am?"

"You vile, low wretch!"

"Come, come, my dear," said Mr. Oakley, "you know our cousin. Ben don't live among the most refined society, and so you ought to be able to look over a little of—of—his—I may say, I am sure, without offence, roughness now and then;—come, come, there is no harm done, I'm sure. Forget and forgive say I. That's my maxim, and has always been, and will always be."

"Well," said the beef-eater, "it's a good one to get through the world with, and so there's an end of it. I forgives you, Mother Oakley."

"You forgive—"

"Yes, to be sure. Though I am only a beaf-eater, I suppose as I may forgive people for all that—eh, Cousin Oakley?"

"Oh, of course, Ben, of course. Come, come, wife, you know as well as I that Ben has many good qualities, and that take him for all in all, as the man in the play says, we shan't in a hurry look upon his like again."

"And I'm sure I don't want to look upon his like again," said Mrs. Oakley; "I'd rather by a good deal keep him a week than a fortnight. He's enough to breed a famine in the land, that he is."

"Oh, bless you, no," said Ben, "that's amongst your little mistakes, ma'am, I can assure you. By the bye, what a blessed long time that fellow is coming with the rest of the beer and the other sausages—why, what's the matter with you, cousin Oakley—eh, old chap, you look out of sorts?"

"I don't feel just the thing, do you know, Ben."

"Not—the thing—why—why, now you come to mention it, I somehow feel as if all my blessed inside was on a turn and a twist. The devil—I—don't feel comfortable at all I don't."

"And I'm getting very ill," gasped Mr. Oakley.

"And I'm getting iller," said the beef-eater, manufacturing a word for the occasion. "Bless my soul! there's something gone wrong in my inside. I know there's murder—there's a go—oh, Lord! it's a doubling me up, it is."

"I feel as if my last hour had come," said Mr. Oakley—"I'm a—a—dying man—I am—oh, good gracious! there was a twinge!"

Mrs. Oakley, with all the coolness in the world, took down her bonnet from behind the parlour-door where it hung, and, as she put it on said,—

"I told you both that some judgment would come over you, and now you see it has. How do you like it? Providence is good, of course, to its own, and I have—"

"What—what—?"

"*Pisoned* the half-and-half."

Big Ben, the beef-eater, fell off his chair with a deep groan, and poor Mr. Oakley sat glaring at his wife, and shivering with apprehension, quite unable to speak, while she placed a shawl over her shoulders, as she added in the same tone of calmness she had made the terrific announcement concerning the poisoning—

"Now, you wretches, you see what a woman can do when she makes up her mind for vengeance. As long as you all live, you'll recollect me; but, if you don't, that won't much matter, for you won't live long, I can tell you, and now I'm going to my sister's, Mrs. Tiddiblow."

So saying, Mrs. Oakley turned quickly round, and, with an insulting toss of her head, and not at all caring for the pangs and sufferings of her poor victims, she left the place, and proceeded to her sister's house, where she slept as comfortably as if she had not by any means committed two diabolical murders. But has she done so, or shall we, for the honour of human nature, discover that she went to a neighbouring chemist's, and only purchased some dreadfully powerful medicinal compound, which she placed in the half-and-half, and which began to give those pangs to Big Ben, the beef-eater, and to Mr. Oakley, concerning which they were both so eloquent? This must have been the case; for Mrs. Oakley could not have been such a fiend in a human guise as to laugh as she passed the chemist's shop. Oh no! she might not have felt remorse, but that is a very different thing, indeed, from laughing at the matter, unless it were really laughable and not serious, at all. Big Ben and Mr. Oakley must have at length found out how they had been hoaxed, and the most probable thing was that the before-mentioned chemist himself told them; for they sent for him in order to know if anything could be done to save their lives. Ben from that day forthwith made a determination that he would not visit Mr. Oakley, and the next time they met he said—

"I tell you what it is, that old hag, your wife, is one too many for us, that's a fact; she gets the better of me altogether—so, whenever you feels a little inclined for a gossip about old times, just you come down to the Tower."

"I will, Ben."

"Do; we can always find something to drink, and you can amuse yourself, too, by looking at the animals. Remember, feeding time is two o'clock; so, now and then, I shall expect to see you, and, above all, be sure you let me know if that canting parson, Lupin, comes any more to your house."

"I will, Ben."

"Ah, do; and I'll give him another lesson if he should, and I tell you how I'll do it. I'll get a free admission to the wild *beastesses* in the Tower, and when he comes to see 'em, for them 'ere sort of fellows always goes everywhere they can go for nothing, I'll just manage to pop him into a cage along of some of the most *cantankerous* creatures as we have."

"But would not that be dangerous?"

"Oh dear no! we has a laughing hyaena as would frighten him out of his wits; but I don't think as he'd bite him much, do you know. He's as playful as a kitten, and very fond of standing on his head."

"Well, then, Ben, I have, of course, no objection, although I do think that the lesson you have already given to the reverend gentleman will and ought to be fully sufficient for all purposes, and I don't expect we shall see him again."

"But how does Mrs. O. behave to you?" asked Ben.

"Well, Ben, I don't think there's much difference; sometimes she's a little civil, and sometimes she ain't; it's just as she takes it into her head."

"Ah! that all comes of marrying."

"I have often wondered, though, Ben, that you never married." Ben gave a chuckle as he replied—

"Have you though, really? Well, Cousin Oakley, I don't mind telling you, but the real fact is, once I was very near being served out in that sort of way."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I'll tell you how it was; there was a girl called Angelina Day, and a nice-looking enough creature she was as you'd wish to see, and didn't seem as if she'd got any claws at all; leastways she kept them in, like a cat at meal times."

"Upon my word, Ben, you have a great knowledge of the world."

"I believe you, I have! Haven't I been brought up among the wild beasts in the Tower all my life? That's the place to get a knowledge of the world in, my boy. I ought to know a thing or two, and in course I does."

"Well, but how was it, Ben, that you did not marry this Angelina you speak of?"

"I'll tell you; she thought she had me as safe as a hare in a trap, and she was as amiable as a lump of cotton. You'd have thought, to look at her, that she did nothing but smile; and, to hear her, that she said nothing but nice, mild, pleasant things, and I really began to think as I had found out the proper sort of animal."

"But you were mistaken?"

"I believe you, I was. One day I'd been there to see her, I mean, at her father's house, and she'd been as amiable as she could be; I got up to go away, with a determination that the next time I got there I would ask her to say yes, and when I had got a little way out of the garden of the house where they lived—it was out of town some distance—I found I had left my little walking-cane behind me, so I goes back to get it, and when I got into the garden I heard a voice."

"Whose voice?"

"Why Angelina's, to be sure; she was speaking to a poor little dab of a servant they had; and oh, my eye! how she did rap out, to be sure! Such a speech as I never heard in all my life. She went on a matter of ten minutes without stopping, and every other word was some ill name or another; and her voice—oh, gracious! it was like a bundle of wire all of a tangle—it was."

"And what did you do, then, upon making such a discovery as that in so very odd and unexpected a manner?"

"Do! What do you suppose I did?"

"I really cannot say, as you are rather an eccentric fellow."

"Well then, I'll tell you. I went up to the house, and just popped in my head, and says I, 'Angelina, I find out that all cats have claws after all; good evening, and no more from your humble servant, who don't mind the job of taming any wild animal but a woman;' and then off I walked, and I never heard of her afterwards."

"Ah, Ben, it's true enough! You never know them beforehand; but after a little time, as you say, then out come the claws."

"They does—they does."

"And I suppose you since, then, made up your mind to be a bachelor for the rest of your life, Ben?"

"Of course I did. After such experience as that, I should have deserved all I got, and no mistake, I can tell you; and if ever you catches me paying any attention to a female woman, just put me in mind of Angelina Day, and you'll see how I shall be off at once like a shot."

"Ah!" said Mr. Oakley, with a sigh, "everybody, Ben, aint born with your good luck, I can tell you. You are a most fortunate man, Ben, and that's a fact. You must have been born under some lucky planet I think, Ben, or else you never would have had such a warning as you have had about the claws. I found 'em out, Ben, but it was a deal too late; so I had only to put up with my fate, and put the best face I could upon the matter."

"Yes, that's what learned folks call—what's its name—fill—fill—something."

"Philosophy, I suppose you mean, Ben."

"Ah, that's it—you must put up with what you can't help, it means, I take it. It's a fine name for saying you must grin and bear it."

"I suppose that is about the truth, Ben."

It cannot, however, be exactly said that the little incident connected with Mr. Lupin had no good effect upon Mrs. Oakley, for it certainly shook most alarmingly her confidence in that pious individual. In the first place, it was quite clear that he shrank from the horrors of martyrdom;

and, indeed, to escape any bodily inconvenience, was perfectly willing to put up with any amount of degradation or humiliation that he could be subjected to; and that was, to the apprehension of Mrs. Oakley, a great departure from what a saint ought to be. Then again, her faith in the fact that Mr. Lupin was such a chosen morsel as he had represented himself, was shaken from the circumstance that no miracle in the shape of a judgment had taken place to save him from the malevolence of Big Ben, the beef-eater; so that, taking one thing in connexion with another, Mrs. Oakley was not near so religious a character after that evening as she had been before it, and that was something gained. Then circumstances soon occurred, of which the reader will very shortly be fully aware, which were calculated to awaken all the feelings of Mrs. Oakley, if she had really any feelings to awaken, and to force her to make common cause with her husband in an affair that touched him to the very soul, and did succeed in awakening some feelings in her heart that had lain dormant for a long time, but which were still far from being completely destroyed. These circumstances were closely connected with the fate of one in whom we hope, that by this time, the reader has taken a deep and kindly interest—we mean Johanna—that young and beautiful, and gentle, creature, who seemed to have been created with all the capacity to be so very happy, and yet whose fate had become so clouded by misfortune, and who appears now to be doomed through her best affections to suffer so great an amount of sorrow, and to go through so many sad difficulties. Alas, poor Johanna Oakley! Better had you loved some one of less aspiring feelings, and of less ardent imagination, than he possessed to whom you have given your heart's young affections. It is true that Mark Ingestrie possessed genius, and perhaps it was the glorious light that hovers around that fatal gift which prompted you to love him. But genius is not only a blight and a desolation to its possessor, but it is so to all who are bound to the gifted being by the ties of fond affection. It brings with it that unhappy restlessness of intellect which is ever straining after the unattainable, and which is never content to know the end and ultimatum of earthly hopes and wishes; no, the whole life of

such persons is spent in one long struggle for a fancied happiness, which like the ignis-fatuus of the swamp glitters but to betray those who trust to its delusive and flickering beams.

CHAPTER XIII.
JOHANNA'S INTERVIEW WITH ARABELLA WILMOT, AND THE ADVICE.

Alas! poor Johanna, thou hast chosen but an indifferent confidante in the person of that young and inexperienced girl to whom it seems good to thee to impart thy griefs. Not for one moment do we mean to say, that the young creature to whom the spectacle-maker's daughter made up her mind to unbosom herself, was not all that any one could wish as regards honour, goodness, and friendship. But she was one of those creatures who yet look upon the world as a fresh green garden, and had not yet lost that romance of existence which the world and its ways soon banish from the breasts of all. She was young, even almost to girlhood, and having been the idol of her family circle, she knew just about as little of the great world as a child. But while we cannot but to some extent regret that Johanna should have chosen such a confidant and admirer, we with feelings of great freshness and pleasure proceed to accompany her to that young girl's house. Now, a visit from Johanna Oakley to the Wilmots was not so rare a thing, that it should excite any unusual surprise, but in this case it did excite unusual pleasure, because they had not been there for some time. And the reason that she had not, may well be found in the peculiar circumstances that had for a considerable period environed her. She had a secret to keep which, although it might not proclaim what it was most legibly upon her countenance, yet proclaimed that it had an existence, and as she had not made Arabella a confidant, she dreaded the other's friendly questions of the young creature. It may seem surprising that Johanna Oakley had kept from one

whom she so much esteemed, and with whom she had made such a friendship, the secret of her affections; but that must be accounted for by a difference of ages between them to a sufficient extent in that early period of life to show itself palpably. That difference was not quite two years, but when we likewise state, that Arabella was of that small, delicate style of beauty, which makes her look like a child, when even upon the very verge of womanhood, we shall not be surprised that the girl of seventeen hesitated to confide a secret of the heart to what seemed but a beautiful child. The last year, however, had made a great difference in the appearance of Arabella, for, although she still looked a year or so younger than she really was, a more staid and thoughtful expression had come over her face, and she no longer presented, at times when she laughed, that child-like expression, which had been as remarkable in her as it was delightful. She was as different looking from Johanna as she could be, for whereas Johanna's hair was of a rich and glossy brown, so nearly allied to black that it was commonly called such; the long waving ringlets that shaded the sweet countenance of Arabella Wilmot were like amber silk blended to a pale beauty. Her eyes were nearly blue, and not that pale grey, which courtesy calls of that celestial colour, and their long, fringing lashes hung upon a cheek of the most delicate and exquisite hue that nature could produce. Such was the young, loveable, and amiable creature who had made one of those girlish friendships with Johanna Oakley that, when they do endure beyond the period of almost mere childhood, endure for ever, and become one among the most dear and cherished sensations of the heart. The acquaintance had commenced at school, and might have been of that evanescent character of so many school friendships, which, in after life, are scarcely so much remembered as the most dim visions of a dream; but it happened that they were congenial spirits, which, let them be thrown together under any circumstances whatever, would have come together with a perfect and a most endearing confidence in each other's affections. That they were school companions was the mere accident that brought them together, and not the cause of their friendship. Such, then, was the being to whom Johanna Oakley looked for counsel and

assistance; and notwithstanding all that we have said respecting the likelihood of that counsel being of an inactive and girlish character, we cannot withhold our meed of approbation to Johanna, that she had selected one so much in every way worthy of her honest esteem. The hour at which she called was such as to ensure Arabella being within, and the pleasure which showed itself upon the countenance of the young girl, as she welcomed her old playmate, was a feeling of the most delightful and unaffecting character.

"Why, Johanna," she said, "you so seldom call upon me now, that I suppose I must esteem it as a very special act of grace and favour to see you."

"Arabella," said Johanna, "I do not know what you will say to me when I tell you that my present visit is because I am in a difficulty, and want your advice."

"Then you could not have come to a better person, for I have read all the novels in London, and know all the difficulties that anybody can possibly get into, and, what is more important, too, I know all the means of getting out of them, let them be what they may."

"And yet, Arabella, scarcely in all your novel reading will you find anything so strange and so eventful as the circumstances, I grieve to say, it is in my power to record to you. Sit down, and listen to me, dear Arabella, and you shall know all."

"You surprise and alarm me by that serious countenance, Johanna."

"The subject is a serious one. I love."

"Oh! is that all? So do I; there's a young Captain Desbrook in the King's Guards. He comes here to buy his gloves; and if you did but hear him sigh as he leans over the counter, you would be astonished."

"Ah! but, Arabella, I know you well. Yours is one of those fleeting passions that, like the forked lightning, appear for a moment, and ere you can say behold, is gone again. Mine is deeper in my heart, so deep, that to divorce it from it would be to destroy its home for ever."

"But, why so serious, Johanna? You do not mean to tell me that it is possible for you to love any man without his loving you in return?"

"You are right there, Arabella. I do not come to speak to you of a hopeless passion—far from it; but you shall hear. Lend me, my dear friend, your serious attention, and you shall hear of such mysterious matters."

"Mysterious!—then I shall be in my very element. For know that I quite live and exult in mystery, and you could not possibly have come to any one who would more welcomely receive such a commission from you; I am all impatience."

Johanna then, with great earnestness, related to her friend the whole of the particulars connected with her deep and sincere attachment to Mark Ingestrie. She told her how, in spite of all circumstances which appeared to have a tendency to cast a shadow and blight upon their young affection, they had loved, and loved truly; how Ingestrie, disliking, both from principle and distaste, the study of the law, had quarrelled with his uncle, Mr. Grant, and then how, as a bold adventurer, he had gone to seek his fortunes in the Indian seas; fortunes which promised to be splendid, but which might end in disappointment and defeat, and that they had ended in such calamities most deeply and truly did she mourn to be compelled to state. And she concluded by saying—

"And now, Arabella, you know all I have to tell you. You know how truly I have loved, and how, after teaching myself to expect happiness, I have met with nothing but despair; and you may judge for yourself, how sadly the fate, or rather the mystery, which hangs over Mark Ingestrie, must deeply affect me, and how lost my mind must be in all kinds of conjecture concerning him."

The hilarity of spirits which had characterised Arabella in the earlier part of their interview, entirely left her as Johanna proceeded in her mournful narration, and by the time she had concluded, tears of the most genuine sympathy stood in her eyes. She took the hands of Johanna in both her own, and said to her—

"Why, my poor Johanna, I never expected to hear from your lips so sad a tale. This is most mournful, indeed very mournful; and, although I was half inclined before to quarrel with you for this tardy confidence—for you must recollect that it is the first I have heard of this whole affair—but now the misfortunes that oppress you are quite sufficient, Heaven knows, without me adding to them by the shadow of a reproach."

"They are indeed, Arabella, and believe me, if the course of my love ran smoothly, instead of being, as it has been, full of misadventures, you should have had nothing to complain of on the score of want of confidence; but I will own I did hesitate to inflict on you my miseries, for miseries they have been, and, alas! miseries they seem destined to remain."

"Johanna, you could not have used an argument more delusive than that. It is not one which should have come from your lips to me."

"But surely it was a good motive to spare you pain?"

"And did you think so lightly of my friendship that it was to be entrusted with nothing but what wore a pleasant aspect? True friendship surely is best shown in the encounter of difficulty and distress. I grieve, Johanna, indeed, that you have so much mistaken me."

"Nay, now you do me an injustice: it was not that I doubted your friendship for one moment, but that I did indeed shrink from casting the shadow of my sorrows over what should be, and what I hope is, the sunshine of your heart. That was the respect which deterred me from making you a confidant of, what I suppose I must call, this ill-fated passion."

"No, not ill-fated, Johanna. Let us still believe that the time will come when it will be far otherwise than ill-fated."

"But what do you think of all that I have told you? Can you gather from it any hope?"

"Abundance of hope, Johanna. You have no certainty of the death of Ingestrie."

"I certainly have not, as far as regards the loss of him in the Indian seas; but, Arabella, there is one supposition which, from the first moment that it found a home in my breast, has been growing stronger and stronger, and that supposition is, that this Mr. Thornhill was no other than Mark Ingestrie himself."

"Indeed! Think you so? That would be a strange supposition. Have you any special reasons for such a thought?"

"None—further than a something which seemed ever to tell my heart from the first moment that such was the case, and a consideration of the improbability of the story related by Thornhill. Why should Mark Ingestrie have given him the string of pearls and the message to me, trusting to the preservation of this Thornhill, and assuming, for some strange reason, that he himself must fall?"

"There is good argument in that, Johanna."

"And, moreover, Mark Ingestrie told me he intended altering his name upon the expedition."

"It is strange; but now you mention such a supposition, it appears, do you know, Johanna, each moment more probable to me. Oh, that fatal string of pearls!"

"Fatal, indeed! for if Mark Ingestrie and Thornhill be one and the same person, the possession of those pearls has been the temptation to destroy him."

"There cannot be a doubt upon that point, Johanna, and so you will find in all tales of love and of romance, that jealousy and wealth have been the sources of all the abundant evils which fond and attached hearts have from time to time suffered."

"It is so; I believe, it is so, Arabella; but advise me what to do, for truly I am myself incapable of action. Tell me what you think it is possible to do, under those disastrous circumstances, for there is nothing which I

will not dare attempt." "Why, my dear Johanna, you must perceive that all the evidence you have regarding this Thornhill, follows him up to that barber's shop in Fleet-street, and no farther."

"It does, indeed."

"Can you not imagine, then, that there lies the mystery of his fate; and, from what you have yourself seen of this man, Todd, do you think he is one who would hesitate even at murder?"

"Oh, horror! my own thoughts have taken that dreadful turn, but I dreaded to pronounce the word which would embody them. If, indeed, that fearful-looking man fancied that, by any deed of blood, he could become possessed of such a treasure as that which belonged to Mark Ingestrie, unchristian and illiberal as it may sound, the belief clings to me that he would not hesitate to do it."

"Do not, however, conclude, Johanna, that such is the case. It would appear from all you have heard and seen of these circumstances, that there is some fearful mystery; but do not, Johanna, conclude hastily that that mystery is one of death."

"Be it so, or not," said Johanna, "I must solve it, or go distracted. Heaven have mercy upon me!—for even now I feel a fever in my brain that precludes almost the possibility of rational thought."

"Be calm, be calm—we will think the matter over calmly and seriously; and who knows but that, mere girls as we are, we may think of some adventitious mode of arriving at a knowledge of the truth; and now I am going to tell you something, which your narrative has recalled to my mind."

"Say on, Arabella, I shall listen to you with deep attention."

"A short time since, about six months, I think, an apprentice of my father, in the last week of his servitude, was sent to the west-end of the town, to take a considerable sum of money; but he never came back with it, and from that day to this we have heard nothing of him, although, from inquiry that my father made, he ascertained that he received the

money, and that he met an acquaintance in the Strand, who parted from him at the corner of Milford-lane, and to whom he said that he intended to call at Sweeney Todd's, the barber, in Fleet-street, to have his hair dressed, because there was to be a regatta on the Thames, and he was determined to go to it whether my father liked or not."

"And he was never heard of?"

"Never. Of course, my father made every inquiry upon the subject, and called upon Sweeney Todd for the purpose; but, as he declared that no such person had ever called at his shop, the inquiry there terminated."

"'Tis very strange."

"And most mysterious; for the friends of the youth were indeed indefatigable in their searches for him; and, by subscribing together for the purpose, they offered a large reward to any one who could or would give them information regarding his fate."

"And was it all in vain?"

"All; nothing could be learned whatever. Not even the remotest clue was obtained, and there the affair has rested, in the most profound of mysteries."

Johanna shuddered, and for some few moments the two young girls were silent. It was Johanna who broke that silence, by exclaiming—

"Arabella, assist me with what advice you can, so that I may set about what I purpose with the best prospect of success and the least danger; not that I shrink on my own account from risk, but if any misadventure were to occur to me, I might thereby be incapacitated from pursuing that object, to which I will now devote the remainder of my life."

"But what can you do, my dear Johanna? It was but a short time since there was a placard in the barber's window to say that he wanted a lad as an assistant in his business, but that has been removed, or we might have procured some one to take the situation for the express purpose of playing the spy upon the barber's proceedings."

"But, perchance, still there may be an opportunity of accomplishing something in that way, if you knew of any one that would undertake the adventure."

"There will be no difficulty, Johanna, in discovering one willing to do so, although we might be long in finding one of sufficient capacity that we could trust; but I am adventurous, Johanna, as you know, and I think I could have got my cousin Albert to personate the character, only that I think he's rather a giddy youth, and scarcely to be trusted with a mission of so much importance."

"Yes, and a mission likewise, Arabella, which, by a single false step, might be made frightfully dangerous."

"It might indeed."

"Then it will be unfair to place it upon any one but those who feel most deeply for its success."

"Johanna, the enthusiasm with which you speak awakens in me a thought which I shrink from expressing to you, and which, I fear, perhaps more originates from a certain feeling of romance, which, I believe, is a besetting sin, than from any other cause."

"Name it, Arabella; name it."

"It would be possible for you or I to accomplish the object, by going disguised to the barber's, and accepting such a situation, if it were vacant, for a period of about twenty-four hours, in order that during that time an opportunity might be taken of searching in his house for some evidence upon the subject nearest to your heart."

"It is a happy thought," said Johanna, "and why should I hesitate at encountering any risk, or toil, or difficulty, for him who has risked so much for me? What is there to hinder me from carrying out such a resolution? At any moment, if great danger should beset me, I can rush into the street, and claim protection from the passers-by."

"And moreover, Johanna, if you went on such a mission, remember you go with my knowledge, and that consequently I would bring you assistance, if you appeared not in the specified time for your return."

"Each moment, Arabella, the plan assumes to my mind a better shape. If Sweeney Todd be innocent of contriving anything against the life and liberty of those who seek his shop, I have nothing to fear; but if, on the contrary, he be guilty, danger to me would be the proof of such guilt, and that is a proof which I am willing to chance encountering for the sake of the great object I have in view; but how am I to provide myself with the necessary means?"

"Be at rest upon that score. My cousin Albert and you are as nearly of a size as possible. He will be staying here shortly, and I will secure from his wardrobe a suit of clothes, which I am certain will answer your purpose. But let me implore you to wait until you have had your second interview with Colonel Jeffery."

"That is well thought of; I will meet him, and question him closely as to the personal appearance of this Mr. Thornhill; beside, I shall hear if he has any confirmed suspicion on the subject."

"That is well, you will soon meet him, for the week is running on; and let me implore you, Johanna, to come to me the morning after you have so met him, and then we will again consult upon this plan of operations, which appears to us feasible and desirable."

Some more conversation of a similar character ensued between these young girls; and upon the whole, Johanna Oakley felt much comforted by her visit, and more able to think calmly as well as seriously upon the subject which engrossed her whole thoughts and feelings; and when she returned to her own home, she found that much of the excitement of despair which had formerly had possession of her, had given way to hope; and with that natural feeling of joyousness, and that elasticity of mind which belongs to the young, she began to build in her imagination some airy fabrics of future happiness. Certainly, these suppositions went upon the fact that Mark Ingestrie was a prisoner, and not that his life

had been taken by the mysterious barber; for although the possibility of his having been murdered had found a home in her imagination, still to her pure spirit it seemed by far too hideous to be true, and she scarcely could be said really and truly to entertain it as a matter which was likely to be true.

CHAPTER XIV.
TOBIAS'S THREAT, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Perhaps one of the most pitiable objects now in our history is poor Tobias, Sweeney Todd's boy, who certainly had his suspicions aroused in the most terrific manner, but who was terrified, by the threats of what the barber was capable of doing against his mother, from making any disclosures. The effect upon his personal appearance of this wear and tear of his intellect was striking and manifest. The hue of youth and health entirely departed from his cheeks, and he looked so sad and careworn, that it was quite a terrible thing to look upon a young lad so, as it were, upon the threshold of existence, and in whom anxious thoughts were making such war upon the physical energies. His cheeks were pale and sunken; his eyes had an unnatural brightness about them, and, to look upon his lips, one would think they had never parted in a smile for many a day, so sadly were they compressed together. He seemed ever to be watching likewise for something fearful, and even as he walked the streets he would frequently turn and look inquiringly around him with a shudder; and in his brief interview with Colonel Jeffery and his friend the captain, we can have a tolerably good comprehension of the state of his mind. Oppressed with fears, and all sorts of dreadful thoughts, panting to give utterance to what he knew and to what he suspected, yet terrified into silence for his mother's sake, we cannot but view him as signally entitled to the sympathy of the reader, and as, in all respects, one sincerely to be pitied for the cruel circumstances in which he was placed. The sun is shining brightly, and

even that busy region of trade and commerce, Fleet-street, is looking gay and beautiful; but not for that poor spirit-stricken lad are any of the sights and sounds which used to make up the delight of his existence, reaching his eyes or ears now with their accustomed force. He sits moody and alone, and in the position which he always assumes when Sweeney Todd is from home—that is to say, with his head resting on his hands, and looking the picture of melancholy abstraction.

"What shall I do?" he said to himself, "what will become of me? I think if I live here any longer, I shall go out of my senses. Sweeney Todd is a murderer—I am quite certain of it, and I wish to say so, but I dare not for my mother's sake. Alas! alas! the end of it will be, that he will kill me, or that I shall go out of my senses, and then I shall die in some mad-house, and no one will care what I say."

The boy wept bitterly after he had uttered these melancholy reflections, and he felt his tears something of a relief to him, so that he looked up after a little time, and glanced around him.

"What a strange thing," he said, "that people should come into this shop, to my certain knowledge, who never go out of it again, and yet what becomes of them I cannot tell."

He looked with a shuddering anxiety towards the parlour, the door of which Sweeney Todd took care to lock always when he left the place, and he thought that he should like much to have a thorough examination of that room.

"I have been in it," he said, "and it seems full of cupboards and strange holes and corners, such as I never saw before, and there is an odd stench in it that I cannot make out at all; but it's out of the question thinking of ever being in it above a few minutes at a time, for Sweeney Todd takes good care of that."

The boy rose, and opened a small cupboard that was in the shop. It was perfectly empty.

"Now, that's strange," he said, "there was a walking-stick with an ivory top to it here just before he went out, and I could swear it belonged to a man who came in to be shaved. More than once—ah! and more than twice, too, when I have come in suddenly, I have seen people's hats, and Sweeney Todd would try and make me believe that people go away after being shaved, and leave their hats behind them."

He walked up to the shaving chair as it was called, which was a large, old-fashioned piece of furniture, made of oak, and carved; and, as the boy threw himself into it, he said—

"What an odd thing it is that this chair is screwed so tight to the floor! Here is a complete fixture, and Sweeney Todd says it is so because it's in the best possible light, and if he were not to make it fast in such a way, the customers would shift it about from place to place, so that he could not conveniently shave them; it may be true, but I don't know."

"And you have your doubts," said the voice of Sweeney Todd, as that individual, with a noiseless step, walked into the shop—"you have your doubts, Tobias? I shall have to cut your throat, that is quite clear."

Tobias Alarmed At The Mysterious Appearance Of Todd.

Tobias Alarmed At The Mysterious Appearance Of Todd.

"No, no, have mercy upon me; I did not mean what I said."

"Then it's uncommonly imprudent to say it, Tobias. Do you remember our last conversation? Do you remember that I can hang your mother when I please, because, if you do not, I beg to put you in mind of that pleasant little circumstance?"

"I cannot forget—I do not forget."

"'Tis well; and mark me, I will not have you assume such an aspect as you wear when I am not here. You don't look cheerful, Tobias; and, notwithstanding your excellent situation, with little to do, and the number of Lovett's pies you eat, you fall away."

"I cannot help it," said Tobias, "since you told me what you did concerning my mother. I have been so anxious that I cannot help—"

"Why should you be anxious? Her preservation depends upon yourself, and upon yourself wholly. You have but to keep silent, and she is safe; but if you utter one word that shall be displeasing to me about my affairs, mark me, Tobias, she comes to the scaffold; and if I cannot conveniently place you in the same mad-house where the last boy I had was placed, I shall certainly be under the troublesome necessity of cutting your throat."

"I will be silent—I will say nothing, Mr. Todd. I know I shall die soon, and then you will get rid of me altogether, and I don't care how soon that may be, for I am quite weary of my life—I shall be glad when it is over."

"Very good," said the barber; "that's all a matter of taste. And now, Tobias, I desire that you look cheerful and smile, for a gentleman is outside feeling his chin with his hand, and thinking he may as well come in and be shaved. I may want you, Tobias, to go to Billingsgate, and bring me a pennyworth of shrimps."

"Yes," thought Tobias, with a groan—"yes, while you murder him."

CHAPTER XV.
THE SECOND INTERVIEW BETWEEN JOHANNA AND THE COLONEL IN THE TEMPLE GARDENS.

Now that there was a great object to gain by a second interview with Colonel Jeffery, the anxiety of Johanna Oakley to have it became extremely great, and she counted the very hours until the period should arrive when she could again proceed to the Temple-gardens with something like a certainty of finding him. The object, of course, was to ask him for a description of Mr. Thornhill, sufficiently accurate to enable her to come to something like a positive conclusion as to whether she ought to call him to her own mind as Mark Ingestrie or not. And Colonel Jeffery was not a bit the less anxious to see her than she was to look upon him; for although in divers lands he had looked upon many a fair face, and heard many a voice that had sounded soft and musical in his ears, he had seen none that, to his mind, was so fair, and had heard no voice that he had considered really so musical and charming to listen to, as Johanna Oakley's. A man of more honourable and strict sense of honour than Colonel Jeffery could not have been found, and, therefore, it was that he allowed himself to admire the beautiful under any circumstances, because he knew that his admiration was of no dangerous quality, but that, on the contrary, it was one of those feelings which might exist in a bosom such as his, quite undebased by a meaner influence. We think it necessary, however, before he has his second meeting with Johanna Oakley, to give such an explanation of his

thoughts and feelings as it is in our power. When first he met her, the purity of her mind, and the genuine and beautiful candour of all she said, struck him most forcibly, as well as her great beauty, which could not fail to be extremely manifest. After that he began to reason with himself as to what ought to be his feelings with regard to her—namely, what portion of these ought to be suppressed, and what ought to be encouraged. If Mark Ingestrie were dead, there was not a shadow of interference or dishonour in him, Colonel Jeffery, loving the beautiful girl, who was surely not to be shut out of the pale of all affection because the first person to whom her heart had warmed with a pure and holy passion, was no more.

"It may be," he thought, "that she is incapable of feeling a sentiment which can at all approach that which once she has felt; but still she may be happy and serene, and may pass many joyous hours as the wife of another."

He did not positively make these reflections as applicable to himself, although they had a tendency that way, and he was fast verging to a state of mind which might induce him to give them a more actual application. He did not tell himself that he loved her—no, the word "admiration" took the place of the more powerful term; but then, can we not doubt that, at this time, the germ of a very pure and holy affection was lighted up in the heart of Colonel Jeffery for the beautiful creature who suffered the pangs of so much disappointment, and who loved one so well, who, we almost fear, if he were living, was scarcely the sort of person fully to requite such an affection. But we know so little of Mark Ingestrie, and there appears to be so much doubt as to whether he be alive or dead, that we should not prejudge him upon such very insufficient evidence. Johanna Oakley did think of taking Arabella Wilmot with her to this meeting with Colonel Jeffery, but she abandoned the idea, because it really looked as if she was either afraid of him or afraid of herself, so she resolved to go alone; and when the hour of appointment came, she was then walking upon that broad gravelled path, which has been trodden by some of the best, and some of the most eminent, as well as some of the

worst of human beings. It was not likely that with the feelings of Colonel Jeffery towards her, he would keep her waiting. Indeed, he was then a good hour before the time, and his only great dread was, that she might not come. He had some reason for this dread, because it will be readily recollected by the reader, that she had not positively promised to come; so that all he had was a hope that way tending and nothing further. As minute after minute had passed away, she came not, although the time had not yet really arrived; his apprehension that she would not give him the meeting had grown in his mind almost to a certainty, when he saw her timidly advancing along the garden walk. He rose to meet her at once, and for a few moments after he had greeted her with kind civility she could do nothing but look inquiringly in his face, to know if he had any news to tell her of the object of her anxious solicitude.

"I have heard nothing, Miss Oakley," he said, "that can give you any satisfaction concerning the fate of Mr. Thornhill, but we have much suspicion—I say we, because I have taken a friend into my confidence—that something serious must have happened to him, and that the barber, Sweeney Todd, in Fleet-street, at whose door the dog so mysteriously took his post, knows something of that circumstance, be it what it may."

He led her to a seat as she spoke, and when she had recovered sufficiently the agitation of her feelings to speak, she said in a timid, hesitating voice—

"Had Mr. Thornhill fair hair, and large, clear, grey eyes?"

"Yes, he had such; and, I think, his smile was the most singularly beautiful I ever beheld in a man."

"Heaven help me!" said Johanna.

"Have you any reason for asking that question concerning Thornhill?"

"God grant I had not; but, alas! I have indeed. I feel that in Thornhill, I must recognise Mark Ingestrie himself."

"You astonish me."

"It must be so, it must be so; you have described him to me, and I cannot doubt it; Mark Ingestrie and Thornhill are one! I knew that he was going to change his name, when he went out upon that wild adventure to the Indian Sea. I was well aware of that fact."

"I cannot think, Miss Oakley, that you are correct in that supposition. There are many things which induce me to think otherwise; and the first and foremost of them is, that the ingenuous character of Mr. Thornhill forbids the likelihood of such a thing occurring. You may depend it is not —cannot be, as you suppose."

"The proofs are too strong for me, and I find I dare not doubt them. It is so, Colonel Jeffery, as time, perchance, may show; it is sad, very sad, to think that it is so, but I dare not doubt it, now that you have described him to me exactly as he lived."

"I must own, that in giving an opinion on such a point to you, I may be accused of arrogance and presumption, for I have had no description of Mark Ingestrie, and never saw him; and although you never saw certainly Mr. Thornhill, yet I have described him to you, and therefore you are able to judge from that description something of him."

"I am indeed, and I cannot—dare not doubt. It is horrible to be positive on this point to me, because I do fear with you that something dreadful has occurred, and that the barber in Fleet-street could unravel a frightful secret, if he chose, connected with Mark Ingestrie's fate."

"I do sincerely hope from my heart that you are wrong; I hope it, because I tell you frankly, dim and obscure as the hope that Mark Ingestrie may have been picked up from the wreck of his vessel, it is yet stronger than the supposition that Thornhill has escaped the murderous hands of Sweeney Todd, the barber."

Johanna looked in his face so imploringly, and with such an expression of hopelessness, that it was most sad indeed to see her, and quite involuntarily he exclaimed—

"If the sacrifice of my life would be to you a relief, and save you from the pangs you suffer, believe me, it should be made."

She started as she said—

"No, no: Heaven knows enough has been sacrificed already—more than enough, much more than enough. But do not suppose that I am ungrateful for the generous interest you have taken in me. Do not suppose that I think any the less of the generosity and nobility of soul that would offer a sacrifice, because it is one that I would hesitate to accept. No, believe me, Colonel Jeffery, that among the few names that are enrolled in my breast—and such to me will ever be honoured—remember yours will be found while I live, but that will not be long—but that will not be long."

"Nay, do not speak so despairingly."

"Have I not cause for despair?"

"Cause have you for great grief, but yet scarcely for despair. You are young yet, and let me entertain a hope that even if a feeling of regret may mingle with your future thoughts, time will achieve something in tempering your sorrow; and if not great happiness, you may know yet great serenity."

"I dare not hope it, but I know your words are kindly spoken, and most kindly meant."

"You may well assure yourself that they are so."

"I will ascertain his fate, or perish."

"You alarm me by those words, as well as by your manner of uttering them. Let me implore you, Miss Oakley, to attempt nothing rash; remember how weak and inefficient must be the exertions of a young girl like yourself, one who knows so little of the world, and can really understand so little of its wickedness."

"Affection conquers all obstacles, and the weakest and most inefficient girl that ever stepped, if she have strong within her that love which, in all its sacred intensity, knows no fear, shall indeed accomplish much. I feel that, in such a cause, I could shake off all girlish terrors and ordinary alarms; and if there be danger, I would ask, what is life to me without all that could adorn it and make it beautiful?"

"This, indeed, is the very enthusiasm of affection, when, believe me, it will lead you to some excess—to some romantic exercise of feeling, such as will bring great danger in its train, to the unhappiness of those who love you."

"Those who love me—who is there to love me now?"

"Johanna Oakley, I dare not and will not utter words that come thronging to my lips, but which I fear might be unwelcome to your ears; I will not say that I can answer the question that you have asked, because it would sound ungenerous at such a time as this, when you have met me to talk about the fate of another. Oh! forgive me, that, hurried away by the feeling of a moment, I have uttered these words, for I meant not to utter them."

Johanna looked at him in silence, and it might be that there was the slightest possible tinge of reproach in her look, but it was very slight, for one glance at that ingenuous countenance would be sufficient to convince the most sceptical of the truth and single-mindedness of its owner: of this there could be no doubt whatever, and if anything in the shape of a reproach was upon the point of coming from her lips, she forbore to utter it.

"May I hope," he added, "that I have not lowered myself in your esteem, Miss Oakley, by what I have said?"

"I hope," she said gently, "that you will continue to be my friend."

He laid an emphasis on the word "friend," and he fully understood what she meant to imply thereby, and after a moment's pause said—

"Heaven forbid that ever, by word or by action, Johanna, I should do aught to deprive myself of that privilege. Let me be yet your friend, since —"

He left the sentence unfinished, but if he had added the words—"Since I can do no more," he could not have made it more evident to Johanna that those were the words he intended to utter.

"And now," he added, "that I hope and trust we understand each other better than we did, and you are willing to call me by the name of friend, let me once more ask of you, by the privilege of such a title, to be careful of yourself, and not to risk much in order that you may, perhaps, have some remote chance of achieving very little."

"But can I endure this dreadful suspense?"

"It is, alas! too common an infliction on human nature, Johanna. Pardon me for addressing you as Johanna."

"Nay, it requires no excuse. I am accustomed so to be addressed by all who feel a kindly interest for me. Call me Johanna if you will, and I shall feel a greater assurance of your friendship and your esteem."

"I will then avail myself of that permission, and again and again I will entreat you to leave to me the task of making what attempts may be made to discover the fate of Mr. Thornhill. There must be danger even in inquiring for him, if he has met with any foul play, and therefore I ask you to let that danger be mine."

Johanna asked herself if she should or not tell him of the scheme of operations that had been suggested by Arabella Wilmot, but, somehow or another, she shrank most wonderfully from so doing, both on account of the censure which she concluded he would be likely to cast upon it, and the romantic, strange nature of the plan itself, so she said, gently and quickly—

"I will attempt nothing that shall not have some possibility of success attending it. I will be careful, you may depend, for many considerations. My father, I know, centres all his affections in me, and for his sake I will

be careful."

"I shall be content then, and now may I hope that this day week I may see you here again, in order that I may tell you if I have made any discovery, and that you may tell me the same; for my interest in Thornhill is that of a sincere friend, to say nothing of the deep interest in your happiness which I feel, and which now has become an element in the transaction of the highest value?"

"I will come," said Johanna, "if I can come."

"You do not doubt?"

"No, no. I will come, and I hope to bring you some news of him in whom you are so much interested. It shall be no fault of mine if I come not."

He walked with her from the gardens, and together they passed the shop of Sweeney Todd, but the door was close shut, and they saw nothing of the barber, or of that poor boy, his apprentice, who was so much to be pitied. He parted with Johanna near to her father's house, and he walked slowly away with his mind so fully impressed with the excellence and beauty of the spectacle-maker's daughter, that it was quite clear, as long as he lived, he would not be able to rid himself of the favourable impression she had made upon him.

"I love her," he said; "I love her, but she seems in no respect willing to enchain her affections. Alas! alas! how sad it is for me, that the being who above all others I could wish to call my own, instead of a joy to me, I have only encountered that she might impart a pang to my heart. Beautiful and excellent Johanna, I love you, but I can see that your own affections are withered for ever."

CHAPTER XVI.
THE BARBER MAKES ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO SELL THE STRING OF PEARLS.

It would seem as if Sweeney Todd, after his adventure in already trying to dispose of the string of pearls which he possessed, began to feel little doubtful about his chances of success in that matter, for he waited patiently for a considerable period before he again made the attempt, and then he made it after a totally different fashion. Towards the close of night on that same evening when Johanna Oakley had met Colonel Jeffery, for the second time, in the Temple Garden, and while Tobias sat alone in the shop in his usual deep dejection, a stranger entered the place, with a large blue bag in his hand, and looked inquiringly about him.

"Hilloa, my lad!" said he, "is this Mr. Todd's?"

"Yes," said Tobias; "but he is not at home. What do you want?"

"Well, I'll be hanged," said the man, "if this don't beat everything; you don't mean to tell me he is a barber, do you?"

"Indeed I do; don't you see?"

"Yes, I see to be sure; but I'll be shot if I thought of it beforehand. What do you think he has been doing?"

"Doing," said Tobias, with animation; "do you think he will be hung?"

"Why, no, I don't say it is a hanging matter, although you seem as if you wished it was; but I'll just tell you now we are artists at the west-end of the town."

"Artists! Do you mean to say you draw pictures?"

"No, no, we make clothes; but we call ourselves artists now, because tailors are out of fashion."

"Oh, that's it, is it?"

"Yes, that's it; and you would scarcely believe it, but he came to our shop actually, and ordered a suit of clothes, which were to come to no less a sum than thirty pounds, and told us to make them up in such a style that they were to do for any nobleman, and he gave his name and address, as Mr. Todd, at this number in Fleet-street, but I hadn't the least idea that he was a barber; if I had, I am quite certain the clothes would not have been finished in the style they are, but quite the reverse."

"Well," said Tobias, "I can't think what he wants such clothing for, but I suppose it's all right. Was he a tall, ugly-looking fellow?"

"As ugly as the very devil. I'll just show you the things, as he is not at home. The coat is of the finest velvet, lined with silk, and trimmed with lace. Did you ever, in all your life, see such a coat for a barber?"

"Indeed, I never did; but it is some scheme of his, of course. It is a superb coat."

"Yes, and all the rest of the dress is of the same style; what on earth he can be going to do with it I can't think, for it's only fit to go to court in."

"Oh, well, I know nothing about it," said Tobias, with a sigh, "you can leave it or not as you like, it is all one to me."

"Well, you do seem the most melancholy wretch ever I came near; what's the matter with you?"

"The matter with me? Oh, nothing. Of course, I am as happy as I can be. Ain't I Sweeney Todd's apprentice, and ain't that enough to make anybody sing all day long?"

"It may be for all I know, but certainly you don't seem to be in a singing humour; but, however, we artists cannot waste our time, so just be so good as to take care of the clothes, and be sure you give them to your master; and so I wash my hands of the transaction."

"Very good, he shall have them; but do you mean to leave such valuable clothes without getting the money for them?"

"Not exactly, for they are paid for."

"Oh! that makes all the difference—he shall have them."

Scarcely had this tailor left the place, when a boy arrived with a parcel, and, looking around him with undisguised astonishment, said—

"Isn't there some other Mr. Todd, in Fleet-street?"

"Not that I know of," said Tobias. "What have you got there?"

"Silk stockings, gloves, lace, cravats, ruffles, and so on."

"The deuce you have; I dare say it's all right."

"I shall leave them—they are paid for. This is the name, and this is the number."

"Now, stupid!"

This last exclamation arose from the fact that this boy, in going out, ran up against another who was coming in.

"Can't you see where you are going?" said the new arrival.

"What's that to you? I have a good mind to punch your head."

"Do it, and then come down our court, and see what a licking I'll give you."

"Will you? Why don't you? Only let me catch you, that's all."

They stood for some moments so closely together that their noses very nearly touched; and then, after mutual assertions of what they would do if they caught each other—although, in either case, to stretch out an arm would have been quite sufficient to have accomplished that object—they

separated, and the last comer said to Tobias, in a tone of irritation, probably consequent upon the misunderstanding he had just had with the hosier's boy—

"You can tell Mr. Todd that the carriage will be ready at half-past seven precisely."

And then he went away, leaving Tobias in a state of great bewilderment as to what Sweeney Todd could possibly be about to do with such an amount of finery as that which was evidently coming home for him.

"I can't make it out," he said. "It's some villany, of course, but I can't make out what it is—I wish I knew; I might thwart him in it. He is a villain, and neither could nor would project anything good; but what can I do? I am quite helpless in this, and will just let it take its course. I can only wish for a power of action I shall never possess. Alas, alas! I am very sad, and know not what will become of me. I wish that I was in my grave, and there I am sure I shall be soon, unless something happens to turn the tide of all this wretched evil fortune that has come upon me."

It was in vain for Tobias to think of vexing himself with conjectures as to what Sweeney Todd was about to do with so much finery, for he had not the remotest foundation to go upon in the matter, and could not for the life of him imagine any possible contingency or chance which should make it necessary for the barber to deck himself in such gaudy apparel. All he could do was to lay down in his own mind a general principle as regarded Sweeney Todd's conduct, and that consisted in the fact, that whatever might be his plans, and whatever might be his objects, they were for no good purpose; but, on the contrary, were most certainly intended for the accomplishment of some great evil which that most villanous person intended to perpetrate.

"I will observe all I can," thought Tobias to himself, "and do what I can to put a stop to his mischiefs; but I fear it will be very little he will allow me to observe, and perhaps still less that he will allow me to do; but I can but try, and do my best."

Poor Tobias's best, as regarded achieving anything against Sweeney Todd, we may well suppose would be little indeed, for that individual was not the man to give anybody an opportunity of doing much; and, possessed as he was of the most consummate art, as well as the greatest possible amount of unscrupulousness, there can be very little doubt but that any attempt poor Tobias might make would recoil upon himself. In about half an hour the barber returned, and his first question was—

"Have any things been left for me?"

"Yes, sir," said Tobias, "here are two parcels, and a boy has been to say that the carriage will be ready at half-past seven precisely."

"'Tis well," said the barber, "that will do; and Tobias, you will be careful, whilst I am gone, of the shop. I shall be back in half an hour, mind you, and not later; and be sure that I find you here at your post. But you may say, if any one comes here on business, there will be neither shaving nor dressing to-night. You understand me?"

"Yes, sir, certainly."

Sweeney Todd then took the bundles which contained the costly apparel, and retired into the parlour with them; and, as it was then seven o'clock, Tobias correctly enough supposed that he had gone to dress himself, and he waited with a considerable amount of curiosity to see what sort of an appearance the barber would cut in his fine apparel. Tobias had not to control his impatience long, for in less than twenty minutes, out came Sweeney Todd, attired in the very height of fashion for the period. His waistcoat was something positively gorgeous, and his fingers were loaded with such costly rings, that they quite dazzled the sight of Tobias to look upon; then, moreover, he wore a sword with a jewelled hilt, but it was one which Tobias really thought he had seen before, for he had a recollection that a gentleman had come to have his hair dressed, and had taken it off, and laid just such a sword across his hat during the operation.

"Remember," said Sweeney Todd, "remember your instructions; obey them to the letter, and no doubt you will ultimately become happy and independent."

With these words, Sweeney Todd left the place, and poor Tobias looked after him with a frown, as he repeated the words—

"Happy and independent. Alas! what a mockery it is of this man to speak to me in such a way—I only wish that I were dead!"

But we will leave Tobias to his own reflections, and follow the more interesting progress of Sweeney Todd, who, for some reason best known to himself, was then playing so grand a part, and casting away so large a sum of money. He made his way to a livery-stables in the immediate neighbourhood, and there, sure enough, the horses were being placed to a handsome carriage; and all being very soon in readiness, Sweeney Todd gave some whispered directions to the driver, and the vehicle started off westward. At that time Hyde Park Corner was very nearly out of town, and it looked as if you were getting a glimpse of the country, and actually seeing something of the peasantry of England, when you got another couple of miles off, and that was the direction in which Sweeney Todd went; and as he goes, we may as well introduce to the reader the sort of individual whom he was going to visit in so much state, and for whom he thought it necessary to go to such great expense. At that period the follies and vices of the nobility were somewhere about as great as they are now, and consequently extravagance induced on many occasions tremendous sacrifice of money, and it was found extremely convenient on many occasions for them to apply to a man of the name of John Mundel, an exceedingly wealthy person, a Dutchman by extraction, who was reported to make immense sums of money by lending to the nobility and others what they required on emergencies, at enormous rates of interest. But it must not be supposed that John Mundel was so confiding as to lend his money without security. It was quite the reverse, for he took care to have the jewels, some costly plate, or the title-deeds of an estate, perchance, as security, before he would part with a single shilling of his cash. In point of fact, John Mundel was nothing more than

a pawnbroker on a very extensive scale, and, although he had an office in town, he usually received his more aristocratic customers at his private residence, which was about two miles off, on the Uxbridge Road. After this explanation, it can very easily be imagined what was the scheme of Sweeney Todd, and that he considered, if he borrowed from John Mundel a sum equal in amount to half the real value of the pearls, he should be well rid of a property which he certainly could not sufficiently well account for the possession of, to enable him to dispose of it openly to the highest bidder. We give Sweeney Todd great credit for the scheme he proposed. It was eminently calculated to succeed, and one which, in the way he undertook it, was certainly set about in the best possible style. During the ride, he revolved in his mind exactly what he should say to John Mundel, and, from what we know of him, we may be well convinced that Sweeney Todd was not likely to fail from any amount of bashfulness in the transaction; but that, on the contrary, he was just the man to succeed in any scheme which required great assurance to carry it through; for he was most certainly master of great assurance, and possessed of a kind of diplomatic skill, which, had fortune placed him in a more elevated position of life, would no doubt have made a great man of him, and gained him great political reputation. John Mundel's villa, which was called, by the by, Mundel House, was a large, handsome, and modern structure, surrounded by a few acres of pleasure-gardens, which, however, the money-lender never looked at, for his whole soul was too much engrossed by his love for cash to enable him to do so; and, if he derived any satisfaction at all from it, that satisfaction must have been entirely owing to the fact, that he had wrung mansion, grounds, and all the costly furnishing of the former, from an improvident debtor, who had been forced to fly the country, and leave his property wholly in the hands of the money-lender and usurer. It was but a short drive with the really handsome horses that Sweeney Todd had succeeded in hiring for the occasion, and he soon found himself opposite the entrance gates of the residence of John Mundel. His great object now was that the usurer should see the equipage which he had brought down; and he accordingly desired the footman who accompanied him at once to ring

the bell at the entrance-gate, and to say that a gentleman was waiting in his carriage to see Mr. Mundel. This was done; and when the money-lender's servant reported to him that the equipage was a costly one, and that, in his opinion, the visitor must be some nobleman of great rank, John Mundel made no difficulty about the matter, but walked down to the gate at once, where he immediately mentally subscribed to the opinion of his servant, by admitting to himself that the equipage was faultless, and presumed at once that it did belong to some person of great rank. He was proportionally humble, as such men always are, and, advancing to the side of the carriage, he begged to know what commands his lordship—for so he called him at once—had for him?

The Barber Acts The Duke To Pawn The Pearls.

The Barber Acts The Duke To Pawn The Pearls.

"I wish to know," said Sweeney Todd, "Mr. Mundel, if you are inclined to lay under an obligation a rather illustrious lady, by helping her out of a little pecuniary difficulty?"

John Mundel glanced again at the equipage, and he likewise saw something of the rich dress of his visitor, who had not disputed the title which had been applied to him, of lord; and he made up his mind accordingly that it was just one of the transactions that would suit him, provided the security that would be offered was of a tangible nature. That was the only point upon which John Mundel had the remotest doubt, but, at all events, he urgently pressed his visitor to alight and walk in.

CHAPTER XIV.
THE GREAT CHANGE IN THE PROSPECTS OF SWEENEY TODD.

As Sweeney Todd's object, so far as regarded the money-lender having seen the carriage, was fully answered, he had no objection to enter the house, which he accordingly did at once, being preceded by John Mundel, who became each moment more and more impressed with the fact, as he considered it, that his guest was some person of very great rank and importance in society. He ushered him into a splendidly-furnished apartment, and after offering him refreshments, which Sweeney Todd politely declined, he waited with no small degree of impatience for his visitor to be more explicit with regard to the object of his visit.

"I should," said Sweeney Todd, "have myself accommodated the illustrious lady with the sum of money she requires, but as I could not do so without incumbering some estates, she positively forbade me to think of it."

"Certainly," said Mr. Mundel, "she is a very illustrious lady, I presume?"

"Very illustrious indeed, but it must be a condition of this transaction, if you at all enter into it, that you are not to inquire precisely who she is, nor are you to inquire precisely who I am."

"It's not my usual way of conducting business, but if everything else be satisfactory, I shall not cavil at that."

"Very good; by everything else being satisfactory, I presume you mean the security offered?"

"Why, yes, that is of great importance, my lord."

"I informed the illustrious lady, that, as the affair was to be wrapped up in something of a mystery, the security must be extremely ample."

"That's a very proper view to take of the matter, my lord. I wonder," thought John Mundel, "if he is a duke; I'll call him 'your grace' next time, and see if he objects to it."

"Therefore," continued Sweeney Todd, "the illustrious lady placed in my hands security to a third greater amount than she required."

"Certainly, certainly, a very proper arrangement, your grace; may I ask the nature of the proffered security?"

"Jewels."

"Highly satisfactory and unexceptionable security; they go into a small space, and do not deteriorate in value."

"And if they do," said the barber, "deteriorate in value, it would make no difference to you, for the illustrious person's honour would be committed to your redemption."

"I don't doubt that, your grace, in the least; I merely made the remark incidentally, quite incidentally."

"Of course, of course; and I trust, before going further, that you are quite in a position to enter into this subject."

"Certainly I am, and, I am proud to say, to any amount. Show me the money's worth, your grace, and I will show you the money—that's my way of doing business; and no one can say that John Mundel ever shrunk from a matter that was brought fairly before him, and that he considered worth his going into."

"It was by hearing such a character of you that I was induced to come to you. What do you think of that?"

Sweeney Todd took from his pocket, with a careless air, the string of pearls, and cast them down before the eyes of the money-lender, who took them up and ran them rapidly through his fingers for a few seconds before he said—

"I thought there was but one string like this in the kingdom, and those belonged to the Queen."

"Well," said Sweeney Todd.

"I humbly beg your grace's pardon. How much money does your grace require on these pearls?"

"Twelve thousand pounds is their current value, if a sale of them was enforced; eight thousand pounds are required of you on their security."

"Eight thousand is a large sum. As a general thing I lend but half the value upon anything; but in this case, to oblige your grace and the illustrious personage, I do not, of course, hesitate for one moment but shall for one month lend you the required amount."

"That will do," said Sweeney Todd, scarcely concealing the exultation he felt at getting so much more from John Mundel than he expected, and which he certainly would not have got if the money-lender had not been most fully and completely impressed with the idea that the pearls belonged to the Queen, and that he had actually at length majesty itself for a customer. He did not suppose for one moment that it was the queen who wanted the money; but his view of the case was, that she had lent the pearls to this nobleman to meet some exigency of his own, and that, of course, they would be redeemed very shortly. Altogether a more pleasant transaction for John Mundel could not have been imagined. It was just the sort of thing he would have looked out for, and had the greatest satisfaction in bringing to a conclusion, and he considered it was opening the door to the highest class of business in his way that he was capable of doing.

"In what name, your grace," he said, "shall I draw a cheque upon my banker?"

"In the name of Colonel George."

"Certainly, certainly; and if your grace will give me an acknowledgment for eight thousand pounds, and please to understand that at the end of a month from this time the transaction will be renewed if necessary, I will give you a cheque for seven thousand five hundred pounds."

"Why seven thousand five hundred only, when you mentioned eight thousand pounds?"

"The five hundred pounds is my little commission upon the transaction. Your grace will perceive that I appreciate highly the honour of your grace's custom, and consequently charge the lowest possible price. I can assure your grace I could get more for my money by a great deal, but the pleasure of being able to meet your grace's views is so great, that I am willing to make a sacrifice, and therefore it is that I say five hundred, when I really ought to say one thousand pounds, taking into consideration the great scarcity of money at the present juncture; and I can assure your grace that—"

"Peace, peace," said Sweeney Todd; "and if it be not convenient to redeem the jewels at the end of a month from this time, you will hear from me most assuredly."

"I am quite satisfied of that," said John Mundel, and he accordingly drew a cheque for seven thousand five hundred pounds, which he handed to Sweeney Todd, who put it in his pocket, not a little delighted that at last he had got rid of his pearls, even at a price so far beneath their real value.

"I need scarcely urge upon you, Mr. Mundel," he said, "the propriety of keeping this affair profoundly secret."

"Indeed you need not, your grace, for it is part of my business to be discreet and cautious. I should very soon have nothing to do in my line, your grace may depend, if I were to talk about it. No, this transaction will for ever remain locked up in my own breast, and no living soul but your grace and I need know what has occurred."

With this, John Mundel showed Sweeney Todd to his carriage, with abundance of respect, and in two minutes more he was travelling along towards town with what might be considered a small fortune in his pocket. We should have noticed earlier that Sweeney Todd had, upon the occasion of his going to sell the pearls to the lapidary, in the city, made some great alterations in his appearance, so that it was not likely he should be recognised again to a positive certainly. For example—having no whiskers whatever of his own, he had put on a large black pair of false ones, as well as moustachios, and he had given some colour to his cheeks likewise which had so completely altered his appearance, that those who were most intimate with him would not have known him except by his voice, and that he took good care to alter in his intercourse with John Mundel, so that it should not become a future means of detection.

"I thought that this would succeed," he muttered to himself, as he went towards town, "and I have not been deceived. For three months longer, and only three, I will carry on the business in Fleet-street, so that any sudden alteration in my fortunes may not give rise to suspicion."

He was then silent for some minutes, during which he appeared to be revolving some very knotty question in his brain, and then he said, suddenly—

"Well, well, as regards Tobias, I think it will be safer, unquestionably, to put him out of the way by taking his life, than to try to dispose of him in a mad-house, and I think there are one or two more persons whom it will be highly necessary to prevent being mischievous, at all events at present. I must think—I must think."

When such a man as Sweeney Todd set about thinking, there could be no possible doubt but that some serious mischief was meditated, and any one who could have watched his face during that ride home from the money-lender's, would have seen by its expression that the thoughts which agitated him were of a dark and desperate character, and such as anybody but himself would have shrunk from aghast. But he was not a man to shrink from anything, and, on the contrary, the more a set of

circumstances presented themselves in a gloomy and a terrific aspect, the better they seemed to suit him, and the peculiar constitution of his mind. There can be no doubt but that the love of money was the predominant feeling in Sweeney Todd's intellectual organization, and that, by the amount it would bring him, or the amount it would deprive him of, he measured everything. With such a man, then, no question of morality or ordinary feeling could arise, and there can be no doubt that he would quite willingly have sacrificed the whole human race, if, by so doing, he could have achieved any of the objects of his ambition. And so, on his road homeward, he probably made up his mind to plunge still deeper into criminality, and perchance to indulge in acts that a man not already so deeply versed in iniquity would have shrunk from with the most positive terror. And by a strange style of reasoning, such men as Sweeney Todd reconcile themselves to the most heinous crimes upon the ground of what they call policy. That is to say, that having committed some serious offence, they are compelled to commit a great number more for the purpose of endeavouring to avoid the consequences of the first lot, and hence the continuance of criminality becomes a matter necessary to self-defence, and an essential ingredient in their consideration of self-preservation. Probably Sweeney Todd had been for the greater part of his life, aiming at the possession of extensive pecuniary resources, and, no doubt, by the aid of a superior intellect, and a mind full of craft and design, he had managed to make others subservient to his views; and now that those views were answered, and that his underlings and accomplices were no longer required, they became positively dangerous. He was well aware of that cold-blooded policy which teaches that it is far safer to destroy than to cast away the tools by which a man carves his way to power and fortune.

"They shall die," said Sweeney Todd—"dead men tell no tales, nor women nor boys either, and they shall all die; after which there will, I think, be a serious fire in Fleet-street. Ha! ha! it may spread to what mischief it likes, always provided it stops not short of the entire destruction of my house and premises. Rare sport—rare sport will it be

to me, for then I will at once commence a new career, in which the barber will be forgotten, and the man of fashion only seen and remembered, for with this sad addition to my means, I am fully capable of vying with the highest and the noblest, let them be whom they may."

This seemed a pleasant train of reflections to Sweeney Todd, and as the coach entered Fleet-street, there sat such a grim smile upon his countenance that he looked like some fiend in human shape, who had just completed the destruction of a human soul. When he reached the livery stables to which he directed them to drive, instead of his own shop, he rewarded all who had gone with him most liberally, so that the coachman and footman, who were both servants out of place, would have had no objection for Sweeney Todd every day to have gone on some such an expedition, so that they should receive as liberal wages for the small part they enacted in it as they did upon that occasion. He then walked from the stables toward his own house, but upon reaching there a little disappointment awaited him, for he found to his surprise that no light was burning; and when he placed his hand upon the shop-door, it opened, but there was no trace of Tobias, although he, Sweeney Todd, called loudly upon him the moment he set foot within the shop. Then a feeling of apprehension crept across the barber, and he groped anxiously about for some matches, by the aid of which he hoped to procure a light, and then an explanation of the mysterious absence of Tobias. But in order that we may, in its proper form, relate how it was that Tobias had had the daring thus, in open contradiction of his master, to be away from the shop, we must devote to Tobias a chapter, which will plead his extenuation.

CHAPTER XV.
TOBIAS'S ADVENTURES DURING THE ABSENCE OF SWEENEY TODD.

Tobias guessed, and guessed rightly too, that when Sweeney Todd said he would be away half an hour, he only mentioned that short period of time, in order to keep the lad's vigilance on the alert, and to prevent him from taking any advantage of a more protracted absence. The very style and manner in which he had gone out, precluded the likelihood of it being for so short a period of time; and that circumstance set Tobias seriously thinking over a situation which was becoming more intolerable every day. The lad had the sense to feel that he could not go on much longer as he was going on, and that in a short time such a life would destroy him.

"It is beyond endurance," he said, "and I know not what to do; and since Sweeney Todd has told me that the boy he had before went out of his senses, and is now in the cell of a mad-house, I feel that such will be my fate, and that I too shall come to that dreadful end, and then no one will believe a word I utter, but consider everything to be mere raving."

After a time, as the darkness increased, he lit the lamp which hung in the shop, and which, until it was closed for the night, usually shed a dim ray from the window. Then he sat down to think again, and he said to himself—

"If I could now but summon courage to ask my mother about this robbery which Sweeney Todd imputes to her, she might assure me it was false, and that she never did such a deed; but then it is dreadful for me to

ask her such a question, because it may be true; and then, how shocking it would be for her to be forced to confess to me, her own son, such a circumstance."

These were the honourable feelings which prevented Tobias from questioning his mother as regarded Todd's accusation of her—an accusation too dreadful to believe implicitly, and yet sufficiently probable for him to have a strong suspicion that it might be true after all. It is to be deeply regretted that Tobias's philosophy did not carry him a little further, and make him see, the moment the charge was made, that he ought unquestionably to investigate it to the very utmost. But still we could hardly expect, from a mere boy, that acute reasoning and power of action, which depend so much upon the knowledge of the world and an extensive practice in the usages of society. It was sufficient if he felt correctly—we could scarcely expect him to reason so. But upon this occasion, above all others, he seemed completely overcome by the circumstances which surrounded him; and from his excited manner, one might have almost imagined that the insanity he himself predicted at the close of his career was really not far off. He wrung his hands, and he wept, every now and then, in sad speech, bitterly bemoaning his situation, until at length, with a sudden resolution, he sprang to his feet, exclaiming—

"This night shall end it. I can endure it no more. I will fly from this place, and seek my fortune elsewhere. Any amount of distress, danger, or death itself even, is preferable to the dreadful life I lead."

He walked some paces towards the door, and then he paused, as he said to himself in a low tone—

"Todd will surely not be home yet awhile, and why should I then neglect the only opportunity I may ever have of searching this house to satisfy my mind as regards any of the mysteries that it contains?"

He paused over this thought, and considered well its danger, for dangerous indeed it was to no small extent, but he was desperate; and with a resolution that scarcely could have been expected from him, he

determined upon taking that step, above all others, which Todd was almost sure to punish with death. He closed the shop door, and bolted it upon the inside, so that he could not be suddenly interrupted, and then he looked round him carefully for some weapon, by the aid of which he should be able to break his way into the parlour, which the barber always kept closed and locked in his absence. A weapon that would answer the purpose of breaking any lock, if he, Tobias, chose to proceed so roughly to work, was close at hand in the iron bar, which, when the place was closed at night, secured a shutter to the door. Wrought up as he was to almost frenzy, Tobias seized this bar, and, advancing towards the parlour door, he with one blow smashed the lock to atoms, and the door yielded. The moment it did so, there was a crash of glass, and when Tobias entered the room he saw that upon its threshold lay a wine-glass shattered to atoms, and he felt certain that it had been placed in some artful position by Sweeney Todd as a detector, when he should return, of any attempt that had been made upon the door of the parlour. And now Tobias felt that he was so far committed that he might as well go on with his work, and accordingly he lit a candle, which he found upon the parlour table, and then proceeded to make what discoveries he could. Several of the cupboards in the room yielded at once to his hands, and in them he found nothing remarkable; but there was one that he could not open; so, without a moment's hesitation, he had recourse to the bar of iron again, and broke its lock, when the door swung open,—and to his astonishment there tumbled out of this cupboard such a volley of hats of all sorts and descriptions, some looped with silver, some three-cornered, and some square, that they formed quite a museum of that article of attire, and excited the greatest surprise in the mind of Tobias, at the same time that they tended very greatly to confirm some other thoughts and feelings which he had concerning Sweeney Todd. This was the only cupboard which was fast, although there was another door which looked as if it opened into one, but when Tobias broke that down with the bar of iron, he found it was the door which led to the staircase conducting to the upper part of the house—that upper part which Sweeney Todd, with all his avarice, would never let, and of which the shutters were kept

continually closed, so that the opposite neighbours never caught a glimpse into any of the apartments. With cautious and slow steps, which he adopted instantaneously, although he knew that there was no one in the house but himself, Tobias ascended the staircase.

"I will go to the very top rooms first," he said to himself, "and so examine them all as I come down, and then if Todd should return suddenly, I shall have a better chance of hearing him, than as if I began below and went upwards."

Acting upon this prudent scheme, he went up to the attics, all the doors of which were swinging open, and there was nothing in any of them whatever. He descended to the second floor with the like result, and a feeling of great disappointment began to creep over him at the thought that, after all, the barber's house might not repay the trouble of examination. But when he reached the first floor he soon found abundant reason to alter his opinion. The doors were fast, and he had to burst them open; and, when he got in, he found that those rooms were partially furnished, and that they contained a great quantity of miscellaneous property of all kinds and descriptions. In one corner was an enormous quantity of walking-sticks, some of which were of a very costly and expensive character, with gold and silver chased tops to them, and in another corner was a great number of umbrellas—in fact, at least a hundred of them. Then there were boots and shoes lying upon the floor, partially covered up, as if to keep them from dirt; there were thirty or forty swords of different styles and patterns, many of them appearing to be very firm blades, and in one or two cases the scabbards were richly ornamented. At one end of the front and larger of these two rooms, was an old-fashioned-looking bureau of great size, and with as much wood-work in it as seemed required to make at least a couple of such articles of furniture. This was very securely locked, and presented more difficulties in the way of opening it than any of the doors had done, for the lock was of great strength and apparent durability. Moreover it was not so easily got at, but at length by using the bar as a sort of lever, instead of as a mere machine to strike with, Tobias succeeded in forcing this bureau

open, and then his eyes were perfectly dazzled with the amount of jewellery and trinkets of all kinds and descriptions that were exhibited to his gaze. There was a great number of watches, gold chains, silver and gold snuff-boxes, and a large assortment of rings, shoe-buckles, and brooches. These articles must have been of great value, and Tobias could not help exclaiming aloud—

"How could Sweeney Todd come by these articles, except by the murder of their owners?"

This, indeed, seemed but too probable a supposition, and the more especially so, as in a further part of this bureau a great quantity of apparel was found by Tobias. He stood with a candle in his hand, looking upon these various objects for more than a quarter of an hour, and then as a sudden and a natural thought came across him of how completely a few of them even would satisfy his wants and his mother's for a long time to come, he stretched forth his hand towards the glittering mass, but he drew it back again with a shudder, saying—

"No—no, these things are the plunder of the dead. Let Sweeney Todd keep them to himself, and look upon them, if he can, with eyes of enjoyment. I will have none of them; they would bring misfortune along with every guinea that they might be turned into."

As he spoke, he heard St. Dunstan's clock strike nine, and he started at the sound, for it let him know that already Sweeney Todd had been away an hour beyond the time he said he would be absent, so that there was a probability of his quick return now, and it would scarcely be safe to linger longer in his house.

"I must be gone—I must be gone. I should like to look upon my mother's face once more before I leave London for ever perhaps. I may tell her of the danger she is in from Todd's knowledge of her secret; no—no, I cannot speak to her of that; I must go, and leave her to those chances which I hope and trust will work favourably for her."

Flinging down the iron bar which had done him such good service, Tobias stopped not to close any of those receptacles which contained the plunder that Sweeney Todd had taken most probably from murdered persons, but he rushed down stairs into the parlour again, where the boots that had fallen out of the cupboard still lay upon the floor in wild disorder. It was a strange and sudden whim that took him, rather than a matter of reflection, that induced him, instead of his own hat, to take one of those which were lying so indiscriminately at his feet; and he did so. By mere accident it turned out to be an exceedingly handsome hat, of rich workmanship and material, and then Tobias, feeling terrified lest Sweeney Todd should return before he could leave the place, paid no attention to anything, but turned from the shop, merely pulling the door after him, and then darting over the road towards the Temple like a hunted hare; for his great wish was to see his mother, and then he had an undefined notion that his best plan for escaping the clutches of Sweeney Todd would be to go to sea. In common with all boys of his age, who know nothing whatever of the life of a sailor, it presented itself in the most fascinating colours. A sailor ashore and a sailor afloat, are about as two different things as the world can present; but, to the imagination of Tobias Ragg, a sailor was somebody who was always dancing hornpipes, spending money, and telling wonderful stories. No wonder, then, that the profession presented itself under such fascinating colours to all such persons as Tobias; and as it seemed, and seems still, to be a sort of general understanding that the real condition of a sailor should be mystified in every possible way and shape by both novelist and dramatist, it is no wonder that it requires actual experience to enable those parties who are in the habit of being carried away by just what they hear, to come to a correct conclusion.

"I will go to sea!" ejaculated Tobias. "Yes, I will go to sea!"

As he spoke these words he passed out of the gate of the Temple leading into Whitefriars, in which ancient vicinity his mother dwelt, endeavouring to eke out a living as best she might. She was very much

surprised (for she happened to be at home) at the unexpected visit of her son, Tobias, and uttered a faint scream as she let fall a flat-iron very nearly upon his toes.

"Mother," he said, "I cannot stay with Sweeney Todd any longer, so do not ask me."

"Not stay with such a respectable man?"

"A respectable man, mother! Alas, alas, how little you know of him! But what am I saying? I dare not speak! Oh, that fatal, fatal candlestick!"

"But how are you to live, and what do you mean by a fatal candlestick?"

"Forgive me—I did not mean to say that! Farewell, mother! I am going to sea."

"To see what, my dear?" said Mrs. Ragg, who was much more difficult to talk to, than even Hamlet's grave-digger. "You don't know how much I am obliged to Sweeney Todd."

"Yes, I do, and that's what drives me mad to think of. Farewell, mother, perhaps for ever! If I can, of course I will communicate with you, but now I dare not stay."

"Oh! what have you done, Tobias—what have you done?"

"Nothing—nothing! but Sweeney Todd is—"

"What—what?"

"No matter—no matter! Nothing—nothing! And yet at this last moment I am almost tempted to ask you concerning a candlestick."

"Don't mention that," said Mrs. Ragg; "I don't want to hear anything said about it."

"It is true, then?"

"Yes; but did Mr. Todd tell you?"

"He did—he did. I have now asked the question I never thought could have passed my lips. Farewell, mother; for ever farewell!"

Tobias rushed out of the place, leaving old Mrs. Ragg astonished at his behaviour, and with a strong suspicion that some accession of insanity had come over him.

"The Lord have mercy upon us!" she said, "what shall I do? I am astonished at Mr. Todd telling him about the candlestick; it's true enough, though, for all that. I recollect it as well as though it were yesterday; it was a very hard winter, and I was minding a set of chambers, when Todd came to shave the gentleman, and I saw him with my own eyes put a silver candlestick in his pocket. Then I went over to his shop and reasoned with him about it, and he gave it me back again, and I brought it to the chambers, and laid it down exactly on the spot where he took it from."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Ragg, after a pause of a few moments, "to be sure, he has been a very good friend to me ever since, but that I suppose is for fear I should tell, and get him hung or transported. But, however, we must take the good with the bad, and when Tobias comes to think of it, he will go back again to his work, I dare say; for, after all, it's a very foolish thing for him to trouble his head whether Mr. Todd stole a silver candlestick or not."

CHAPTER XVI.
THE STRANGE ODOUR IN OLD ST. DUNSTAN'S CHURCH.

About this time, and while the incidents of our most strange and eventful narrative were taking place, the pious frequenters of old St. Dunstan's church began to perceive a strange and most abominable odour throughout that sacred edifice. It was in vain that old women who came to hear the sermons, although they were too deaf to catch a third part of them, brought smelling bottles and other means of stifling their noses; still that dreadful charnel-house sort of smell would make itself most painfully and most disagreeably apparent. And the Rev. Joseph Stillingport, who was the regular preacher, smelt it in the pulpit; and had been seen to sneeze in the midst of a most pious discourse indeed, and to hold to his pious mouth a handkerchief, in which was some strong and pungent essence, for the purpose of trying to overcome the horrible effluvia. The organ-blower and the organ-player were both nearly stifled, for the horrible odour seemed to ascend to the upper part of the church; although those who sat in what may be called the pit, by no means escaped it. The churchwardens looked at each other in their pews with contorted countenances, and were almost afraid to breathe; and the only person who did not complain bitterly of the dreadful odour in St. Dunstan's church, was an old woman who had been a pew-opener for many years; but then she had lost the faculties of her nose, which, perhaps, accounted satisfactorily for that circumstance. At length, however, the nuisance became so intolerable, that the beadle, whose duty it was in the morning to open the church doors, used to come up to

them with the massive key in one hand, and a cloth soaked in vinegar in the other, just as the people used to do in the time of the great plague of London; and when he had opened the doors, he used to run over to the other side of the way.

"Ah, Mr. Blunt!" he used to say to the bookseller, who lived opposite —"ah! Mr. Blunt, I is obligated to cut over here, leastways till the *atymouspheric* air is mixed up all along with the *stinkifications* which come from the church."

By this it will be seen that the beadle was rather a learned man, and no doubt went to some mechanics' institution of those days, where he learned something of everything but what was calculated to be of some service to him. As might be supposed, from the fact that this sort of thing had gone on for a few months, it began to excite some attention with a view to a remedy; for, in the great city of London, a nuisance of any sort or description requires to become venerable by age before any one thinks of removing it; and after that, it is quite clear that that becomes a good argument against removing it at all. But at last, the churchwardens began to have a fear that some pestilential disease would be the result if they for any longer period of time put up with the horrible stench, and that they might be among its first victims, so they began to ask each other what could be done to obviate it. Probably, if this frightful stench, being suggestive, as it was, of all sorts of horrors, had been graciously pleased to confine itself to some poor locality, nothing would have been heard of it; but when it became actually offensive to a gentleman in a metropolitan pulpit, and when it began to make itself perceptible to the sleepy faculties of the churchwardens of St. Dunstan's church, Fleet-street, so as to prevent them even from dozing through the afternoon sermon, it became a very serious matter indeed. But what was it, what could it be, and what was to be done to get rid of it? These were the anxious questions that were asked right and left, as regarded the serious nuisance, without the fates graciously acceding any reply. But yet one thing seemed to be generally agreed, and that was, that it did come, and

must come, somehow or other, out of the vaults from beneath the church. But then, as the pious and hypocritical Mr. Butterwick, who lived opposite, said—

"How could that be, when it was satisfactorily proved by the present books that nobody had been buried in the vaults for some time, and therefore it was a very odd thing that dead people, after leaving off smelling and being disagreeable, should all of a sudden burst out again in that line, and be twice as bad as ever they were at first."

And on Wednesdays sometimes, too, when pious people were not satisfied with the Sunday's devotion, but began again in the middle of the week, that stench was positively terrific. Indeed, so bad was it, that some of the congregation were forced to leave, and have been seen to slink into Bell-yard, where Lovett's pie-shop was situated, and then and there solace themselves with a pork or a veal pie, in order that their mouths and noses should be full of a delightful and agreeable flavour, instead of one most peculiarly and decidedly the reverse. At last there was a confirmation to be held at St. Dunstan's church, and a great concourse of persons assembled, for a sermon was to be preached by the bishop after the confirmation; and a very great fuss indeed was to be made about really nobody knew exactly what. Preparations, as newspapers say, upon an extensive scale, and regardless of expense, were made for the purpose of adding lustre to the ceremony, and surprising the bishop, when he came, with a good idea that the people who attended St. Dunstan's church were somebodies, and really worth confirming. The confirmation was to take place at twelve o'clock, and the bells ushered in the morning with their most pious tones, for it was not every day that the authorities of St. Dunstan succeeded in catching a bishop, and when they did so, they were determined to make the most of him. And the numerous authorities, including churchwardens, and even the very beadle, were in an uncommon fluster, and running about, and impeding each other, as authorities always do upon public occasions. But, to those who only look to the surface of things, and who came to admire what was grand and magnificent in the preparations, the beadle

certainly carried away the palm, for that functionary was attired in a completely new cocked hat and coat, and certainly looked very splendid and showy upon the occasion. Moreover, that beadle had been well and judiciously selected, and the parish authorities made no secret of it, when there was an election for beadle, that they threw all their influence into the scale of that candidate who happened to be the biggest, and consequently, who was calculated to wear the official costume with an air that no smaller man could have possibly aspired to on any account. At half-past eleven o'clock the bishop made his gracious appearance, and was duly ushered into the vestry, where there was a comfortable fire, and on the table in which, likewise, were certain cold chickens and bottles of rare wines; for confirming a number of people, and preaching a sermon besides, was considered no joke, and might, for all they knew, be provocative of a great appetite in the bishop. And with what a bland and courtly air the bishop smiled as he ascended the steps of St. Dunstan's Church. How affable he was to the churchwardens, and he actually smiled upon a poor miserable charity boy, who, his eyes glaring wide open, and his muffin cap in his hand, was taking his first stare at a real live bishop. To be sure, the beadle knocked him down directly the bishop had passed, for having the presumption to look at such a great personage, but then that was to be expected fully and completely, and only proved that the proverb, which permits a cat to look at a king, is not equally applicable to charity boys and bishops. When the bishop got to the vestry, some very complimentary words were uttered to him by the usual officiating clergyman, but, somehow or other, the bland smile had left the lips of the great personage, and, interrupting the vicar in the midst of a fine flowing speech, he said—

"That's all very well, but what a terrible stink there is here!"

The churchwardens gave a groan, for they had flattered themselves that perhaps the bishop would not notice the dreadful smell, or that, if he did, he would think it was accidental, and say nothing about it; but now, when he really did mention it, they found all their hopes scattered to the winds, and that it was necessary to say something.

"Is this horrid charnel-house sort of smell always here?"

"I am afraid it is," said one of the churchwardens.

"Afraid!" said the bishop, "surely you know; you seem to me to have a nose."

"Yes," said the churchwarden, in great confusion, "I have that honour, and I have the pleasure of informing you, my Lord Bishop—I mean I have the honour of informing you that this smell is always here."

The bishop sniffed several times, and then he said—

"It is very dreadful; and I hope that by the next time I come to St. Dunstan's, you will have the pleasure and the honour, both, of informing me that it has gone away."

The churchwarden bowed, and got into an extreme corner, saying to himself—

"This is the bishop's last visit here, and I don't wonder at it, for, as if out of pure spite, the smell is ten times worse than ever to-day."

And so it was, for it seemed to come up through all the crevices of the flooring of the church, with a power and perseverance that was positively dreadful.

The people coughed, and held their handkerchiefs to their noses, remarking to each other—

"Isn't it dreadful?—did you ever know the smell in St. Dunstan's so bad before," and everybody agreed that they never had known it anything like so bad, for that it was positively awful—and so indeed it was.

The anxiety of the bishop to get away was quite manifest, and, if he could have decently taken his departure without confirming anybody at all, there is no doubt but that he would have willingly done so, and left all the congregation to die and be—something or another. But this he could not do, but he could cut it short, and he did so. The people found themselves confirmed before they almost knew where they were, and the bishop would not go into the vestry again on any account, but hurried

down the steps of the church, and into his carriage, with the greatest precipitation in the world, thus proving that holiness is no proof against a most abominable stench. As may be well supposed, after this, the subject assumed a much more serious aspect, and on the following day a solemn meeting was held of all the church authorities, at which it was determined that men should be employed to make a thorough and searching examination of the vaults of St. Dunstan's, with the view of discovering, if possible, from whence particularly the abominable stench emanated. And then it was decided that the stench was to be put down, and that the bishop was to be apprized it was put down, and that he might visit the church in perfect safety.

CHAPTER XVII.
SWEENEY TODD'S PROCEEDINGS CONSEQUENT UPON THE DEPARTURE OF TOBIAS.

We left the barber in his own shop, much wondering that Tobias had not responded to the call which he had made upon him, but yet scarcely believing it possible that he could have ventured upon the height of iniquity, which we know Tobias had really been guilty of. He paused for a few moments, and held up the light which he had procured, and gazed around him with inquiring eyes, for he could, indeed, scarcely believe it possible that Tobias had sufficiently cast off his dread of him, Sweeney Todd, to be enabled to achieve any act for his liberation. But when he saw that the lock of the parlour-door was open, positive rage obtained precedence over every other feeling.

"The villain!" he cried, "has he dared really to consummate an act I thought he could not have dreamt of for a moment? Is it possible that he can have presumed so far as to have searched the house?"

That Tobias, however, had presumed so far, the barber soon discovered, and when he went into his parlour and saw what had actually occurred, and that not only was every cupboard door broken open, but that likewise the door which led to the staircase and the upper part of the house had not escaped, he got perfectly furious, and it was some time before he could sufficiently calm himself to reflect upon the probable and possible amount of danger he might run in consequence of these proceedings. When he did, his active mind at once told him that there

was not much to be dreaded immediately, for that most probably Tobias, still having the fear before his eyes of what he might do as regarded his mother, had actually run away; and, "in all likelihood," muttered the barber, "he has taken with him something which would allow me to fix upon him the stigma of robbery, but that I must see to."

Having fastened the shop-door securely, he took the light in his hands, and ascended to the upper part of his house—that is to say, the first floor, where alone anything was to be found. He saw at once the open bureau, with all its glittering display of jewels, and as he gazed upon the heap, he muttered—

"I have not so accurate a knowledge of what is here as to be able to say if anything be extracted or not, but I know the amount of money, if I do not know the precise number of jewels which this bureau contains."

He opened a small drawer which had entirely escaped the scrutiny of Tobias, and proceeded to count a large number of guineas which were there.

"These are correct," he said, when he had finished his examination —"these are correct, and he has touched none of them."

He then opened another drawer, in which were a great many packets of silver done up in paper, and these likewise he carefully counted, and was satisfied they were right.

"It is strange," he said, "that he has taken nothing, but yet perhaps it is better that it should be so, inasmuch as it shows a wholesome fear of me. The slightest examination would have shown him these hoards of money; and since he has not made that slight examination, nor discovered any of them, it seems to my mind decisive upon the subject, that he has taken nothing, and perchance I shall discover him easier than I imagine."

Tobias Discovers The Barber's Hidden Plunder.

Tobias Discovers The Barber's Hidden Plunder.

He repaired to the parlour again, and carefully divested himself of everything which had enabled him so successfully to impose upon John Mundel, and replaced them by his ordinary costume, after which he fastened up his house and sallied forth, taking his way direct to Mrs. Ragg's humble home, in the expectation that there he would hear something of Tobias, which would give him a clue where to search for him, for search for him he fully intended; but what were his precise intentions perhaps he could hardly have told himself, until he actually found him. When he reached Mrs. Ragg's house, and made his appearance abruptly before that lady, who seemed somehow or another to be always ironing and always to drop the iron when any one came in, very near their toes, he said—

"Where did your son Tobias go after he left you to-night?"

"Lor! Mr. Todd, is it you? You are as good as a conjuror, sir, for he was here; but bless you, sir, I know no more where he is gone to, than the man in the moon. He said he was going to sea, but I am sure I should not have thought it, that I should not."

"To sea!—then the probability is that he would go down to the docks, but surely not to-night. Do you not expect him back here to sleep?"

"Well, sir, that's a very good thought of yours; and he may come back here to sleep, for all I know to the contrary."

"But you do not know it for a fact?"

"He didn't say so; but he may come, you know, sir, for all that."

"Did he tell you his reason for leaving me?"

"Indeed no, sir; he really did not, and he seemed to me to be a little bit out of his senses."

"Ah! Mrs. Ragg," said Sweeney Todd, "there you have it. From the first moment that he came into my service, I knew and felt confident that he was out of his senses. There was a strangeness of behaviour about him, which soon convinced me of that fact, and I am only anxious about him,

in order that some effort may be made to cure him of such a malady, for it is a serious, and a dreadful one, and one which, unless taken in time, will be yet the death of Tobias."

These words were spoken with such solemn seriousness, that they had a wonderful effect upon Mrs. Ragg, who, like most ignorant persons, began immediately to confirm that which she most dreaded.

"Oh, it's too true," she said, "it's too true. He did say some extraordinary things to-night, Mr. Todd, and he said he had something to tell, which was too horrid to speak of. Now the idea, you know, Mr. Todd, of anybody having anything at all to tell, and not telling it at once, is quite singular."

"It is!—and I am sure that his conduct is such you never would be guilty of, Mrs. Ragg;—but hark! what's that?"

"It's a knock, Mr. Todd."

"Hush, stop a moment—what if it be Tobias?"

"Gracious goodness! it can't be him, for he would have come in at once."

"No; I slipped the bolt of the door, because I wished to talk to you without observation; so it may be Tobias, you perceive, after all. But let me hide somewhere, so that I may hear what he says, and be able to judge how his mind is affected. I will not hesitate to do something for him, let it cost what it may."

"There's the cupboard, Mr. Todd. To be sure there is some dirty saucepans and a frying-pan in it, and of course it aint a fit place to ask you to go into."

"Never mind that—never mind that; only you be careful, for the sake of Tobias's very life, to keep secret that I am here."

The knocking at the door increased each moment in vehemence, and scarcely had Sweeney Todd succeeded in getting into the cupboard along with Mrs. Ragg's pots and pans, and thoroughly concealed himself, when

she opened the door; and, sure enough—Tobias, heated, tired, and looking ghastly pale—staggered into the room.

"Mother," he said, "I have taken a new thought, and have come back to you."

"Well, I thought you would, Tobias; and a very good thing it is that you have."

"Listen to me: I thought of flying from England for ever, and of never again setting foot upon its shores. I have altered that determination completely, and I feel now that it is my duty to do something else."

"To do what, Tobias?"

"To tell all I know—to make a clean breast, mother, and, let the consequences be what they may, to let justice take its course."

"What do you mean, Tobias?"

"Mother, I have come to a conclusion, that what I have to tell is of such vast importance, compared with any consequences that may arise from the petty robbery of the candlestick, which you know of, that I ought not to hesitate a moment in revealing everything."

"But, my dear Tobias, remember that that is a dreadful secret, and one that must be kept."

"It cannot matter—it cannot matter; and, besides, it is more than probable that by revealing what I actually know, and which is of such great magnitude, I may, mother, in a manner of speaking, perchance completely exonerate you from the consequences of that transaction. Besides, it was long ago, and the prosecutor may have mercy; but, be all that how it may, and be the consequences what they may, I must and will tell what I now know."

"But what is it Tobias, that you know?"

"Something too dreadful for me to utter to you alone. Go into the Temple, mother, to some of the chambers you attend to, and ask them to come to me, and listen to what I have got to say. They will be amply

repaid for their trouble, for they will hear that which may, perhaps, save their own lives."

"He is quite gone," thought Mrs. Ragg, "and Mr. Todd is correct; poor Tobias is as mad as he can be!" "Alas, alas, Tobias, why don't you try to reason yourself into a better state of mind! You don't know a bit what you are saying, any more than the man in the moon."

"I know I am half mad, mother, but yet I know what I am saying well; so do not fancy that it is not to be relied upon, but go and fetch some one at once to listen to what I have to relate."

"Perhaps," thought Mrs. Ragg, "if I were to pretend to humour him, it would be as well, and, while I am gone, Mr. Todd can speak to him."

This was a bright idea of Mrs. Ragg's, and she forthwith proceeded to carry it into execution, saying—

"Well, my dear, if it must be, it must be—and I will go; but I hope while I have gone, somebody will speak to you, and convince you that you ought to try to quiet yourself."

These words Mrs. Ragg uttered aloud, for the special benefit of Sweeney Todd, who, she considered, would have been there to take the hint accordingly. It is needless to say he did hear them, and how far he profited by them, we shall quickly perceive. As for poor Tobias, he had not the remotest idea of the close proximity of his arch enemy; if he had, he would quickly have left that spot, where he might well to conjecture so much danger awaited him; for although Sweeney Todd, under the circumstances, probably felt that he dared not take Tobias's life, still he might exchange something that could place it in his power to do so shortly, with the least personal danger to himself. The door closed after the retreating form of Mrs. Ragg, and as, considering the mission she was gone upon, it was very clear some minutes must elapse before she could return, Sweeney Todd did not feel that there was any very particular hurry in the transaction.

"What shall I do?" he said to himself. "Shall I await his mother's coming again, and get her to aid me, or shall I of myself adopt some means which will put an end to trouble on this boy's account?"

Sweeney Todd was a man tolerably rapid in thought, and he contrived to make up his mind that the best plan, unquestionably, would be to lay hold of Tobias at once, and so prevent the possibility of any appeal to his mother becoming effective. Tobias, when his mother left the place, as he imagined, for the purpose of procuring some one to listen to what he considered to be Sweeney Todd's delinquencies, rested his face upon his hands, and gave himself up to painful and deep thought. He felt that he had arrived at quite a crisis in his history, and that the next few hours could not surely but be very important to him in their results; and so they were indeed, but not certainly exactly in the way that he all along anticipated, for he thought of nothing but of the arrest and discomfiture of Todd, little expecting how close was his proximity to that formidable personage.

"Surely," thought Tobias, "I shall, by disclosing all that I know about Todd, gain some consideration for my mother, and after all, she may not be prosecuted for the robbery of the candlestick, for how very trifling is that affair compared to the much more dreadful things which I more than suspect Sweeney Todd to be guilty of. He is and must be, from all that I have seen and heard, a murderer, although how he disposes of his victims is involved in the most complete mystery, and is to me a matter past all human power of comprehension. I have no idea even upon that subject whatever."

This, indeed, was a great mystery; for, even admitting that Sweeney Todd was a murderer, and it must be allowed that as yet we have only circumstantial evidence of that fact, we can form no conclusion from such evidence as to how he perpetrated the deed, or how afterwards he disposed of the body of his victim. This grand and principal difficulty in the way of committing murder with impunity, namely, the disposal of a

corpse, certainly did not seem at all to have any effect upon Sweeney Todd; for if he made corpses, he had some means of getting rid of them with the most wonderful expedition as well as secrecy.

"He is a murderer," thought Tobias. "I know he is, although I have never seen him do the deed, or seen any appearances in the shop of a deed of blood having been committed. Yet why is it that occasionally, when a better dressed person than usual comes into the shop, that he sends me out on some errand to a distant part of the town?"

Tobias did not forget, too, that on more than one occasion he had come back quicker than he had been expected, and that he had caught Sweeney Todd in some little confusion, and seen the hat, the stick, or perhaps the umbrella of the last customer quietly waiting there, although the customer had gone; and even if the glaring improbability of a man leaving his hat behind him in a barber's shop was got over, why did he not come back for it? This was a circumstance which was entitled to all the weight which Tobias, during his mental cogitations, could give to it, and there could be but one possible explanation of a man not coming back for his hat, and that was that he had not the power to do so.

"This house will be searched," thought Tobias, "and all those things, which of course must have belonged to so many different people, will be found, and then they will be identified, and he will be required to say how he came by them, which, I think, will be a difficult task indeed for Sweeney Todd to accomplish. What a relief it will be to me, to be sure, when he is hanged, as I think he is tolerably sure to be!"

"What a relief," muttered Sweeney Todd, as he slowly opened the door, unseen by Tobias—"what a relief it will be to me when this boy is in his grave, as he will be soon, or else I have forgotten all my moral learning, and turned chicken-hearted—neither of them very likely circumstances."

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE MISADVENTURE OF TOBIAS.—THE MAD-HOUSE ON PECKHAM-RYE.

Sweeney Todd paused for a moment at the cupboard door, before he made up his mind as to whether he should pounce upon poor Tobias at once, or adopt a more creeping, cautious mode of operation. The latter course was by far the most congenial to his mind, and so he adopted it in a moment or so, and stole quietly from his place of concealment, and with so little noise, that Tobias could not have the least suspicion that any one was in the room but himself. Treading, as if each step might involve some serious consequences, he thus at length got completely behind the chair on which Tobias was sitting, and stood with folded arms, and such a hideous smile upon his face, that they together formed no inapt representation of the Mephistopheles of the German drama.

"I shall at length," murmured Tobias, "be free from my present dreadful state of mind, by thus accusing Todd. He is a murderer—of that I have no doubt: it is but a duty of mine to stand forward as his accuser."

Sweeney Todd stretched out his two brawny hands, and clutched Tobias by the head, which he turned round till the boy could see him, and then he said—

"Indeed, Tobias; and did it never strike you that Todd was not so easily to be overcome as you would wish him, eh, Tobias?"

The shock of this astonishing and sudden appearance of Sweeney Todd was so great, that for a few moments Tobias was deprived of all power of speech or action, and with his head so strangely twisted as to seem to threaten the destruction of his neck. He glared in the triumphant and malignant countenance of his persecutor, as he would into that of the arch enemy of all mankind, which probably he now began to think the barber really was. If one thing more than another was calculated to delight such a man as Todd, it certainly was to perceive what a dreadful effect his presence had upon Tobias, who remained for about a minute and a half in this state before he ventured upon uttering a shriek, which, however, when it did come, almost frightened Todd himself. It was one of those cries which can only come from a heart in its utmost agony—a cry which might have heralded the spirit to another world, and proclaimed, as it very nearly did the destruction of the intellect for ever. The barber staggered back a pace or two as he heard it, for it was too terrific even for him, but it was for a very brief period that it had that stunning effect upon him, and then, with a full consciousness of the danger to which it subjected him, he sprang upon poor Tobias as a tiger might be supposed to do upon a lamb, and clutched him by the throat, exclaiming—

"Such another cry, and it is the last you ever live to utter, although it cover me with difficulties to escape the charge of killing you. Peace! I say, peace!"

This exhortation was quite needless, for Tobias could not have uttered a word, had he been ever so much inclined to do so; the barber held his throat with such an iron clutch, as if it had been in a vise.

"Villain," growled Todd, "villain; so this is the way in which you have dared to disregard my injunctions. But no matter, no matter!—you shall have plenty of leisure to reflect upon what you have done for yourself. Fool! to think that you could cope with me—Sweeney Todd! Ha! ha!"

He burst into a laugh, so much more hideous, than his ordinary efforts in that way, that, had Tobias heard it—which he did not, for his head had dropped upon his breast, and he had become insensible—it would have terrified him almost as much as Sweeney Todd's sudden appearance had done.

"So," muttered the barber, "he has fainted, has he? Dull child, that is all the better. For once in a way, Tobias, I will carry you—not to oblige you, but to oblige myself. By all that's damnable, it was a lively thought that brought me here to-night, or else I might, by the dawn of the morning, have had some very troublesome inquiries made of me."

He took Tobias up as easily as if he had been an infant, and strode from the chambers with him, leaving Mrs. Ragg to draw whatever inference she chose from his absence; but feeling convinced that she was too much under his controul, to take any steps of a nature to give him the smallest amount of uneasiness.

"The woman," he muttered to himself, "is a double-distilled ass, and can be made to believe anything, so that I have no fear whatever of her. I dare not kill Tobias, because it is necessary, in case of the matter being at any other period mentioned, that his mother shall be in a position to swear that she saw him after this night alive and well."

The barber strode through the Temple, carrying the boy, who seemed not at all in a hurry to recover from the nervous and partial state of suffocation into which he had fallen. As they passed through the gate opening into Fleet-street, the porter, who knew the barber well by sight, said—

"Hilloa, Mr. Todd, is that you? Why, who are you carrying?"

"Yes, it's I," said Todd, "and I am carrying my apprentice boy, Tobias Ragg, poor fellow."

"Poor fellow!—why, what's the matter with him?"

"I can hardly tell you, but he seems to me and to his mother to have gone out of his senses. Good night to you, good night. I'm looking for a coach."

"Good night, Mr. Todd; I don't think you'll get one nearer than the market—what a kind thing now of him to carry the boy! It ain't every master would do that; but we must not judge of people by their looks, and even Sweeney Todd, though he has a face that one would not like to meet in a lonely place on a dark night, may be a kind-hearted man."

Sweeney Todd walked rapidly down Fleet-street, towards old Fleet Market, which was then in all its glory, if that could be called glory which consisted in all sorts of filth, enough to produce a pestilence within the city of London. When there, he addressed a large bundle of great coats, in the middle of which was supposed to be a hackney coachman of the regular old school, and who was lounging over his vehicle, which was as long and lumbering as a city barge.

"Jarvey," he said, "what will you take me to Peckham Rye for?"

"Peckham Rye—you and the boy—there ain't any more of you waiting round the corner, are there—'cos, you know, that won't be fair?"

"No, no, no."

"Well, don't be in a passion, master. I only asked, you know, so you need not be put out about it; I will take you for twelve shillings, and that's what I call remarkably cheap, all things considered."

"I'll give half the amount," said Sweeney Todd, "and you may consider yourself well paid."

"Half, master?—that is cutting it low; but, howsomdever, I suppose I must put up with it, and take you. Get in, I must try and make it up by some better fare out of somebody else."

The barber paid no heed to these renewed remonstrances of the coachman, but got into the vehicle, carrying Tobias with him, apparently with great care and consideration; but when the coach door closed, and no one was observing him, he flung him down among the straw that was at the bottom of the vehicle, and resting his immense feet upon him, he gave one of his disagreeable laughs, as he said—

"Well, I think I have you now, Master Tobias; your troubles will soon be over. I am really very much afraid that you will die suddenly, and then there will be an end of you altogether, which will be a very sad thing, though I don't think I shall go into mourning, because I have an opinion that that only keeps alive the bitterness of regret, and that it's a great deal better done without, Master Tobias."

The hackney coach swung about from side to side, in the proper approved manner of hackney coaches in the olden time, when they used to be called "bone setters," and to be thought wonderful if they made a progress of three miles and a half an hour. This was the sort of vehicle, then, in which poor Tobias, still perfectly insensible, was rumbled over Blackfriars-bridge, and so on towards Peckham, which Sweeney Todd had announced to be his place of destination. Going at the rate they did, it was nearly two hours before they arrived upon Peckham Rye; and any one acquainted with that locality is well aware that there are two roads, the one to the left, and the other to the right, both of which are pleasantly enough studded with villa residences. Sweeney Todd directed the coachman to take the road to the left, which he accordingly did, and they pursued it for a distance of about a mile and a half. It must not be supposed that this pleasant district of country was then in the state it is now, as regards inhabitants or cultivation. On the contrary, it was rather a wild spot, on which now and then a serious robbery had been committed; and which had witnessed some of the exploits of those highwaymen, whose adventures, in the present day, if one may judge from the public patronage they may receive, are viewed with such a great amount of interest. There was a lonely, large, rambling, old-looking house by the way side, on the left. A high wall surrounded it, which only allowed the topmost portion of it to be visible, and that presented great symptoms of decay, in the dilapidated character of the chimney-pot, and the general appearance of discomfort which pervaded it. There Sweeney Todd directed the coachman to stop, and when the vehicle, after swinging to and fro for several minutes, did indeed at last resolve itself into a state of repose, Sweeney Todd got out himself, and rang a bell, the

handle of which hung invitingly at the gate. He had to wait several minutes before an answer was given to this summons, but at length a noise proceeded from within, as if several bars and bolts were being withdrawn; and presently the door was opened, and a huge, rough-looking man made his appearance on the threshold.

The Barber Carries Off Tobias To A Private Mad-House.

The Barber Carries Off Tobias To A Private Mad-House.

"Well! what is it now?" he cried.

"I have a patient for Mr. Fogg," said Sweeney Todd. "I want to see him immediately."

"Oh! well, the more the merrier: it don't matter to me a bit. Have you got him with you—and is he tolerably quiet?"

"It's a mere boy, and he is not violently mad, but very decidedly so as regards what he says."

"Oh! that's it, is it? He can say what he likes here, it can make no difference in the world to us. Bring him in—Mr. Fogg is in his own room."

"I know the way: you take charge of the lad, and I will go and speak to Mr. Fogg about him. But stay, give the coachman these six shillings, and discharge him."

The doorkeeper of the lunatic asylum, for such it was, went out to obey the injunctions of Sweeney Todd, while that rascally individual himself walked along a wide passage to a door which was at the further extremity of it.

CHAPTER XIX.
THE MADHOUSE CELL.

When the porter of the madhouse went out to the coach, his first impression was, that the boy, who was said to be insane, was dead—for not even the jolting ride to Peckham had been sufficient to arouse him to a consciousness of how he was situated; and there he lay still at the bottom of the coach alike insensible to joy or sorrow.

"Is he dead?" said the man to the coachman.

"How should I know?" was the reply; "he may be or he may not, but I want to know how long I am to wait here for my fare?"

"There is your money, be off with you. I can see now that the boy is all right, for he breathes, although it's after an odd fashion that he does so. I should rather think he has had a knock on the head, or something of that kind."

As he spoke, he conveyed Tobias within the building, and the coachman, since he had got his six shillings, feeling that he had no further interest in the matter, drove away at once, and paid no more attention to it whatever. When Sweeney Todd reached the door at the end of the passage, he tapped at it with his knuckles, and a voice cried—

"Who knocks—who knocks? Curses on you all! Who knocks?"

Sweeney Todd did not make any verbal reply to this polite request, but opening the door he walked into the apartment, which is one that really deserves some description. It was a large room with a vaulted roof, and in the centre was a superior oaken table, at which sat a man considerably

advanced in years, as was proclaimed by his grizzled locks that graced the sides of his head, but whose herculean frame and robust constitution had otherwise successfully resisted the assaults of time. A lamp swung from the ceiling, which had a shade over the top of it, so that it cast a tolerably bright glow upon the table below, which was covered with books and papers, as well as glasses and bottles of different kinds, which showed that the madhouse-keeper was, at all events, as far as himself was concerned, not at all indifferent to personal comfort. The walls, however, presented the most curious aspect, for they were hung with a variety of tools and implements, which would have puzzled any one not initiated into the matter even to guess at their uses. These were, however, in point of fact, specimens of the different kinds of machinery which were used for the purpose of coercing the unhappy persons whose evil destiny made them members of that establishment. Those were what is "called the good old times," when all sorts of abuses flourished in perfection, and when the unhappy insane were actually punished as if they were guilty of some great offence. Yes, and worse than that were they punished, for a criminal who might have injustice done to him by any who were in authority over him, could complain, and if he got hold of a person of higher power, his complaints might be listened to, but no one heeded what was said by the poor maniac, whose bitterest accusations of his keepers, let their conduct be what it might, was only listened to and set down as a further proof of his mental disorder. This was indeed a most awful and sad state of things, and, to the disgrace of this country, it is a social evil allowed until very late years to continue in full force. Mr. Fogg, the madhouse-keeper fixed his keen eyes from beneath his shaggy brows, upon Sweeney Todd, as the latter entered his apartment, and then he said—

"Mr. Todd, I think, unless my memory deceives me."

"The same," said the barber, making a hideous face, "I believe I am not easily forgotten."

"True," said Mr. Fogg, as he reached a book, the edge of which was cut into a lot of little slips, on each of which was a capital letter, in the order of the alphabet—"true, you are not easily forgotten, Mr. Todd."

He then opened the book at the letter T, and read from it:—

"Mr. Sweeney Todd, Fleet-street, London, paid one year's keep and burial of Thomas Simkins, aged 15, found dead in his bed, after a residence in the asylum of 10 months and 4 days. I think, Mr. Todd, that was our last little transaction; what can I do now for you, sir?"

"I am rather unfortunate," said Todd, "with my boys. I have got another here, who has shown such decided symptoms of insanity, that it becomes absolutely necessary to place him under your care."

"Indeed!—does he rave?"

"Why, yes he does, and it's the most absurd nonsense in the world that he raves about; for, to hear him, one would really think that, instead of being one of the most humane of men, I was, in point of fact, an absolute murderer."

"A murderer, Mr. Todd!"

"Yes, a murderer—a murderer to all intents and purposes; could anything be more absurd than such an accusation?—I, that have the milk of human kindness flowing in every vein, and whose very appearance ought to be sufficient to convince anybody at once of my kindness of disposition."

Sweeney Todd finished his speech by making such a hideous face, that the madhouse-keeper could not for the life of him tell what to say to it; and then there came one of those short, disagreeable laughs which Todd would at times utter, which, somehow or other, never appeared exactly to come from his mouth, but always made people look up at the walls and ceiling of the apartment in which they were, in great doubt as to whence the remarkable sound came.

"For how long," said the madhouse-keeper, "do you think this malady will continue?"

"I will pay," said Sweeney Todd, as he leaned over the table, and looked in the face of his questioner, "I will pay for twelve months; but I don't think between you and I, that the case will last anything like so long—I think he will die suddenly."

"I shouldn't wonder if he did. Some of our patients do die very suddenly, and, somehow or other, we never know exactly how it happens; but it must be some sort of fit, for they are found dead in the morning in their beds, and then we bury them privately and quietly, without troubling anybody about it at all, which is decidedly the best way, because it saves a great annoyance to friends and relations, as well as prevents any extra expense which otherwise might be foolishly gone to."

"You are wonderfully correct and considerate," said Todd, "and it's no more than what I expected from you, or what any one might expect from a person of your great experience, knowledge, and acquirements. I must confess I am quite delighted to hear you talk in so elevated a strain."

"Why," said Mr. Fogg, with a strange leer upon his face, "we are forced to make ourselves useful, like the rest of the community; and we could not expect people to send their mad friends and relatives here, unless we took good care that their ends and views were answered by so doing. We make no remarks, and we ask no questions. Those are the principles upon which we have conducted business so successfully and so long; those are the principles upon which we shall continue to conduct it, and to merit, we hope, the patronage of the British public."

"Unquestionably—most unquestionably."

"You may as well introduce me to your patient at once, Mr. Todd, for I suppose, by this time, he has been brought into this house."

"Certainly, certainly—I shall have great pleasure in showing him to you."

The madhouse-keeper rose, and so did Mr. Todd, and the former, pointing to the bottles and glasses on the table, said—

"When this business is settled, we can have a friendly glass together."

To this proposition Sweeney Todd assented with a nod, and then they both proceeded to what was called a reception-room in the asylum, and where poor Tobias had been conveyed and laid upon a table, when he showed slight symptoms of recovering from the state of insensibility into which he had fallen, and a man was sluicing water on his face by the assistance of a hearth broom occasionally dipped into a pailful of that fluid.

"Quite young," said the madhouse-keeper, as he looked upon the pale and interesting face of Tobias.

"Yes," said Sweeney Todd, "he is young—more's the pity—and, of course, we deeply regret his present situation."

"Oh, of course, of course; but see, he opens his eyes, and will speak directly."

"Rave, you mean, rave!" said Todd; "don't call it speaking, it is not entitled to the name. Hush! listen to him."

"Where am I?" said Tobias, "where am I? Todd is a murderer—I denounce him."

"You hear—you hear?" said Todd.

"Mad indeed," said the keeper.

"Oh, save me from him—save me from him!" said Tobias, fixing his eyes upon Mr. Fogg. "Save me from him; it is my life he seeks because I know his secrets. He is a murderer—and many a person comes into his shop, who never leaves it again in life, if at all."

"You hear him?" said Todd. "Was there ever anybody so mad?"

Tobias In The Hands Of The Mad-House Keepers.

Tobias In The Hands Of The Mad-House Keepers.

"Desperately mad," said the keeper. "Come, come, young fellow, we shall be under the necessity of putting you in a strait waistcoat if you go on in that way. We must do it, for there is no help in such cases if we don't."

Todd slunk back into the dark of the apartment, so that he was not seen, and Tobias continued, in an imploring tone—

"I do not know who you are, sir, or where I am; but let me beg of you to cause the house of Sweeney Todd, the barber, in Fleet-street, near St. Dunstan's church, to be searched, and you will find that he is a murderer. There are at least a hundred hats, quantities of walking sticks, umbrellas, watches, and rings, all belonging to unfortunate persons who, from time to time, have met with their deaths through him."

"How uncommonly mad!" said Mr. Fogg.

"No, no," said Tobias, "I am not mad. Why call me mad, when the truth or falsehood of what I say can be ascertained so easily? Search his house, and if those things be not found there, say that I am mad, and have but dreamed of them. I do not know how he kills the people. That is a great mystery to me yet; but that he does kill them, I have no doubt—I cannot have a doubt."

"Watson!" cried the mad-house keeper. "Hilloa! here, Watson."

"I am here, sir," said the man, who had been dashing water upon poor Tobias's face.

"You will take this lad, Watson, as he seems extremely feverish and unsettled. You will take him and shave his head, Watson, and put a strait waistcoat upon him, and let him be put in one of the dark, damp cells. We must be careful of him, and too much light encourages delirium and fever."

"Oh! no, no!" cried Tobias; "What have I done that I should be subjected to such cruel treatment? what have I done that I should be placed in a cell? If this be a madhouse, I am not mad. Oh! have mercy upon me!—have mercy upon me!"

"You will give him nothing but bread and water, Watson; and the first symptom of his recovery, which will produce better treatment, will be his exonerating his master from what he has said about him; for he must be mad so long as he continues to accuse such a gentleman as Mr. Todd of such things; nobody but a mad man or a mad boy would think of it."

"Then," said Tobias, "I shall continue mad; for if it be madness to know and aver that Sweeney Todd, the barber, of Fleet-street, is a murderer, mad am I, for I know it, and aver it. It is true—it is true."

"Take him away, Watson, and do as I desired you. I begin to find that the boy is a very dangerous character, and more viciously mad than anybody we have had here for a considerable time."

The man named Watson seized upon Tobias, who again uttered a shriek something similar to the one which had come from his lips when Sweeney Todd clutched hold of him in his mother's room. But they were used to such things in that madhouse, and cared little for them, so no one heeded the cry in the least; but poor Tobias was carried to the door half maddened in reality by the horrors that surrounded him. Just as he was being conveyed out, Sweeney Todd stepped up to him, and putting his mouth close to his ear, he whispered—

"Ha! ha! Tobias! how do you feel now? Do you think Sweeney Todd will be hung, or will you die in the cell of a madhouse?"

CHAPTER XX.
THE NEW COOK TO MRS. LOVETT GETS TIRED OF HIS SITUATION.

From what we have already had occasion to record about Mrs. Lovett's new cook, who ate so voraciously in the cellar, our readers will no doubt be induced to believe that he was a gentleman likely enough soon to be tired of his situation. To a starving man, and one who seemed completely abandoned even by hope, Lovett's bake-house, with an unlimited leave to eat as much as possible, must of course present itself in the most desirable and lively colours: and no wonder therefore, that, banishing all scruple, a man so placed, would take the situation, with very little inquiry. But people will tire of good things; and it is a remarkable well-authenticated fact that human nature is prone to be discontented. And those persons who are well acquainted with the human mind, and who know well how little value people set upon things which they possess, while those which they are pursuing, and which seem to be beyond their reach, assume the liveliest colours imaginable, adopt various means of turning this to account. Napoleon took good care that the meanest of his soldiers should see in perspective the possibility of grasping a marshal's baton. Confectioners at the present day, when they take a new apprentice, tell him to eat as much as he likes of those tempting tarts and sweetmeats, one or two of which before had been a most delicious treat. The soldier goes on fighting away, and never gets the marshal's baton. The confectioner's boy crams himself with Banbury cakes, gets dreadfully sick, and never touches one afterwards. And now, to revert to our friend in Mrs. Lovett's bakehouse. At first everything was

delightful, and, by the aid of the machinery, he found that it was no difficult matter to keep up the supply of pies by really a very small amount of manual labour. And that labour also was such a labour of love, for the pies were delicious; there could be no mistake about that. He tasted them half cooked, he tasted them wholly, and he tasted them over-done; hot and cold; pork and veal with seasoning, and without seasoning, until at last he had had them in every possible way and shape; and when the fourth day came after his arrival in the cellar, he might have been sitting in rather a contemplative attitude with a pie before him. It was twelve o'clock: he had heard that sound come from the shop. Yes, it was twelve o'clock, and he had eaten nothing yet; but he kept his eye fixed upon the pie that lay untouched before him.

"The pies are all very well," he said; "in fact, of course they are capital pies; and now that I see how they are made, and know that there is nothing wrong in them, I, of course, relish them more than ever; but one can't always live upon pies; it's quite impossible one can subsist upon pies from one end of the year to the other, if they were the finest pies the world ever saw, or ever will see. I don't say anything against the pies—I know they are made of the finest flour, the best possible butter, and that the meat, which comes from God knows where, is the most delicate looking and tender I ever ate in all my life."

He stretched out his hand and broke a small portion of the crust from the pie that was before him, and he tried to eat it. He certainly did succeed; but it was a great effort; and when he had done, he shook his head, saying—

"No, no!—d—n it! I cannot eat it, and that's the fact—one cannot be continually eating pies: it is out of the question, quite out the question; and all I have to remark is—d—n the pies! I really don't think I shall be able to let another one pass my lips."

He rose and paced with rapid strides the place in which he was, and then suddenly he heard a noise; and, looking up, he saw a trap door in the roof open, and a sack of flour begin gradually to come down.

"Hilloa, hilloa!" he cried, "Mrs. Lovett—Mrs. Lovett!"

Down came the flour, and the trap door was closed.

"Oh, I can't stand this sort of thing," he exclaimed; "I cannot be made into a mere machine for the manufacture of pies. I cannot and will not endure it—it is past all bearing."

For the first time almost since his incarceration, for such it really was, he began to think that he would take an accurate survey of the place where this tempting manufacture was carried on. The fact was, his mind had been so intensely occupied during the time he had been there in providing merely for his physical wants, that he had scarcely had time to think or reason upon the probabilities of an uncomfortable termination of his career; but now, when he had really become quite surfeited with the pies, and tired of the darkness and gloom of the place, many unknown fears began to creep across him, and he really trembled, as he asked himself what was to be the end of all. It was with such a feeling as this that he now set about a careful and accurate survey of the place; and taking a little lamp in his hand, he resolved upon peering into every corner of it, with a hope that surely he should find some means by which he should effect an escape from what otherwise threatened to be an intolerable imprisonment. The vault in which the ovens were situated was the largest; and although a number of smaller ones communicated with it, containing the different mechanical contrivances for pie-making, he could not from any one of them discover an outlet. But it was to the vault where the meat was deposited upon stone shelves that he paid the greatest share of attention, for to that vault he felt convinced there must be some hidden and secret means of ingress, and therefore of egress likewise, or else how came the shelves always so well stocked with meat as they were? This vault was larger than any of the other subsidiary ones, and the roof was very high, and, come into it when he would, it always happened that he found meat enough upon the shelves, cut into large lumps, and sometimes into slices, to make a batch of pies with. When it got there, was not so much a mystery to him as how it got there; for, of course, as he must sleep sometimes, he concluded, naturally enough,

that it was brought in by some means during the period that he devoted to repose. He stood in the centre of this vault with the lamp in his hand, and he turned slowly round, surveying the walls and the ceilings with the most critical and marked attention, but not the smallest appearance of an outlet was observable. In fact, the walls were so entirely filled up with the stone shelves, that there was no space left for a door; and as for the ceiling, it seemed perfectly entire. Then the floor was of earth; so that the idea of a trap door opening in it was out of the question, because there was no one on his side of it to place the earth again over it, and give it its compact and usual appearance.

"This is most mysterious," he said; "and if ever I could have been brought to believe that any one had the assistance of the devil himself in conducting human affairs, I should say that by some means Mrs. Lovett had made it worth the while of that elderly individual to assist her; for, unless the meat gets here by some supernatural agency, I really cannot see how it can get here at all. And yet here it is—so fresh, and pure, and white-looking, although I never could tell the pork from the veal myself, for they seemed to me both alike."

He now made a still narrower examination of this vault, but he gained nothing by that. He found that the walls at the back of the shelves were composed of flat pieces of stone, which, no doubt, were necessary for the support of the shelves themselves; but beyond that he made no further discovery, and he was about leaving the place, when he fancied he saw some writing on the inner side of the door. A closer inspection convinced him that there were a number of lines written with lead pencil, and after some difficulty he decyphered them as follows:—

"Whatever unhappy wretch reads these lines may bid adieu to the world and all hope, for he is a doomed man! He will never emerge from these vaults with life, for there is a secret connected with them so awful and so hideous, that to write it makes one's blood curdle, and the flesh to creep upon my bones. That secret is this—and you may be assured, whoever is

reading these lines, that I write the truth, and that it is as impossible to make that awful truth worse by any exaggeration, as it would be by a candle at mid-day to attempt to add any new lustre to the sunbeams."

Here, most unfortunately, the writing broke off, and our friend, who, up to this point, had perused the lines with the most intense interest, felt great bitterness of disappointment, from the fact that enough should have been written to stimulate his curiosity to the highest possible point, but not enough to gratify it.

"This is, indeed, most provoking," he exclaimed. "What can this most dreadful secret be, which it is impossible to exaggerate? I cannot, for a moment, divine to what it can allude."

In vain he searched over the door for some more writing—there was none to be found, and from the long straggling pencil-mark, which followed the last word, it seemed as if he who had been then writing had been interrupted, and possibly met the fate that he had predicted, and was about to explain the reason of.

"This is worse than no information. I had better have remained in ignorance than have received so indistinct a warning; but they shall not find me an easy victim, and, besides, what power on earth can force me to make pies unless I like, I should wish to know?"

As he stepped out of the place in which the meat was kept into the large vault where the ovens were, he trod upon a piece of paper that was lying upon the ground, and which he was quite certain he had not observed before. It was fresh and white, and clean too, so that it could not have been long there, and he picked it up with some curiosity. That curiosity was, however, soon turned to dismay when he saw what was written upon it, which was to the following effect, and well calculated to produce a considerable amount of alarm in the breast of any one situated as he was, so entirely friendless and so entirely hopeless of any extraneous aid in those dismal vaults, which he began, with a shudder, to suspect would be his tomb:—

"You are getting dissatisfied, and therefore it becomes necessary to explain to you your real position, which is simply this:—You are a prisoner, and were such from the first moment that you set foot where you now are; and you will find, unless you are resolved upon sacrificing your life, that your best plan will be to quietly give into the circumstances in which you find yourself placed. Without going into any argument or details upon the subject, it is sufficient to inform you that so long as you continue to make the pies, you will be safe; but if you refuse, then the first time you are caught asleep your throat will be cut."

This document was so much to the purpose, and really had so little of verbosity about it, that it was extremely difficult to doubt its sincerity. It dropped from the half-paralysed hands of that man, who, in the depth of his distress, and urged on by great necessity, had accepted a situation that he would have given worlds to escape from, had he been possessed of them.

"Gracious Heaven!" he exclaimed, "and am I then indeed condemned to such a slavery? Is it possible, that even in the heart of London, I am a prisoner, and without the means of resisting the most frightful threats that are uttered against me? Surely, surely this must be all a dream! It is too terrific to be true!"

He sat down upon that low stool where his predecessor had sat before, receiving his death-wound from the assassin who had glided in behind him, and dealt him that crashing blow, whose only mercy was that it had at once deprived the victim of existence. He could have wept bitterly, wept as he there sat, for he thought over days long passed away, of opportunities let go by with the heedless laugh of youth; he thought over all the chances and fortunes of his life, and now to find himself the miserable inhabitant of a cellar, condemned to a mean and troublesome employment, without even the liberty of leaving that, to starve if he chose, upon pain of death—a frightful death, which had been threatened him, was indeed torment! No wonder that at times he felt himself unnerved, and that a child might have conquered him, while at other

moments such a feeling of despair would come across him, that he called aloud upon his enemies to make their appearance, and give him at least the chance of a struggle for his life.

"If I am to die," he cried, "let me die with some weapon in my hand, as a brave man ought, and I will not complain, for there is little indeed in life now which should induce me to cling to it; but I will not be murdered in the dark."

He sprang to his feet, and rushing up to the door, which opened from the house into the vaults, he made a violent and desperate effort to shake it. But such a contingency as this had surely been looked forward to and provided against, for the door was of amazing strength, and most effectually resisted all his efforts, so that the result of his endeavours was but to exhaust himself, and he staggered back, panting and despairing, to the seat he had so recently left. Then he heard a voice, and upon looking up he saw that the small square opening in the upper part of the door, through which he had been before addressed, was open, and a face there appeared, but it was not the face of Mrs. Lovett. On the contrary, it was a large and hideous male physiognomy, and the voice that came from it was croaking and harsh, sounding most unmusically upon the ears of the unfortunate man who was thus made a victim to Mrs. Lovett's pie popularity.

"Continue at your work," said the voice, "or death will be your portion as soon as sleep overcomes you, and you sink exhausted to that repose which you will never awaken from, except to feel the pangs of death, and to be conscious that you are weltering in your blood. Continue at your work, and you will escape all this—neglect it, and your doom is sealed."

The Stranger In Mrs. Lovett's Bakehouse.

"What have I done that I should be made such a victim of? Let me go, and I will swear never to divulge the fact that I have been in these vaults, so I cannot disclose any of their secrets, even if knew them."

"Make pies," said the voice, "eat them, and be happy. How many a man would envy your position—withdrawn from all the struggles of existence, amply provided with board and lodging, and engaged in a pleasant and delightful occupation; it is astonishing how you can be dissatisfied!"

Bang! went the little square orifice at the top of the door, and the voice was heard no more. The jeering mockery of those tones, however, still lingered upon the ear of the unhappy prisoner, and he clasped his head in his hands with a fearful impression upon his brain that he surely must be going mad.

"He will drive me to insanity," he cried; "already I feel a sort of slumber stealing over me for want of exercise, and the confined air of these vaults hinder me from taking regular repose; but now, if I close an eye, I shall expect to find the assassin's knife at my throat."

He sat for some time longer, and not even the dread he had of sleep could prevent a drowsiness creeping across his faculties, and this weariness would not be shaken off by any ordinary means, until at length he sprang to his feet, and shaking himself roughly, like one determined to be wide awake, he said to himself, mournfully—

"I must do their bidding or die; hope may be a delusion here, but I cannot altogether abandon it, and not until its faintest image has departed from my breast can I lie down to sleep and say—Let death come in any shape it may, it is welcome."

With a desperate and despairing energy he set about replenishing the furnaces of the oven, and, when he had got them all in a good state, he commenced manufacturing a batch of one hundred pies, which, when he had finished and placed upon the tray, and set the machine in motion which conducted them up to the shop, he considered to be a sort of price paid for his continued existence, and flinging himself upon the ground, he fell into a deep slumber.

CHAPTER XXI.
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 to-night 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 to-day; 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 are 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 mis-shapen 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.

"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 XXII.
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 by-gone, 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, 'your's 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.

"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 lamp-post.'

"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 lamp-post, 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 look-out 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 to-night?'

"'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 XXIV.
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 some one 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 non-appearance 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 XXV.
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 personæ* 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.

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 engulphed 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 XXVI.
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 to-day 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 biassed. If you, sir, would do me the favour at about twelve o'clock to-day, 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,

"O. D. Fogg."

"To Dr. Popplejoy, &c."

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 cart-whip 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 mad-house 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, to-day—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 death-bed 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 XXVII.
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 hand-bell 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 howsomdever 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 to-day."

"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 flag-stones 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 to-day 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."

CHAPTER XXVIII.
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. Popplejoy 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 to-morrow morning: what's your opinion, Watson?"

"Oh, damn it, what's the use of all this round-about 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 to-morrow 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 down stairs, 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 up stairs, 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.'

"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 good-will. 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!"

"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 to-morrow; 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 XXIX.
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 villanies, 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 to-night, 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 flag-stones, as you see, and that the wall here at the back forms likewise part of the wall of an old wood-house 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 flag-stones 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 wood-house."

"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 wood-house, 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 wood-house 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 XXX.
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 task-mistress, 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 over-charged 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 up-hill 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, long-headed 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—

"D——n 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 over-browning 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 wide-mouthed, 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 XXXI.
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!"

The Flight Of Tobias From Peckham Mad-House.

The Flight Of Tobias From Peckham Mad-House.

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."

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 Beef Eater, 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 pick-a-back, 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 bed-room, 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 door step 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 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 to-day, and gone to-morrow. 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 skin-flint," 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 XXII.
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 bed-room 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 fiend-like 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, a-hem! 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."

CHAPTER XXXIII.
JOHANNA WALKS ABROAD IN DISGUISE.

But, amid all the trials, and perplexities, and anxieties that beset the dramatis personæ of our story, who suffered like Johanna? What heart bled as hers bled? What heart heaved with sad emotion as hers heaved? Alas! poor Johanna, let the fate of Mark Ingestrie be what it might, he could not feel the pangs that tore thy gentle heart. Truly might she have said—

> "Man's love is of his life a thing apart
> 'Tis woman's whole existence,"

for she felt that her joy—her life itself, was bartered for the remembrance of how she had been loved by him whose fate was involved in one of the most painful and most inscrutable of mysteries. Where could she seek for consolation, where for hope? The horizon of her young life seemed ever darkening, and the more she gazed upon it with the fond hope of singing—

> "The first faint star of coming joy,"

the more confounded her gentle spirit became by the blackness of despair. It is sad indeed that the young, the good, and the gentle, should be the grand sufferers in this world, but so it is. The exquisite capacity to feel acutely is certain to find ample food for agony. If human nature could wrap itself up in the chill mantle of selfishness, and be perfectly insensible to all human feeling, it might escape, but such cannot be done

by those who, like the fine and noble-minded Johanna Oakley, sympathise with all that is beautiful and great in creation. Already the pangs of hope deferred were feeding upon the damask of her cheeks. The lily had usurped the rose, and although still exquisitely beautiful, it was the pale beauty of a statue that she began to show to those who loved her. In the street people would turn to gaze after her with admiration blended with pity. They already looked upon her as half an angel, for already it seemed as though she had shaken off much of her earthly lurements, and was hastening to

"Rejoin the stars."

The Schoolfellows, Johanna And Arabella.

The Schoolfellows, Johanna And Arabella.

Let us look at her as she lies weeping upon the breast of her friend Arabella Wilmot. The tears of the two young girls are mingling together, but the one is playing the part of comforter, while the other mourns over much.

"Now, Johanna," sobbed Arabella, "you talk of doing something to save Mark Ingestrie, if he be living, or to bring to justice the man whom you suspect to be his murderer. Let me ask you what you can hope to do, if you give way to such an amount of distress as this?"

"Nothing—nothing."

"And are you really to do nothing? Have you not agreed, Johanna, to make an attempt, in the character of a boy, to find out the secret of Ingestrie's disappearance, and have not I provided for you all that you require to support the character? Courage, courage, courage.—Oh, I could tell you such stories of fine ladies dressing as pages, and following gallant knights to the field of battle, that you would feel as though you could go through anything."

"But the age of chivalry is gone."

"Yes, and why—because folks will not be chivalric. To those who will, the age of chivalry comes back again in all its glory."

"Listen to me, Arabella: if I really thought that Mark was no more, and lost to me for ever, I could lie down and die, leaving to Heaven the punishment of those who have taken his life, but in the midst of all my grief—in the moments of my deepest depression, the thought clings to me, that he lives yet. I do not know how it is, but the thought of Mark Ingestrie dead, is but a vague one, compared to the thought of Mark Ingestrie suffering."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and at times it seems as if a voice whispered to me, that he was yet to be saved, if there existed a heart fair enough and loving enough in its strength to undertake the task. It is for that reason, and not from any romantic love of adventure, or hope of visiting with punishment a bad man, that my imagination clings to the idea of going in boy's apparel to Fleet-street, to watch, and perchance to enter that house to which he last went, and from which, according to all evidence, he never emerged."

"And you are really bold enough?"

"I hope so—I think, if I am not, God will help me."

A sob that followed these words, sufficiently testified how much in need of God's help poor Johanna was, but after a few minutes she succeeded in recovering herself from her emotion, and she said more cheerfully—

"Come, Arabella, we talked of a rehearsal of my part; but I shall be more at ease when I go to act it in reality, and with danger. I shall be able to comport myself well, with only you for a companion, and such chance passengers as the streets of the city may afford for my audience."

"I am glad," said Arabella, "that you keep in this mind. Now come and dress yourself, and we will go out together. You will be taken for my brother, you know."

In the course of a quarter of an hour, Johanna presented the appearance of as good-looking a lad of about fourteen as the world ever saw, and if she could but have imparted a little more confidence and boyish bustle to her gait and manner, she would have passed muster under the most vigilant scrutiny. But as it was, nothing could be more unlikely than that any one should penetrate her disguise, for what is not suspected, is seldom seen very readily.

"You will do capitally," said Arabella, "I must take your arm, you know. We will not go far."

"Only to Fleet Street."

"Fleet Street. You surely will not go so far as that?"

"Yes, Arabella. Now that I have attired myself in these garments for a special purpose, let me do a something towards the carrying it out. By walking that distance I shall accustom myself to the road; and, moreover, a dreadful kind of fascination drags me to that man's shop."

Arabella, if the truth must be told, shook a little as they, after watching an opportunity, emerged into the street, for although the spirit of romantic adventure had induced her to give the advice to Johanna that she had, her own natural feminine sensibilities shrunk from the carrying of it out. Ashamed, however, of being the first to condemn her own suggestion, she took the arm of Johanna, and those two young creatures were in the tide of human life that ebbs and flows in the great city. The modest walk and gentle demeanour of the seeming young boy won Johanna many a passing glance as she and Arabella proceeded down Ludgate Hill towards Fleet Street, but it was quite clear that no one suspected the disguise which, to do Arabella justice, in its general arrangement was very perfect, and as Johanna wore a cap, which concealed much of the upper part of her face, and into which was gathered all her hair, she might have really deceived those who were the most intimate with her, so that it was no wonder she passed unobserved

with mere strangers. In this way, then, they reached Fleet Street without obstruction, and Johanna's heart beat rapidly as they approached the shop of Sweeney Todd.

"It will be imprudent to stop for even a moment at his door or window," said Arabella, "for, remember, you have no opportunity of varying your disguise."

"I will not stop. We will pass rapidly on, but—but it is something to look upon the doorstep over which the shadow of Mark has last passed."

In another moment they were on a level with the shop. Johanna cast a glance at the window, and then shrunk back with affright as she saw, occupying one of the upper panes of glass, the hideous face of Todd. He was not looking at her though, for with an awful squint that revealed all the whites of his eyes—we were going to say, but the dirty yellows would have been much nearer the truth—he seemed to be observing something up the street.

"Come on—come on," whispered Johanna.

Arabella had not happened to observe this apparition of Todd in the window, and she looked round to see what occasioned Johanna's sudden terror, when a young Temple clerk, who chanced to be a few paces behind them, immediately, with the modesty peculiar to his class, imagined the glance of the blooming girl to be a tribute to his attractions. He kissed the end of a faded glove, and put on what he considered a first-class fascinating aspect.

Johanna's Alarm At The Sight Of Sweeney Todd.

Johanna's Alarm At The Sight Of Sweeney Todd.

"Come on—come on," said Arabella now in her turn.

Johanna, of course, thought that Arabella too had caught sight of the hideous and revolting countenance of Sweeney Todd, and so they both hastened on together.

"Don't look back," said Arabella.

"Is he following?"

"Oh, yes—yes."

Johanna thought she meant Todd, while Arabella really meant the Temple gent, but, notwithstanding the mutual mistake, they hurried on, and the clerk taking that as quite sufficient encouragement, pursued them, putting his cravat to rights as he did so, in order that when he came up to them, he should present the most fascinating aspect possible.

"No—no." said Johanna, as she glanced behind. "You must have been mistaken, Arabella. He is not pursuing us."

"Oh, I am so glad."

Arabella looked back, and the Temple gent kissed his dilapidated glove.

"Oh, Johanna," she said, "how could you tell me he was not following, when there he is."

"What, Todd?"

"No. That impertinent ugly puppy with the soiled cravat."

"And you meant him?"

"To be sure."

"Oh, what a relief, I was flying on, fancying that Todd was in pursuit of us, and yet my judgment ought at once to have told me that that could not be the case, knowing nothing of us. How our fears overcome all reason. Do you know that strange-looking young man?"

"Know him? Not I."

"Well, my darling," said the gent, reaching to within a couple of paces of Arabella, "how do you do to-day?—a-hem! Are you going far? Ain't you afraid that somebody will run away with such a pretty gal as you—'pon soul, you are a charmer."

"Cross," whispered Arabella, and the two young girls at once crossed Fleet Street. It was not then so difficult an operation to get from one side of that thoroughfare to the other as it is now. The gent was by no means disconcerted at this evident wish to get out of his way, but he crossed likewise, and commenced a series of persecution, which such animals call gallantry, and which, to any respectable young female, are specially revolting.

"Now, my dear," he said, "St. Dunstan's is just going to strike the hour, and you will see the clubs hit the bells if you look, and I shall expect a kiss when it's all over."

"You are impertinent," said Johanna.

"Come, that's a good joke—why, you little whipper snapper, I suppose you came out to take care of your sister. Here's a penny to go and buy yourself a cold pie at Mrs. Lovett's. I'll see to your sister while you are gone. Oh, you need not look so wild about it. Did you never hear of a gent talking to a pretty gal in the street?"

"Often," said Johanna, "but I never heard of a gentleman doing so."

"Upon my word, you are as sharp as a needle, so I'll just pull your ears to teach you better manners, you young rascal—come—come, it's no use your kicking."

"Help—help!" cried Arabella.

They were now just opposite the principal entrance to the Temple, and as Arabella cried "help," who should emerge from under the gateway but Ben the Beef Eater. The fact is, that he was on his way to the Tower just previous to the meeting with Colonel Jeffery and Tobias. Arabella, who had twice or thrice seen him at the Oakley's, knew him at once.

"Oh, sir," she cried, "I am Johanna's friend, Miss Wilmot, and this—this gent won't leave me and my cousin here alone."

The gent made an effort to escape, but Ben caught him by the hinder part of his apparel, and held him tight.

"Is this him?"

"Yes—yes."

"Oh dear no—oh dear no, my good sir. It's that fellow there, with the white hat. There he goes, up Chancery Lane. My dear sir, you are quite mistaken; I wanted to protect the young lady, and as for the lad, bless his heart. I—oh dear, it wasn't me."

Still holding the gent by the first grasp he had taken of him, Ben suddenly crossed the road to where a parish pump stood, at the corner of Bell Yard, and holding him under the spout with one hand, he worked the handle with the other, despite the shrieks and groans of his victim, who in a few moments was rendered so limp and wet, that when Ben let him go, he fell into the sink below the pump, and there lay, until some small boys began pelting him. During the confusion and laughter of the bystanders, Arabella and Johanna rapidly retreated towards the City again, for they thought Ben might insist upon escorting them, and that, in such a case, it was possible enough the disguise of Johanna, good as it was, might not suffice to save her from the knowledge of one so well acquainted with her.

"Let us cross, Arabella," she said. "Let us cross, if it be but for one moment, to hear what the subject of the conversation between Todd and that man is."

"If you wish it, Johanna."

"I do, I do."

They crossed, and once again passed the shop of Todd, when they heard the man say—

"Well, if he has gone he has gone, but I think it is the strangest thing I ever heard of."

"So do I," said Todd.

Without lingering, and so perhaps exciting Todd's attention and suspicion, they could hear no more, but Johanna had heard enough to give the spur to imagination, and when they had again crossed Fleet-street, and were making their way rapidly up Ludgate-hill, she whispered to Arabella—

"Another! another!"

"Another what, Johanna? You terrify me by that tone. Oh, be calm. Be calm, I pray you. Some one will observe your agitation."

"Another victim," continued Johanna. "Another victim—another victim. Did you not hear what the man said? Was it not suggestive of another murder? Oh, Heaven preserve my reason, for each day, each hour, brings to me such accumulating proof of horrors, that I fear I shall go mad."

"Hush! hush! Johanna—Johanna!"

"My poor, poor Mark—"

"Remember that you are in the street, Johanna, and for my sake, I pray you to be calm. Those tears and that flushed cheek will betray you. Oh, why did I ever advise you to come upon such an enterprise as this? It is my fault, all my fault."

The terror and the self-accusation of Arabella Wilmot did more to bring Johanna to a reasonable state than anything else, and she made an effort to overcome her feelings, saying—

"Forgive me—forgive me, my dear friend—I, only, am to blame. But at the moment I was overcome by the thought that, in the heart of London, such a system of cold-blooded murder—"

She was unable to proceed, and Arabella, holding her arm tightly within her own, said—

"Do not attempt to say another word until we get home. There, in my chamber, you can give free vent to your feelings, but let the danger, as well as the impropriety of doing so in the open street, be present to your

mind. Say no more now, I implore you; say no more."

This was prudent advice, and Johanna had sufficient command of herself to take it, for she uttered not one other word until they were both almost breathless with the haste they had made to Arabella's chamber. Then, being no longer under the restraint of locality or circumstances, the tears of Johanna burst forth, and she wept abundantly. Arabella's romantic reading did sometimes, as it would appear, stand her in good stead, and upon this occasion she did not attempt to stem the torrent of grief that was making its way from the eyes of her fair young friend. She told herself that with those tears a load of oppressive grief would be washed from Johanna's spirit, and the result fully justified her prognostications. The tears subsided into sobs, and the sobs to sighs.

"Ah, my dear friend," she said, "how much have you to put up with from me. What a world of trouble I am to you."

"No," said Arabella, "that you are not, Johanna; I am only troubled when I see you overcome with too excessive grief, and then, I confess, my heart is heavy."

"It shall not be so again. Forgive me this once, dear Arabella."

Johanna flung herself into her friend's arms, and while they kissed each other, and Arabella was about commencing a hopeful kind of speech, a servant girl, with open mouth and eyes, looked into the room, transfixed with amazement.

"Well, Miss Bella," she cried at last, "you is fond of boys!"

Arabella started, and so did Johanna.

"Is that you, Susan?"

"Yes, Miss Bella, it is me. Well I never! The idea! I shall never get the better of this here! Only to think of you, Miss Bella, having a boy at your time of life."

"What do you mean, Susan? How dare you use such language to me? Get you gone!"

"Oh, yes, I'm a-going in course; but if I had anybody in the house, it shouldn't be a little impudent looking boy with no whiskers."

"She must know all," whispered Johanna.

"No, no," said Arabella, "I will not, feeling my innocence, be forced into making a confidant of a servant. Let her go."

"But she will speak."

"Let her speak."

Susan left the room, and went direct to the kitchen, holding up her hands all the way, and giving free expression to her feelings as she did so —

"Well, the *idea* now, of a little stumpy looking boy, when there's sich a lot of nice young men with whiskers to be had just for the wagging of one's little finger. Only to think of it. Sitting in her lap too, and them a kissing one another like—like—coach horses. Well I never. Now there's Lines's, the cheesemonger's, young man as I has in of a night, he is somebody, and such loves of whiskers I never seed in my born days afore; but I is surprised at Miss Bella, that I is—a shrimp of a boy in her lap! Oh dear, oh dear!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.
MR. FOGG FINDS THAT ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.

We feel that we ought not entirely to take leave of that unfortunate, who failed in escaping with Tobias Ragg, from Mr. Fogg's establishment at Peckham, without a passing notice. It will be recollected that Tobias had enough to do to get away himself, and that he was in such a state of mind that it was quite a matter of new mechanical movement of his limbs that enabled him to fly from the madhouse. Horror of the place, and dread of the people who called it theirs, had lighted up the glare of a partial insanity in his brain, and he flew to London, we admit, without casting another thought upon the wretched creature who had fallen in the attempt to free herself from those fiends in human shape who made a frightful speculation in the misery of their fellow creatures. The alarm was already spread in the madhouse, and Mr. Fogg himself arrived at the spot where the poor creature lay stunned and wounded by her fall.

"Watson! Watson!" he cried.

"Here," said that official, as he presented himself.

"Take this carcase up, Watson. I'm afraid Todd's boy is gone."

"Ha! ha!"

"Why do you laugh?"

"Why where's the odds if he has. I tell you what it is, Fogg, I haven't been here so long without knowing what's what. If that boy ever recovers his senses enough to tell a rational tale, I'll eat him. However, I'll soon go

and hunt him up. We'll have him again."

"Well, Watson, you give me hopes, for you have upon two different occasions brought back runaways. Bring the woman in and—and, Watson?

"Aye, aye."

"I think I would put her in No. 10."

"Ho! ho!—No. 10. Then she's booked. Well, well, come on Fogg, come on, it's all one. I suppose the story will be 'An attempt to escape owing to too much indulgence;' and some hints consequent on that, and then brought back to her own warm comfortable bed, where she went asleep so comfortably that we all thought she was as happy as an Emperor, and then—"

"She never woke again," put in Fogg. "But in this case you are wrong, Watson. It is true that twice or thrice I have thought, for the look of the thing, it would be desirable to have an inquest upon somebody, but in this case I will not. The well is not full!"

"Full?"

"No, I say the well is not full, Watson; and it tells no tales."

"It would hold a hundred bodies one upon another yet," said Watson, "and tell no tales. Ha! ha!"

"Good!"

"It is good. She is to go there, is she? well, so be it."

Watson carried the miserable female in his arms to the house.

"By-the-bye, it is a second thought," he said, "about No. 10."

"Yes, yes, there's no occasion. Watson, could you not at once—eh? It is a good hour. Could you not go right through the house, my good Watson, and at once—eh?"

"At once what?"

"Oh, you know. Ha! ha! You are not the dull fellow at comprehending a meaning you would fain make out; but you, Watson—you understand me well enough, you know you do. We understand each other, and always shall."

"I hope so, but if you want anything done I'll trouble you to speak out. What do you mean by 'couldn't you go through the house at once—eh?'"

"Pho! pho! Put her down the well at once. Humanity calls upon us to do it. Why should she awaken to a sense of her disappointment, Watson? Put her down at once, and she will never awaken at all to a sense of anything."

"Very well. Come on, business is business."

"You—you don't want me?"

"Don't I," said Watson, bending his shaggy brows upon him, and looking extra hideous on account of a large black patch over one eye, which he bore as a relict of his encounter with Tobias. "Don't I? Hark you, Fogg; if you won't come and help me to do it, you shall have it to do by yourself, without me at all."

"Why—why, Watson, Watson. This language—"

"Is nothing new, Fogg."

"Well, well, come on.—Come on—if it must be so, it must.—I—I will hold a lantern for you, of course; and you know, Watson, I make things easy to you, in the shape of salary, and all that sort of thing."

Watson made no reply to all this, but went through the house to the back part of the grounds, carrying with him his insensible burthen, and Fogg followed him, trembling in every limb. The fact was, that he, Fogg, had not for some time had a refresher in the shape of some brandy. The old deserted well to which they were bound was at a distance of about fifty yards from the back of the house; towards it the athletic Watson hastened with speed, closely followed by Fogg, who was truly one of those who did not mind holding a candle to the devil. The walls of that

building were high, and it was not likely that any intruder from the outside could see what was going on, so Watson took no precaution.—The well was reached, and Fogg cried to him—

"Now—now—quick about it, lest she recovers."

Another moment and she would have been gone in her insensibility, but as if Fogg's words were prophetic, she did recover, and clinging convulsively to Watson, she shrieked—

"Mercy! mercy! Oh, have mercy upon me! Help! help!"

"Ah, she recovers!" cried Fogg, "I was afraid of that. Throw her in. Throw her in, Watson."

"Confound her!"

"Why don't you throw her in?"

The Murder At The Well By Fogg And Watson.

The Murder At The Well By Fogg And Watson.

"She clings to me like a vice. I cannot—Give me a knife, Fogg. You will find one in my coat pocket—a knife—a knife!"

"Mercy! mercy! Have mercy upon me! No—no—no,—Help! Oh God! God!"

"The knife! The knife, I say!"

"Here, here," cried Fogg, as he hastily took it from Watson's pocket and opened it. "Here! Finish her, and quickly too, Watson!"

The scene that followed is too horrible for description. The hands of the wretched victim were hacked from their hold by Watson, and in the course of another minute, with one last appalling shriek, down she went like a flash of lightning to the bottom of the well.

"Gone!" said Watson.

Another shriek and Fogg, even, stopped his ears, so appalling was that cry, coming as it did so strangely from the bottom of the well.

"Throw something upon her," said Fogg. "Here's a brick—"

"Bah!" cried Watson, "bah! there's no occasion to throw anything on her. She'll soon get sick of such squealing."

Another shriek, mingled with a strange frothy cry, as though some one had managed to utter it under water, arose. The perspiration stood in large drops upon the face of Fogg.—He seized the brick he had spoken of, and cast it into the well. All was still as the grave before it reached the bottom, and then he wiped his face and looked at Watson.

"This is the worst job," he said, "that ever we have had—"

"Not a whit.—Brandy—give me a tumbler of brandy, Fogg. Some of our own particular, for I have something to say to you now, that a better opportunity than this for saying is not likely to occur."

"Come into my room then," said Fogg, "and we can talk quietly.—Do you think—that—that—"

"What?"

"That she is quite dead?"

"What do I care.—Let her crawl out of that, if she can."

With a jerk of his thumb, Watson intimated that the well was the "that" he referred to, and then he followed Fogg into the house, whistling as he went the same lively air with which he had frequently solaced his feelings in the hearing of poor Tobias Ragg. Never had Fogg been in such a state of agitation, except once, and that was long ago, upon the occasion of his first crime. Then he had trembled as he now trembled, but the

> "Dull custom of iniquity"

had effectually blunted soon the keen edge of his conscience, and he had for years carried on a career of infamy without any other feeling than exultation at his success.—Why then did he suffer now? Had the well in the garden ever before received a victim? Was he getting alive to the excellence of youth and beauty?—Oh no—no. Fogg was getting old. He could not stand what he once stood in the way of conscience. When he reached his room—that room in which he had held the conference with Todd, he sank into a chair with a deep groan.

"What's the matter now?" cried Watson, who got insolent in proportion as Fogg's physical powers appeared to be upon the wane.

"Nothing, nothing."

"Nothing?—Well, I never knew anybody look so white with nothing the matter. Come, I want a drop of brandy; where is it?"

"In that cupboard; I want some myself likewise. Get it out, Watson. You will find glasses there."

Watson was not slow in obeying this order. The brandy was duly produced, and, after Fogg had drank as much as would have produced intoxication in any one not so used to the ardent spirit as himself, he spoke more calmly, for it only acted upon him as a gentle sedative.

"You wished to say something to me, Watson."

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I am tired, completely tired, Fogg."

"Tired? Then why don't you retire to rest at once, Watson? There is, I am sure, nothing to keep you up now; I am going myself in a minute."

"You don't understand me, or you won't, which is much the same thing. I did not mean that I was tired of the day, but I am tired of doing all the work, Fogg, while you—while you—"

"Well—while I—"

"Pocket all the profit. Do you understand that? Now hark you. We will go partners, Fogg, not only in the present and the future, but in the past. I will have half of your hoarded up gains, or—"

"Or what?"

Mr. Watson made a peculiar movement, supposed to indicate the last kick of a culprit executed at the Old Bailey.

"You mean you will hang yourself," said Fogg. "My dear Watson, pray do so as soon as you think proper. Don't let me hinder you."

"Hark you, Fogg. You may be a fox, but I am a badger. I mean that I will hang you, and this is the way to do it. My wife—"

"Your what?"

"My wife," cried Watson, "has, in writing, the full particulars of all your crimes. She don't live far off, but still far enough to make it a puzzle for you to find her. If she don't see me once in every forty-eight hours, she is to conclude something has happened to me, and then she is to go at once to Bow Street with the statement, and lay it before a magistrate. You understand. Now I have contrived, with what I got from you by fair means as well as by foul, and by robbing the patients besides, to save some money, and if you and I don't agree, Mrs. Watson and I will start for New Zealand, or some such place, but—but, Fogg—"

"Well?"

"We will denounce you before we go."

"And what is to be the end of all this? The law has a long as well as a strong arm, Watson."

"I know it. You would say it might be long enough to strike me."

Fogg nodded.

"Leave me to take care of that. But as you want to know the result of all this, it is just this. I want to have my share, and I will have it. Give me a couple of thousand down, and half for the future."

Fogg was silent for a moment or two, and then he said—

"Too much, Watson, too much. I have not so much."

"Bah! At your banker's now you have exactly £11,267."

Fogg writhed.

"You have been prying. Well, you shall have the two thousand."

"On account."

Fogg writhed again. "I say you shall have so much, Watson, and you shall keep the books, and have your clear half of all future proceeds. Is there anything else you have set your mind upon, because if you have, while we are talking about business, you may as well state it, you know."

"No, there's nothing else—I am satisfied. All I have to add is, that you had better put your head into the fire than attempt to play any tricks with me. You understand?"

"Perfectly."

Watson was not altogether satisfied. He would have been better pleased if Fogg had made more resistance. The easy compliance of such a man with anything that touched his pocket looked suspicious, and filled the mind of Watson with a thousand vague conjectures. Already—aye, even before he left Fogg's room, Watson began to feel the uneasiness of his new position, and to pay dearly for the money he was to have. Even money may be given an exorbitant price for. When he was by himself, as he traversed the passage leading to his own sleeping room, Watson could not forbear looking cautiously around him at times, as though gaunt murder stalked behind him, and he fastened his bed-room door with more than his usual caution. The wish to sleep came not to him, and sitting down upon his bed-side he rested his chin upon his hand and said to himself in a low anxious shrinking kind of whisper—

"What does Fogg mean to do?"

Nor was the recent interview without its after effects upon the mad-house keeper himself. When the door closed upon Watson he shook his clenched hand in the direction he had taken, and muttered curses,

"Not loud, but deep."

"The time will come," he said, "Master Watson, and that quickly too, when I will let you see that I am still the master spirit. You shall be satisfied for the present, but your death-warrant is preparing. You will not live long to triumph over me by threats of what your low cunning can accomplish."

He rose and drank more raw brandy, after which, still muttering maledictions upon Watson, he returned to his bed-room, where, if he did not sleep, and if during the still hours of the night his brain was not too much vexed, he hoped to be able to concoct some scheme which should present him with a prospect of exemplary vengeance upon Watson.

CHAPTER XXXV.
MRS. LOVETT'S NEW LOVER.

Mrs. Lovett was a woman of luxurious habits. Perhaps the constant savoury hot pie atmosphere in which she dwelt contributed a something to the development of her tastes, but certainly that lady, in dress, jewellery, and men, had her fancies. Did the reader think that she saw anything attractive in the satyr-like visage of Todd, with its eccentricities of vision? Did the reader think that the lawyers' clerks frequenting her shop suited her taste, varying, as all the world knows that class of bipeds does, between the fat and flabby, and the white and candle looking, if we may be allowed the expression? Ah, no,—Mrs. Lovett's dreams of man had a loftier range, but we must not anticipate. Facts will speak trumpet-tongued for themselves.

> It is the hour when lawyers' clerks
> From many a gloomy chamber stalk;
> It is the hour when lovers' vows
> Are heard in every Temple walk.

Mrs. Lovett was behind her counter all alone, but the loneliness continued but for a very brief period, for from Carey-street, with a nervousness of gait highly suggestive of a fear of bailiffs—bailiffs were there in all their glory—comes a—a what shall we say? Truly there are some varieties of the genus homo that defy minute classification, but perhaps this individual who hastened down Bell Yard was the nearest in approximation to what used to be called "a swaggering companion," that can be found. He was a gent upon town—that is to say, according to his

own phraseology, he lived upon his wits; and if the reader will substitute dishonesty for wits, he will have a much clearer notion of what the swaggering companion of modern days lived upon. He was tall, burly, forty years of age, and his bloated countenance and sleepy eyes betrayed the effects of a long course of intemperance. He wore mock jewellery of an outrageous size; his attire was flashy and gaudy—his linen ... the less we say about that the better—enormous black whiskers (false) shaded his cheeks, and mangey-looking moustache (real) covered his upper lip—add to all this, such a stock of ignorance and impudence as may be supposed to thoroughly saturate one individual, and the reader has the swaggering companion before him. At a rapid pace he neared Mrs. Lovett's, muttering to himself as he went—

"I wonder if I can gammon her out of a couple of guineas."

Yes, reader, this compound of vulgarity, ignorance, impudence and debauchery was Mrs. Lovett's gentle fancy—her taste—her—her, what shall we say?—her personification of all that a man should be. Do not start; Mrs. Lovett has many imitators, for, without libelling the fairer, better, and more gentle of that sex, who can be such angels as well as such—a-hem!—there are thousands who would be quite smitten with the "swaggering companion." When he reached the shop-window, he placed his nose against it for a moment to reconnoitre who was in the shop, and seeing the fair one alone, he at once crossed the threshold.

"Ah, charmer, how do the fates get on with you?"

"Sir—"

A smile upon the face of Mrs. Lovett was a practical contradiction to the rebuff which her reception of him by words of mouth seemed to carry.

"Oh, you bewitching—a—a—"

The remainder of the sentence was lost in the devouring a pie, which the "swaggering companion" took from the shop counter.

"Really, sir," said Mrs. Lovett—"I wish you would not come here, I am all alone, and—"

"Alone? You beautiful female.—Oh you nice creature.—Allow me."

The "swaggering companion" lifted up that portion of the counter which enabled Mrs. Lovett to pass from one side of it to the other, and as coolly as possible walked into the parlour. Mrs. Lovett followed him, protesting at what she called his impudence. But for all that, a bottle of spirits and some biscuits were procured. The "swaggering companion," however, pushed the biscuits aside, saying—

"Pies for me. Pies for me."

Mrs. Lovett looked at him scrutinisingly as she said—

"And do you really like the pies, or do you only eat them out of compliment to me?"

"Really like them? I tell you what it is; out of compliment to you, of course, I could eat anything, but the pies are delicacies.—Where do you get your veal?"

"Well, if you will have pies you shall, Major Bounce."—That was the name which the "swaggering companion" appended to his disgusting corporealty.

"Certainly, my dear, certainly. As I was saying, I could freely, to compliment you, eat old Tomkins, the tailor, of Fleet Street."

"Really. How do you think he would taste?"

"Tough!"

"Ha! Ha!"

It was an odd laugh that of Mrs. Lovett's. Had she borrowed it from Todd?

"My dear Mrs. L.," said the major, "what made you laugh in that sort of way? Ah, if I could only persuade you to go from L to B—"

"Sir?"

"Now, my charmer, seriously speaking:—Here am I, Major Bounce, a gentleman with immense expectations, ready and willing to wed the most charming woman under the sun, if she will only say 'yes.'"

"Have you any objection to America?"

"America? None in the least.—With you for a companion, America would be a Paradise. A regular garden of, what do you call it, my dear? Only say the word, my darling."

The major's arm was gently insinuated round the lady's waist, and after a few moments she spoke.

"Major Bounce, I—I have made money."

"The devil!—so have I, but the police one day—a-hem!—a-hem!—what a cough I have."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing—only a joke. You said you had made money, and that put me in mind of what I read in the 'Chronicle' to-day of some coiners, that's all. Ha-ha!"

"When I spoke of making money, I meant in the way of trade, but having made it, I should not like to spend it in London, and be pointed out as the well-known pie-woman."

"Pie-woman! Oh, the wretches—only let—"

"Peace. Hold your tongue, and hear me out. If I marry and retire, it will be far from here—very far indeed."

"Ah, any land, with you." The major absolutely saluted the lady.

"Be quiet. Pray, in what service are you a major?"

"The South American, my love. A much higher service than the British."

"Indeed."

"Lord bless you, yes. If I was now to go to my estates in South America, there would be a jubilee of ten days at the very least, and the people as well as the government would not know how to make enough of me, I

can assure you. In fact, I have as much right to take the rank of general as of major, but the natural modesty of a military man, and of myself in particular, steps in and says 'A major be it.'"

"Then you have property?"

"Property—property? I believe you, I have. Lots!"

The major dealt his forehead a slap as he spoke, which might be taken as an indication that that was where his property was situated, and that it consisted of his ignorance and impudence—very good trading capitals in this world for, strange to say, the parties solely possessing such qualifications get on much better than education, probity, and genius can push forward their unhappy victims. Mrs. Lovett was silent for some minutes, during which the major saluted her again. Then, suddenly rising, she said—

"I will give you an answer to-morrow. Go away now. We shall be soon interrupted. If I do consent to be yours, there will be something to do before we leave England."

"By Jove, only mention it to me, and it is as good as done. By-the-bye, there is something to do before I leave here, and that is, my charmer, to pay you for the pies."

"Oh, no—no."

"Yes, yes—my honour. Touch my honour, even in regard of a pie, and touch my life.—I put two guineas in one end of my purse, to pay my glover in the Strand, and at the other end are some small coins—where the deuce—can—I—have—put—it."

The major made an affectation of feeling in all his pockets for his lost purse, and then, with a serio-comic look, he said—

"By Jove, some rascal has picked my pocket."

"Never mind me," said Mrs. Lovett, "I don't want payment for the pies."

"Well, but—the—the glover. Poor devil, and I promised him his money this morning. For a soldier and a man of honour to break his word is death. What shall I do?—Mrs. L., could you lend me a couple of guineas until I have the happiness of seeing you again?"

"Certainly, major, certainly I can."

The gallant son of Mars pocketed the coins, and after saluting Mrs. Lovett some half score of times—and she, the beast, liked it—he left the shop and went chuckling into the Strand, where in a few minutes he was in a pot-house, from whence he emerged not until he had liquidated one of the guineas. Was Mrs. Lovett taken in by the major? Did she believe his title, or his wealth, and his common honesty? Did she believe in the story of the purse and of the two guineas that were to be paid to the poor glover because he wanted them? No—no—certainly not. But for all that, she admired the major.—He was her *beau ideal* of a fine man! That was sufficient. Moreover, being what he was—a rogue, cheat, and common swindler—she could exercise, so she thought, a species of control over him which no decent man would put up with, and so in her own mind she had determined to marry the major and fly; but as she said—"There was a little something to be done first." Did that relate to the disposal of Todd? We shall see. If she calculated upon the major putting Sweeney Todd out of the way, she sadly miscalculated; but the wisest heads will blunder. Compared to Todd, the major was indeed a poor creature; but Mrs. Lovett, in the stern courage of her own intellect, could not conceive the possibility of the great, puffy, bloated, fierce Major Bounce being as arrant a coward as ever was kicked. He was so, though, for all that. After he had left her, Mrs. Lovett sat for a long time in a profound reverie, and as it happened that no one came into the shop; the current of her evil thoughts was uninterrupted.

"I have sufficient," she said; "and before it gets too late, I will leave this mode of life. Why did I—tempted by the fiend Todd—undertake it, but that I might make wealth by it, and so assume a position that my heart panted for. I will not delay until it is too late, or I may lose the enjoyment that I have sacrificed so much to find the means of getting. I live in this

world but for the gratification of the senses, and finding that I could not gratify them without abundant means, I fell upon this plan. I—ah—that is he—"

Suddenly the swaggering companion, the redoubtable Major Bounce, rushed past the shop-window, without so much as looking in for a single moment, and made his way towards Carey Street. Mrs. Lovett started up and made her way into the front shop. Major Bounce was out of sight, but from Fleet Street came a poor, draggled, miserable looking woman, making vain efforts at a speed which her weakness prevented her from keeping up.—She called aloud—

"Stop! stop!—only a moment, Flukes! Only a moment, John. Stop!—stop!"

Her strength failed her, and she fell exhausted upon Mrs. Lovett's door-step.

"Heartless!—heartless ever!" she cried. "May the judgment of the Almighty reach him—may he suffer—yes—may he suffer only what I have suffered."

"Who and what are you?" said Mrs. Lovett.

"Poor, and therefore everything that is abject and despicable in London."

"What a truth," said Mrs. Lovett. "What a truth that is. Who would not do even as I do to avoid poverty in a widowed life!—It is too horrible. Amid savages it is nothing, but here it is indeed criminality of the deepest dye. Whom did you call after, woman?"

"My husband."

"Husband. Describe him."

"A sottish-looking man, with moustache. Once seen, he is not easily mistaken—ruffian and villain are stamped by nature upon his face."

Mrs. Lovett winced a little.

"Come in," she said, "I will relieve you for the present. Come in."

The woman by a great effort succeeded in rising and crossing the threshold. Mrs. Lovett gave her a seat, and having presented her with a glass of cordial and a pie, she waited until the poor creature should be sufficiently recovered to speak composedly, and then she said to her with perfect calmness, as though she was by no manner of means personally interested in the matter—

"Now tell me—Is the man with moustache and the braided coat, who passed hastily up Bell Yard a few moments only before you, really your husband?"

"Yes, madam, that is Flukes—"

"Who?"

"Flukes, madam."

"And pray who and what is Flukes?"

"He was a tailor, and he might have been as respectable a man, and earned as honest and good a living as any one in the trade, but a love of idleness and dissipation undid him."

"Flukes—a tailor?"

"Yes, madam; and now that I am utterly destitute, and in want of the common necessaries of life, if I chance to meet him in the streets and ask him for the merest trifle to relieve my necessities, he flies from me in the manner he has done to-day."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, madam. If we were in a lonely place he would strike me, so that I should, from the injury he would do me, be unable to follow him, but that in the public streets he dare-not do, for he fears some man would interfere and put a stop to his cruelty."

"There, my good woman," said Mrs. Lovett, "there are five shillings for you. Go now, for I expect to be busy very shortly."

With a profusion of thanks, that while they lasted were quite stunning, poor Mrs. Flukes left the pie-shop and hobbled homewards. When she was gone the colour went and came several times upon the face of Mrs. Lovett, and then she repeated to herself—"Flukes—a tailor!"

"Pies ready?" said a voice at the door.

"Not quite."

"How long, mum; we want half a dozen of the muttons to-day."

"In about ten minutes."

"Thank you, I'll look in again."

"Flukes—a tailor? Indeed!—Flukes—a tailor? Well I ought to have expected something like this. What a glorious thing it is really to care for no one but oneself after all. I shall lose my faith in—in—fine men."

CHAPTER XXXVI.
TOBIAS'S MOTHER AWAKENS OLD RECOLLECTIONS.

Poor Tobias still remains upon his bed of sickness. The number of hours at the expiration of which the medical man had expected him to recover were nearly gone. In Colonel Jeffery's parlour three persons, besides himself, were assembled. These three were his friend the captain, Sir Richard Blunt, and Mrs. Ragg. The lady was sitting with a not over clean handkerchief at her eyes, and keeping up a perpetual motion with her knee, as though she were nursing some fractious baby, and Mrs. Ragg had been used of late to go out as a monthly nurse occasionally, which, perhaps, accounted for this little peculiarity.

"Now, madam," said the colonel, "you quite understand, I hope, that you are not to mention to any living soul the fact of your son Tobias being with me."

"Oh, dear me, no, sir. Who should I mention it to?"

"That we can't tell," interrupted the captain, "you are simply desired not to tell it."

"I'm sure I don't see anybody once in a week, sir."

"Good God! woman," cried the colonel, "does that mean that when you do see any one you will tell it?"

"Lord love you, sir, it's few people as comes to see you when you are down in the world. I'm sure it's seldom enough a soul taps at my door with a 'Mrs. Ragg, how are you?'"

"Now was there ever such an incorrigible woman as this?"

"If you were to talk to her for a month," said Sir Robert Blunt, "you would not get a direct answer from her. Allow me to try something else—Mrs. Ragg."

"Yes, sir—humbly at your service, sir."

"If you tell any one that Tobias is here, or indeed anywhere within your knowledge, I will apprehend you about a certain candlestick."

"Goodness gracious, deliver us."

"Do you understand that, Mrs. Ragg? You keep silence about Tobias, and I keep silence about the candlestick. You speak about Tobias, and I speak about the candlestick."

Mrs. Ragg shook her head and let fall a torrent of tears, which the magistrate took as sufficient evidence that she did understand him and would act accordingly, so he added—

"Shall we all proceed up stairs? for a great deal will depend upon the boy's first impression when he awakens—and in this case we should not lose a chance."

In pursuance of this sound advice they all proceeded to poor Tobias's bed-room, and there he lay in that profound repose which the powerful opiate administered to him had had the effect of producing. It did not seem as though he had moved head or foot since they had left him. His face was very pale, and when Mrs. Ragg saw him she burst into tears, exclaiming—

"He is dead—he is dead!"

"No such thing, madam," said Colonel Jeffery. "He only sleeps."

"But, oh deary me, what makes him look so old and so strange now? He was bad enough when I saw him last, poor fellow, but not like this."

"He has received ill-usage from someone, and that is precisely what we want to find out. If you can get from him the particulars of what he has suffered, we will take care those who have made him suffer shall not

escape."

"Bless you, gentlemen, what's the use of that if my poor boy is killed?"

There was a good home truth in these words from Mrs. Ragg, although, upon the score of general social policy, they might well be answered. An argument with Mrs. Ragg, however, upon such a subject was not very a-propos. The colonel made her sit down by Tobias's bed-side, and he was then upon the point of remarking to his friend, the captain, that it would be as well, since so many hours had passed, to send for the medical man, when that personage made his appearance.

"Has he awakened?" he asked.

"No—not yet."

"Oh, I see you have a nurse."

"It is his mother. We hope that she, by talking to him familiarly, may produce a good effect, and possibly rid him of that bewilderment of intellect under which he now labours. What think you, sir?"

"That it is a good thought. Let us darken the room as much as possible, as twilight will be most grateful to him upon awakening, which he must do shortly."

The curtains of the window were so arranged that the room was in a state of semi-darkness, and then they all waited with no small anxiety for Tobias to recover from the deep and death-like sleep that had come over him. After about five minutes he moved uneasily and uttered a low moan.

"Speak to him, Mrs. a—a—what's your name?"

"Ragg, sir."

"Aye, Ragg, just speak to him; of course he is well acquainted with your voice, and it may have the effect of greatly rousing him from his lethargic condition."

Poor Mrs. Ragg considered that she had some very extraordinary post to perform, and accordingly she collected to her aid all her learning, which, interrupted by her tears, and now and then by a sob, which she had to gulp down like a large globule of castor oil, had certainly rather a droll effect.

"My dear Tobias—my dear—lie a bed, sluggard, you know—well, I never—Put the kettle on, Polly, and let's all have tea. Tobias, my dear—bless us and save us, are you going to stay in bed all day?"

Another groan from Tobias.

"Well, my dear, perhaps you won't mind getting up and just running towards the corner for a bunch of water cresses? Dear heart alive, there goes the muffin-man like a lamplighter!"

It was by such domestic themes that Mrs. Ragg sought to recall the wandering senses of poor Tobias to a cognizance of the present. But alas! his thoughts were still in the dim and misty land of visions. Suddenly he spoke—

Tobias's Delirium.

Tobias's Delirium.

"Hush—hush! There they come!—elephants!—elephants!—on—on—on. Now for the soldiers, and all mad—mad—mad! Hide me in the straw—deep in a world of straw. Hush! He comes. Sing, oh sing again!—and he—he will not suspect."

The surgeon made a sign to Mrs. Ragg to speak again.

"Why, Tobias, my dear, what are you talking about? Do you mean the Elephant and Castle?"

"Call to his remembrance," said the surgeon, "some old scenes."

"Yes, sir, but when one's heart and all that sort of thing is in one's mouth it's very difficult to recollect things oneself. Tobias!"

"Yes—yes. Ha-ha!"

It was a low, plaintive, strange laugh that, that came from the poor boy whose mind had been so overthrown, and it jarred upon the feelings of all who heard it.

"Tobias, do you recollect the little cottage down the lane at Holloway, where we lived, and the cock roaches, and the strange cat, you know, Tobias, that would not go away? Don't you recollect, Tobias, how the coals there were all slates, and how your poor father, as is dead and gone —"

"Yes, I see him now."

Mrs. Ragg gave a faint scream.

"Father!—father!" said Tobias, as he held out his arms, and the big tears rolled down his cheeks. "Father—father, Todd has not got me now. Don't cry so, father. Stand out of the way of the elephants."

"My dear! my dear!" cried Mrs. Ragg, "do you want to break my heart?"

Tobias rose to a sitting position in the bed, and looked his mother in the face—

"Are you, too, mad?" he said. "Are you, too, mad? Did you tell of Todd?"

"Yes, the only way," said Colonel Jeffery, "for people not to be mad, is to tell of Todd."

"Yes—yes."

"And so you, Tobias, will tell us all you know. That is what we want you to do, and then you will be quite happy and comfortable for the remainder of your days, and live with your mother again far from any apprehension from Todd. Do you understand me?"

Tobias opened his mouth several times in an eager, gasping sort of manner, as though he would have said something rapidly, but he could not. He placed his hands upon his brain, and rocked to and fro for a few moments, and then he broke out into the same low, peculiar laugh that

had before so strangely affected Colonel Jeffery and the others who were there present in that room. The surgeon shook his head as he said, mournfully—

"It is of no use!"

"Do you really think so?" said the colonel.

"For the present, I am convinced that it is of no use to attempt to recall his wandering senses. Time will do wonders, and he has the one grand element of youth in his favour. That, as well as time, will do wonders. The case is a bad one, and the shock the brain of this lad has received must be a most fearful one."

"Do not," said Sir Richard Blunt, "give up so readily, Mrs. Ragg; I would have you try him again. Speak to him again of his father—that seemed to be the topic that most moved him."

Mrs. Ragg could hardly do so for her tears, but she managed to stammer out—

"Tobias, do you recollect when your father bought you the rabbit, and out of vexation, the creature eat its way out of a willow-work cage in the night? Do you remember your poor father's funeral, Tobias, and how we went, you and I, my poor boy, to take the last look at the only one who—who—who—"

Mrs. Ragg could get no further.

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed Tobias, "who told of Todd?"

"Who is this Todd," said the surgeon, "that he continually speaks of, and shudders at the very name of?"

Colonel Jeffery glanced at Sir Richard Blunt, and the latter, who wished the affair by no means to transpire, merely said—

"We are quite as much in the dark as you, sir. It is just what we should like to know, who this Todd is, whose very name seems to hold the imagination of this poor boy in a grasp of iron. I begin to think that nothing more can be done now."

"Nothing, gentlemen, you may depend," said the surgeon. "How old is the lad?"

"Sixteen as never was," replied Mrs. Ragg, "and a hard time I had of it, sir, as you may suppose."

The surgeon did not exactly see how he was called upon to suppose anything of the sort; however he made no further remark to Mrs. Ragg, but continued in conversation for some time with Colonel Jeffery, who informed him that Tobias should remain for a time where he was, so that there should be every possible chance given for his recovery.

"I wish you to continue attending upon him, sir," he added, "for I would spare nothing that medical advice can suggest to restore him. He has, I am convinced, been a great sufferer."

"That is sufficiently clear, sir. You may rely upon my utmost attention."

"Mrs. Ragg," said the colonel, "can you cook?"

"Cook, sir? Lord bless you, sir. I can cook as well as here and there a one, though I say it that oughtn't, and if poor Tobias was but all right, I should not go to be after making myself miserable now about bygones. What's to be cured must be endured—it's a long lane as hasn't a turning. As poor Mr. Ragg often used to say when he was alive—'Grizzling ain't fattening.'"

"I should think it was not. It so happens, Mrs. Ragg, that there is a vacancy in my house for a cook, and if you like to come and take the place, you can look after Tobias as well, you know, for I intend him to remain here for the present. Only remember, you tell this to no one."

"Me, sir! Lord bless you, sir, who do I see?"

The colonel was by no means anxious to convince himself a second time of the impossibility of bringing Mrs. Ragg to a precise answer, so he changed the subject, and it was finally arranged that without a word to any one upon the subject, that very night Mrs. Ragg was to take up her abode with Tobias. After this had been all arranged, the three gentlemen proceeded to the dining room, and held a consultation.

"Of the guilt of Todd," said the magistrate, "I entertain no doubt, but I own that I am extremely anxious to bring the crime legally home to him."

"Exactly," said the colonel, "and I can only say that every plan you can suggest will be cheerfully acquiesced in by me and my friend here."

The captain signified his assent.

"Be assured, gentlemen," added Sir Richard Blunt, "that something shall be done of a decisive character before many days are past. I have seen the higher powers upon the subject, and have full authority, and you may rest satisfied that I shall not mind running a little personal risk to unravel the mysteries that surround the career of Sweeney Todd. I think one thing may be done conveniently."

"What is that, sir?"

"Why, It seems to be pretty well understood that no one resides in Todd's house but himself, and as now he has no boy—unless he has provided himself with one already—he must go out sometimes and leave the place to itself, and upon one of those occasions an opportunity might be found of thoroughly searching the upper part, at all events, of his house."

"Could that be done with safety?"

"I think so. At all events, I feel inclined to try it. If I do so, and make any discovery, you may depend upon my letting you know without an hour's delay, and I sincerely hope that all that will take place may have the effect of setting your mind at rest regarding your friend, Mr. Ingestrie."

"But not of restoring him to us?"

The magistrate shook his head.

"I think, sir," he said, "that you ought to consider that he has, if any one has, fallen a victim to Sweeney Todd."

"Alas! I fear so."

"All the evidence points that way, and we can only take measures in the best way possible to bring his murderer to justice—that that murderer is Sweeney Todd, I cannot for one moment of time bring myself to doubt."

Sir Richard Blunt shortly afterwards left Colonel Jeffery's house and proceeded to the execution of a plan of proceeding, with the particulars of which he had not thought proper to entrust to the colonel, and his friend the captain. Long habits of caution had led the magistrate—who was not one of the fancy magistrates of the present day, but a real police officer—active, cool, and determined—to trust no one but himself with his secrets, and so he kept to himself what he meant to do that night. When he was gone, Colonel Jeffery had a long talk with his friend, and the subject gradually turned to Johanna, whom the colonel yet hoped, he said, to be able one day to call his own.

"No one," he remarked, "would be more truly rejoiced than I to restore Mark Ingestrie to her whom he loves, and whose affection for him is of so enduring and remarkable a character, but if, as Sir Richard Blunt supposes, he is really no more, I think Johanna, by being mine, would stand a better chance of recovering her serenity, if not of enjoying all the happiness in this world that she deserves."

"Hope for the best," said the captain, "and recollect what the surgeon said as regarded Tobias, that time works wonders."

CHAPTER XXXVII.
THE SEARCH AT TODD'S.

The house in Fleet Street, next door to Todd's, was kept by a shoemaker, named Whittle, and in this shoemaker's window was a bill, only put up on the very day of poor Tobias's escape from Peckham, announcing—"An Attic to Let." This was rather an alluring announcement to Sir Richard Blunt. At about half an hour after sunset on the same evening that had witnessed the utter discomfiture of the attempt to restore poor Tobias Ragg to his senses, two men stood in the deep recess of a doorway immediately opposite to the house of Sweeney Todd. These two men were none other than Sir Richard and his esteemed but rather eccentric officer, Mr. Crotchet. After some few moments' silence, Sir Richard spoke, saying—

"Well, Crotchet—what do you think of the affair now?"

"Nothink."

"Nothing? You do not mean that, Crotchet?"

"Says what I means—means what I says, and then leaves it alone."

"But you have some opinion, Crotchet?"

"Had, master—had—"

"Well, Crotchet; I think we can now cross over the way, and endeavour to get possession of the shoemaker's attic, from which we can get into Todd's house."

"And find nothink criminatory."

"You think not; but do you know, Crotchet, I am of opinion that the greatest and cleverest rogues not unfrequently leave themselves open to detection, in some little particular, which they have most strangely and unaccountably neglected. I am not without a hope that we shall find the man, Sweeney Todd, to be one of that class, and if so, we shall not fail to do some good by our visit to the house.—You remain here and watch for his going out, and when he is gone, come over the way and ask for Mr. Smith. Have you seen Fletcher?"

"No, but he will be here presently, and will wait till that 'ere fellow goes away, if so be as he goes out, and then when you and me hears two notes on the key-bugle, it will be time all for us to go for to come to mizzle."

"Very good," said Sir Richard Blunt, and he crossed over to the shoemaker's shop, leaving Crotchet on the watch in the deep doorway.

The fact is, they had been waiting there for some time, in the hope that Todd would go out, but he had not stirred, so that the magistrate thought it would be as well to let Crotchet remain while he secured the shoemaker's attic, with a view to ulterior proceedings. The magistrate was dressed as a respectable, staid clerk, and he walked into the shoemaker's shop with a gravity of gait that was quite imposing.

"You have an attic to let," he said. "Is it furnished?"

"Oh yes, sir, and comfortably too. My missus looks after all that, I can tell you."

"Very well, I want just such a place; for, do you know, since I have left a widower, I like to live in some lively situation, and as all my friends are at Cambridge, and not a soul that I know in London, I don't half fancy going into an out-of-the-way place to live; though, I dare say, for all that, London is safe enough."

"Why, I don't know that," said the shoemaker. "However, you'll be safe enough here, sir, never doubt. The rent is four shillings a week."

"Very good. I think, if you will show it to me, we shall suit each other. The great object with me is to find myself in the house of a respectable man, and one look at you, sir, is quite sufficient to show me that you are one."

This was all highly flattering to the shoemaker, and he was so well pleased to get such a respectable, civil-spoken, middle aged gentleman into his house, that he was prepared, upon half a word to that effect, to come down a whole sixpence a week in the rent, if needs were. Of course, the would-be-lodger was well enough pleased with the attic, and turning to the shoemaker, he handed him four shillings, saying—

"As my friends are all so far off, I ought to give you a week's rent in advance, instead of a reference, and there it is."

After this, who could ask any further questions? The magistrate, just, of his own accord, added that his name was Smith, and that he would stay a short time in his room if the shoemaker could oblige him with a light, which was done accordingly, and when the shoemaker's wife came home —that lady having been out to gossip with no less a personage than Mrs. Lovett—he was quite elated to tell her what a lodger they had, and as he handed her the four shillings, saying "My dear, that will buy you the ribbon at Mrs. Keating's, the mercer, that you had set your mind upon," how could she be other than quite amiable?

"Well, John," she said, "for once in a way, I must say that you have shown great judgment, and if I had been at home myself, I could not have managed better."

This, we are quite sure, our lady readers will agree with us was as much as any married female ought to say. Sir Richard Blunt ascended to the attic, of which he was now, by virtue of a weekly tenancy, lord and master, with a light, and closing the door, he cast his eyes around the apartment. Its appointments were decidedly not luxurious. In one corner a stump-bedstead awakened anything but lively associations, while the miserable little grate, the front of which was decidedly composed of some portions of an old iron hoop from a barrel, did not

look redolent of comforts. The rest of the apartments were what the auctioneers call *en suite*, the said auctioneers having but a dreamy notion of what *en suite* means. But the appointments or disappointments of his attic were of little consequence to Sir Richard Blunt. It was the window that offered attractions to him. Softly opening it, he looked out, and found that there was a leaden gutter, with only the average amount of filth in it, the drain being, of course, stopped up by a dishclout and a cracked flower-pot, which is perfectly according to custom in London. He saw enough at a glance, however, to convince him that there would be no difficulty whatever in getting to the attic of Todd's house, and that fact once ascertained, he waited with exemplary and placid patience the return of Crotchet. Now, Sweeney Todd was, during much of that day, in what is denominated a brown study. He could not make up his mind in what way he was to make up for the loss of the senses of Tobias. It was with him an equal choice of disagreeables. To have a boy, or not to have a boy, which to do became an anxious question.

"A boy is a spy," muttered Todd to himself—"a spy upon all my actions—a perpetual police-officer in a small way, constantly at my elbow—an alarum continually crying to me 'Todd! Todd! beware!' Curses on them all, and yet what a slave am I to this place without a lad; and, after all, when they do become too troublesome and inquisitive, I can but dispose of them as I have disposed of him."

Todd patrolled his shop for some time, thus communing with himself; but as yet he could not make up his mind which to do.—A boy or not a boy?—that was the question. He remained in this unsatisfactory state of mind until sunset had passed away and the dim twilight was wrapping all things in obscurity. Then, without deciding upon either course, he suddenly, in a very hurried manner, shut up his shop, and closing the outer door carefully, he walked rapidly towards Bell Yard. He was going to Mrs. Lovett's, whither we shall follow him at a more convenient opportunity, but just now we have Sir Richard Blunt's enterprise to treat of. Todd had no sooner got fairly out of sight, than Mr. Crotchet emerged

from the doorway in which he was concealed, and went a few paces down Fleet Street, towards the Temple.—He soon met a man genteelly dressed, who seemed to be sauntering along in an idle fashion.

"All's right, Fletcher," said Crotchet.

"Oh, is it?"

"Yes. Have you got that ere little article with you?"

"The bugle? Oh, yes."

"Mind you blows it then, if you sees Todd come home, and no gammon."

"Trust to me old fellow."

Without another word, Mr. Crotchet crossed over the road, and opened the shop-door of the shoemaker. Now the face of Mr. Crotchet was not the most engaging in the world, and when he looked in upon the shoemaker, that industrious workman felt a momentary pang of alarm, and particularly when Mr. Crotchet, imparting a horrible obliquity to his vision, said—

"How is yer, old un?"

"Sir?" said the shoemaker.

"You couldn't show a fellow the way up to Smith's *hattic*, I supposes?"

"Smith—Smith?—Oh, dear me, that's the new lodger. I'll call him down if you wait here."

"No occasion. I'll toddle up, my tulip. He's a relation o' mine, don't you see the likeness atween us?—We was considered the handsomest pair 'o men as was in London at one time, and it sticks to us now, I can tell you."

"If you wish, sir, to go up, instead of having Mr. Smith called down, of course, sir, you can, as you are an old friend. Allow me to light you, sir."

"Not the least occasion. Only tell me where it isn't, and I'll find out where it is, old chap."

"It's the front attic."

"All's right. Don't be sich a hass as to be flaring away arter me, with that ere double dip, I can find my way in *worserer* places than this here. All's right—easy does it."

To the surprise of the shoemaker, his mysterious visitor opened the little door at the back of the shop, which led to the staircase, and in a moment disappeared up them.

"Upon my life, this Mr. Smith," thought the shoemaker, "seems to have some very strange connexions. He told me he knew nobody in London, and then here comes one of the ugliest fellows, I think, I ever saw in all my life, and claims acquaintance with him. What ought I to do?—Ought I to tell Mrs. W. of it?"

At this moment Mrs. W. made her appearance from the mercer's, with the ribbon that had tickled her feminine fancy—all smiles and sweetness. The heart of the shoemaker died within him, for well he knew what visitation he was likely to come in for, if anything connected with the lodger turned out wrong.

"A-hem! a-hem! Well, my dear, have you got the ribbon?"

"Oh yes, to be sure, and a love it is—"

"Ah!—ah!"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, my dove. I was only thinking that it wasn't the ribbon that makes folks look lovely, but the person who wears it. You would look beautiful in any ribbon."

"Why, my dear, that may be very true, but still one ought to look as well as one can, you know, for the credit of one's maker."

"Oh, yes, yes, but I was only thinking—"

"Thinking of what? Bless me, Mr. Wheeler, how mystifying you are to-night, to be sure. What do you mean by this conduct? Was ever a woman so pestered and tormented with a fool of a man, who looks like an owl in an ivy bush for all the world, or a crow peeping into a marrowbone."

"My duck, how can you say so?"

"Duck indeed? Keep your ducks to yourself. Hoity toity. Duck, indeed. You low good-for-nothing—"

"My dear, my dear. I was only thinking, and not in the least wishing to offend."

"But you do offend me, you nasty insinuating, sneering wretch.—What were you thinking about? Tell me this moment."

"Why, that a pretty silver-grey satin mantle would set off your figure so well, that—"

"Oh, John!"

"That, though quarter-day is near at hand, I think you ought to have one."

"Really, Jackey."

"Yes, my dear."

"What a man you are. Ah, Jackey, after all, though we have, like all people, our little tiffs and wiffs and sniffs—after all, I say it, perhaps, that should not say it, you are a dear, good, obliging—"

"Don't mention it."

"Yes, but—"

"No, don't. By-the-bye, do you know, Susey, that I begin to have my suspicions—mind, I may be wrong, but I begin to have my suspicions, do you know, that our attic lodger is, after all, no better than he should be."

"Gracious!"

"Hush! hush! There has been a man here; so ugly—so—so—squintified, if I may say so, that between you and me and the post, my dear, it's enough to frighten any one to look at him, it is indeed.—But as for the silver-grey satin, don't stint the quality for a sixpence or so."

"The wretch!"

"And take care to have plenty of rich trimming to it."

"The monster!"

"And have something pretty to match it, so that when you go to St. Dunstan's next Sunday, all the folks will ask what fine lady from court has come into the city out of curiosity to see the old church."

"Oh, Jackey."

"That's what I call," muttered Mr. Wheeler, "pouring oil upon the troubled waters." He then spoke aloud, saying—"Now, my dear, it is your judgment and advice I want. What shall we do in this case? for you see—first of all, the new lodger denies knowing a soul, and then, in half an hour, an old acquaintance calls upon him here."

The silver-grey satin—the flattering allusion to the probable opinion of the people in St. Dunstan's Church on the next Sunday—the obscure allusion to a something else to match it, and the appeal to her judgment, all had the effect desired upon Mrs. Wheeler, who, dropping entirely the hectoring tone, fell into her husband's views, and began calmly and dispassionately, without abuse or crimination, to discuss the merits, or rather the probable demerits, of the new lodger.

"I tell you, my dear, my opinion," said the lady. "As for stopping in the house and not knowing who and what he is, I won't."

"Certainly not, my love."

"Then, Mr. W., the only thing to do, is for you and I to go up stairs, and say that as I was out you did not know a Mr. Jones had spoken about the lodging, but that, if he could give a reference in London, we would still have him for a lodger."

"Very well. That will be only civil, and if he says he can't, but must send to Cambridge—"

"Why then, my dear, you must say that he may stay till he writes, and I'll be guided by his looks. If I give you a nudge, so, with my elbow, you may consider that it's pretty right."

"Very well, my dove."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.
SIR RICHARD PRIES INTO TODD'S SECRETS.

Crotchet soon reached the attic floor of the shoemaker's house, and although in profound darkness, he managed, as he thought, to touch the right door. Tap! tap! went Crotchet's knuckles, and as he did so he followed a habit very general, when the knock is only a matter of ceremony, and opened the door at the same moment. He popped his head into a room where there was a light, and said—

"Here yer is."

A scream was the reply to him, and then Crotchet saw, by the state of affairs there, that he had made a little mistake in the topography of the attic landing. The attic in which he found himself, for he had crossed the threshold, was in the occupation of an elderly gaunt-looking female, who was comforting her toes by keeping them immersed in a pan of water by the side of a little miserable fire, which was feebly pretending to look cheerful in the little grate.

"Lor, mum!" said Crotchet. "Who'd a thought o' seeing of you?"

"Oh, you monster. You base man, what do you want here?"

"Nothink!"

"Be off with you, or else I'll call the *perlice*."

"Oh, I'm a going, mum. How do you bring it in, mum, in a general way?"

"Help! Murder!"

"Lord bless us, what a racket. Don't you go for to fancy, mum, that I comed up these here attic stairs for to see you. Quite the rewerse, mum."

"Then, pray who did you come to see, you big ugly monster you? The other attic is empty. Oh, you base infidel. I believe I knows what men are by this time."

"No doubt on it, mum. Howsomedever this here's the wrong door, I take it. No harm done, mum. I wish you and your toes, mum, a remarkably good evening."

"Crotchet," said a voice.

"Here yer is."

Sir Richard Blunt had been attentively listening for Crotchet, and when he heard the screams of the old lady in the next attic, he opened the door of his apartment, and looked out. He soon discovered what was amiss, and called out accordingly.

"Bless us, who's that?"

"The Emperor o' Russia, mum," said Crotchet. "He's took that 'ere attic next to you, cos he's heard so much o' the London chumbley pots, and he wants to have a good look at them at his leisure."

With these words Mr. Crotchet left the old lady's attic, and closed the door carefully, leaving her, no doubt, in a considerable state of bewilderment. In another moment he was with the magistrate.

"Crotchet," said Sir Richard, "I thought I told you to do this thing as quietly as you possibly could."

"Down as a hammer, sir."

"I think it is anything but down."

"Right as a trivet, sir, with a hextra leg. Lots o' fear, but no danger. Now for it, Sir Richard. What lay is we to go on?"

It certainly never occurred to Sir Richard Blunt to hold any argument with Mr. Crotchet. He had long since found out that he must, if he would avail himself of his services—and for courage and fidelity he was unequalled—put up with his eccentricities; so upon this occasion he said no more about Crotchet's mistake, but, after a few moments' pause, pointing to the attic door, he said—

"Secure it."

"All's right."

Crotchet took a curious little iron instrument from his pocket, and secured it into the wall by the side of the door. It did not take him more than a moment to do so, and then, fully satisfied of the efficacy of his work, he said—

"Let 'em get over that if they can."

While he was so occupied. Sir Richard Blunt himself had opened the window, and fastened it open securely.

"Now, Crotchet," he said, "look to your pistols."

"All's right, sir."

The magistrate carefully examined the priming of his own arms, and seeing that all was right, he at once emerged from the attic through the window on to the parapet of the house. He might have crept along the gutter just within the parapet, but the gutter aforesaid was not exactly in the most salubrious condition. Indeed, from its filthy state, one might have fancied it to be peculiarly under the direction of the city commissioners of sewers. Crotchet followed Sir Richard closely, and in a moment or two they had traversed a sufficient portion of the parapet to find themselves at the attic window of Todd's house. It would have been next thing to a miracle if they had been seen in their progress, for the roof was very dark coloured, and the night had fairly enough set in, so that if any one had by chance looked up from the street below, they

would scarcely have discovered that there was anybody creeping along the parapet. Now there was a slight creaking noise for about half a minute, and then the window of Sweeney Todd's attic swung open.

"Come on," said Sir Richard, and he softly alighted in the apartment. Crotchet followed him, and then the magistrate carefully closed the window again, and left it in such a way, that a touch from within would open it. Then they were in profound darkness, and as it was no part of the policy of Sir Richard Blunt to run any unnecessary risks, he did not move one inch from the place upon which he stood until he had lighted a small hand lantern, which had a powerful reflector and a tin shade, which in a moment could be passed over the glass, so as to hide the light upon an emergency.

"Now, Crotchet," he said, "we shall see where we are."

"*Reether*," said Crotchet.

By holding the light some height up, they were able to command a good view of the attic. It was a miserable looking room: the walls were in a state of premature decay, and in several places lumps of mortar had fallen from the ceiling, making a litter of broken plaster upon the floor. It was entirely destitute of furniture, with the exception of an old stump bedstead, upon which there lay what looked like a quantity of old clothes.

"Safe enough," said Sir Richard.

"Stop!" said Crotchet.

"What's the matter?"

"There's something odd on the floor here. Don't you see as the dust has got into a crevice as is bigger nor all the other crevices, and goes right along this ways and then along that ways? Don't you move, sir. I'll be down upon it in a minute."

Mr. Crotchet laid himself down flat upon the floor, and then crept on until he came to that part of the flooring which had excited his suspicions. As soon as he pressed upon it with both his hands it gave way

under them plainly, by the elevation of the other end of the three boards of which this trap was composed, proclaiming that it was a moveable portion of the floor, revolving or turning upon one of the joists as a centre.

"Oh dear, how clever!" said Crotchet. "If Mr. Todd goes on a cutting away his joists in this here way he'll bring his blessed old house down with a run some day. How nice and handy, now, if any one was to step upon here—they'd go down into the room below, and perhaps break their blessed legs as they went."

The Secret Trap Discovered In Todd's House.

The Secret Trap Discovered In Todd's House.

"Escape the first for us!" said Sir Richard.

"Oh, lor, yes. Now this here Todd thinks, by putting this here man-trap here, as he has *perwided* again any accidents; but we ain't them 'ere sort o' birds as is catched by chaff, not we. Why he must have spilted his blessed ceiling down below to make this here sort of a jigamaree concern."

"It's not a bad contrivance though, Crotchet. Its own weight, you see, restores it to its place again, and so there's no trouble with it."

"Oh dear, no. It's a what I calls a self-acting catch-'em-who-can sort o' machine. Yes, Sir Richard, I never did think that 'ere Todd was wery green. He don't know quite so much as we know; but yet he's a rum 'un."

"No doubt of it. Do you think, Crotchet, there is anything else in this attic to beware of?"

"Not likely; when he'd finished this here nice little piece of handywork, I dare say he said to himself—'This will catch 'em,' and so down stairs he toddled, and grinned like a monkey as has swallowed a whole nut by haccident, and gived himself a pain in the side in consekence. 'That'll catch 'em,' says he."

Mr. Crotchet seemed so much amused at the picture he drew to himself of the supposed exultation of Todd, that for some moments he did nothing but laugh. The reader must not suppose, however, that in the circumstances of peril in which they were, he indulged in a regular "Ha! ha!"—quite the contrary. He had a mode of laughing under such circumstances that was entirely his own, and which, while it made no noise, shook his huge frame as though some commotion had taken sudden possession of it, and the most ridiculous part of the process was the alarming suddenness with which he would become preternaturally serious again. But Sir Richard Blunt knew his peculiarities, and paid no attention to them, unless they very much interfered with business.

"We must not waste time. Come on, Crotchet."

Sir Richard walked to the door of the attic and tried it. It was as fast as though it had been part of the wall itself.

"So—so," he said. "Master Todd has taken some precautions against being surprised from the top of his house. He has nailed up this door as surely as any door was ever nailed up."

"Has he really, though?"

"Yes. Quick, Crotchet. You have your tools about you, I suppose."

"Never fear," said Crotchet. "I'm the *indiwedal* as never forgets nothink, and if I don't have the middle panel out o' this door a'most as soon as look at it, it's only cos it takes more time."

With this philosophical and indisputable remark, Mr. Crotchet stooped down before the door, and taking various exquisitely made tools from his pocket, he began to work at the door. He knocked nearly noiselessly, and it looked like something little short of magic to see how the panel was forced out of the door without any of the hammering and flustering which a carpenter would have made of it.

"All's right," he said. "If we can't creep through here, we are bigger than I think we is."

"That will do. Hush!"

They both listened attentively, for Sir Richard thought he heard a faint noise from the lower part of the house. As, however, five minutes of attentive listening passed away, and no repetition of it occurred, they thought it was only some one of those accidental sounds which will at times be heard in all houses whether occupied or not. Crotchet took the lead by creeping clearly enough through the opening that he had made in the door of the attic, and Sir Richard followed him. They were both, now, at the head of the staircase, and Sir Richard held up the lantern so as to have a good look around him. The walls looked damp and neglected. There were two other doors opening from that landing, but neither of them was fastened, so that they entered the rooms easily. They took care, though, not to go beyond the threshold for fear of accidents, although it was very unlikely that Todd would take the trouble to construct a trap-door in any other attic than the one which was so easily accessible from the parapet.

"Old clothes—old clothes!" said Crotchet. "There seems to be nothing else in these rooms."

"So it would appear," said Sir Richard.

He lifted up some of the topmost of a heap of garments upon the floor, and a cloud of moths flew upwards in confusion.

"There's the toggery," said Mr. Crotchet, "of the *smugged 'uns*!"

"You really think so."

"Knows it."

"Well, Crotchet, I don't think from what I know myself that we shall disagree about Todd's guilt. The grand thing is to discover how, and in what way he is guilty."

"Just so. I'm quite sure we have seed all as there is to see up here, so suppose we toddle down stairs now, sir. There's, perhaps, quite a lot o' wonders and natur', and art, down below."

"Stop a bit. Hold the lamp."

Crotchet did so, while Sir Richard took from his pocket a pair of thick linsey-woolsey stockings, and carefully drew them on over his boots, for the purpose of deadening the sound of his footsteps; and then he held the light, while Mr. Crotchet, who was similarly provided with linsey-woolseys, went through the same process. After this, they moved like spectres, so perfectly noiseless were their footsteps upon the stairs. Sir Richard went first, while Crotchet now carried the light, holding it sufficiently high that the magistrate could see the stairs before him very well, as he proceeded. It was quite evident, from the state of those stairs, as regarded undisturbed dust, that they had not been ascended for a considerable time; and indeed, Todd, considering the top of his house as perfectly safe after the precautions he had taken, did not trouble himself to visit it. Our adventurers reached the landing upon the second floor in perfect safety; and after giving a few minutes more to the precautionary measure of listening, they opened the first door that presented itself to the observation, and entered the room. They both paused in astonishment, for such a miscellaneous collection of matters as was in this room, could only have been expected to be met with in the shop of a general dealer. Several chairs and tables were loaded with wearing apparel of all kinds and conditions. The corners of the room were literally crowded with mobs of swords, walking sticks, and umbrellas; while a countless heap of hats lay upon the floor in disorder. You could not have stepped into that room for miscellaneous personal appointments of one sort or another; and Mr. Crotchet and Sir Richard Blunt trod upon the hats as they walked across the floor, from sheer inability to get out of the way.

"Well," said Crotchet, "if so be as shaving should go out of fashion, Todd could set up a clothier's shop, and not want for stock to begin with."

"I can imagine," muttered the magistrate to himself, "what a trouble and anxiety all these things must be to Todd, and woollen goods are so difficult to burn. Crotchet, select some of the swords, and look if there are maker's names upon the blades."

While Crotchet was preparing this order. Sir Richard was making a hasty but sufficiently precise examination of the room.

CHAPTER XXXIX.
THE MYSTERIOUS CUPBOARD.

"Here they are," said Crotchet. "Some of these are worth something."

"Get a cane or two, likewise."

"All's right, sir. I tell you what it is, sir. If there's such things as ghosts in the world, I wonder how this Todd can sleep o' nights, for he must have a plaguy lot of 'em about his bed of a night."

"Perhaps he satisfied himself upon that head, Crotchet, before he began his evil practices, for all we know; but let us make our way into another room, for I think we have seen all there is to see in this one."

"Not a doubt of it. It's only a kind of store-room, this, and from the size of it, I should say it ain't the largest on this floor."

Sir Richard walked out of the room on to the landing place. All was perfectly still in the barber's house, and as he had heard nothing of the bugle sound in Fleet-street, he felt quite satisfied that Todd had not returned. It was a great thing, in all his daring exploits in discovering criminals, and successfully ferreting out their haunts, that he (Sir Richard) could thoroughly depend upon his subordinates. He knew they were not only faithful but brave. He knew that, let what might happen, they would never leave him in the lurch. Hence, in the present instance, he felt quite at his ease in the house of Todd, so long as he did not hear the sound of the bugle. Of course, personal danger he did not consider, for he knew he was, if even he had been alone, more than a match for Todd; but what he wanted was, not to overcome Sweeney Todd, but to

find out exactly what were his practices. He could, upon the information he already had, have walked into Todd's shop at any time, and have apprehended him, but that would not have answered. What he wanted to do was to

> "Pluck out the heart of his mystery,"

and, in order to do that, it was not only necessary that Todd should be at large, but that he should have no hint that such a person as he, Sir Richard Blunt, had his eyes wide open to his actions and manoeuvres. Hence was it that, in this examination of the house, he wished to keep himself so secret, and free from any observation. There were three rooms upon the second floor of Todd's house, and the very next one they met with, was the one immediately beneath the trap in the floor of the attic. A glance at the ceiling enabled them easily to perceive it. This room was larger than the other considerably, and in it were many boxes and chests, as well as in the centre an immense old-fashioned counting-house desk, with six immense flaps to it, three upon each side, while a brass railing went along the middle.

"Ah!" said Sir Richard, "here will be something worth the examining, I hope."

"Let's take the cupboards first," said Crotchet. "There are two here, and as they are the first we have seen, let's look at 'em, Sir Richard. I never likes to be in a strange room long, without a peep in the cupboard."

"Very well, Crotchet. Look in that one to the left, while I look in this one to the right."

Sir Richard opened a cupboard door to the right of the fire-place in this room, while Crotchet opened one to the left.

"More clothes," said Sir Richard. "What's in yours, Crotchet?"

"Nothing at all. Yet stay. There's a something high up here. I don't know what it is, but I'll try and reach it if I can."

Crotchet went completely into the cupboard, but he had no sooner done so, than Sir Richard Blunt heard a strange crushing sound, and then all was still.

"Hilloa! What's that, Crotchet?"

He hastily stepped to the cupboard. The door had swung close. It was evidently hung upon its hinges in a manner to do so. With his disengaged hand, the magistrate at once pulled it open. Crotchet was gone. The astonishment of Sir Richard Blunt for a moment was excessive. There was the flooring of the cupboard perfectly safe, but no Crotchet. Nothing to his eyes had looked so like a magical disappearance as this, and with the trap in his hand, he stood while any one might have counted twenty, completely motionless and transfixed by astonishment. Starting then from this lethargic condition, he drew a pistol from his pocket, and rushed to the door of the room. At this instant, he heard the bugle sound clearly and distinctly in the street. Before the echo of the sound had died away, the magistrate was upon the landing-place outside the door of the second floor. He listened intently, and heard some one below coughing. It was not the cough of Crotchet. What was he to do? If he did not make a signal to the officers in the street that all was safe, the house would soon be stormed, and, for all he knew, that might ensure the destruction of Crotchet, instead of saving him. For a moment, the resolution to go down the staircase at all hazards and face Todd—for he had no doubt but that he had come home—possessed him, but a moment's reflection turned the scale of thought in another direction. If the officers, not finding him make a signal that he was safe, did attack the house, they would not do so for some minutes. It was their duty not to be precipitate. He leant on the balustrade, and listened with an intentness that was perfectly painful. He heard the cough again from quite the lower part of the house, and then he became aware that some one was slowly creeping up the stairs. He had placed the slide over the bull's eye of his little lamp, so that all was darkness, but he heard the breathing of the person who was coming up towards him. He shrunk back close to the wall, determined to seize, and with an iron hand, any

one who should reach the landing. Suddenly, from quite the lower part of the building, he heard the cough again. The thought, then, that it must be Crotchet who was coming up, impressed itself upon him, but he would not speak. In a few moments some one reached the landing, and stretching out his right arm, Sir Richard caught whoever it was, and said in a whisper—

"Any resistance will cost you your life."

"Crotchet it is," said the new comer.

"Ah, how glad I am it is you!"

"Reether. Hush. The old 'un is below. Ain't I shook a bit. It's a precious good thing as my bones is in the blessed habit o' holding on, one of 'em to the rest and all the rest to one, or else I should have tumbled to bits."

"Hush! hush!"

"Oh, he's a good way off. That 'ere cupboard has got a descending floor with ropes and pullies, so down I went and was rolled out into a room below and up went the bit of flooring again. I was very nearly startled a little."

"Nearly?"

"Reether, but here I is. I got out and crept up stairs as soon as I could, cos, says I, the governor will wonder what the deuce has become of me."

"I did, indeed."

"Just as I thought. Sir Richard, just listen to me! I've got a fancy for Todd."

"A fancy for Todd?"

"Yes, and I want to stay here a few hours—yes, go and let them as is outside know all's right, and leave me here, I think somehow I shall like to be in this crib alone with Todd for an hour or two. You have got other business to see to, you know, so just leave me here; and mind yer, if I don't get here by six in the morning, just consider as he's got the better of me."

"No, Crotchet, I cannot."

"Can't what?"

"Consent to leave you here alone."

"Bother! what's the row, and where's the danger, I should like to know? Who's Todd? Who am I? Gammon!"

Sir Richard shook his head, although Crotchet could not very well see him shake it, and after a pause he added—

"I don't suppose exactly that there is much danger, Crotchet, but, at all events, I don't like it said that I brought you into this place and then left you here."

"Bother!"

"You go and leave me."

"A likely joke that. No, I tell yer what it is, Sir Richard. You knows me and I knows you, so what does it matter what other folks say? Business is business I hope, and don't you believe that I'm going to be such a flat as to throw away my life upon such a fellow as Todd. I think I can do some good by staying here; if I can't I'll come away, but I don't think, in either case, that Todd will see me. If he does I shall, perhaps, be forced to nab him, and that, after all, is the worst that can come of it."

"Well, Crotchet, you shall have your own way."

"Good."

"I will return to the attic as soon as I conveniently can, and, let what will happen to you, remember that you are not deserted."

"I knows it."

"Good bye. Take care of yourself, old friend."

"I means it."

"I should be indeed afflicted if anything were to happen to you."

"Gammon."

Sir Richard left him his own pistols, in addition to the pair which he, Crotchet, always had about him, so that he was certainly well-armed, let what would happen to him in that house of Sweeney Todd's, which had now become something more than a mere object of suspicion to the police. Well, they knew Todd's guilt—it was the mode in which he was guilty only that still remained a mystery. The moment Sir Richard Blunt reached the attic again, he held his arm out at full length from the window, and waved to and fro the little lantern as a signal to the officers in the street that he was safe. This done, he would not return to the room he had hired of the bootmaker, but he resolved to wait about ten minutes longer in case anything should happen in the house below that might sound alarming. After that period of time, he resolved upon leaving for an hour or two, but he, of course, would not do so without apprising his officers of Crotchet's situation. During the time that had been passed by Crotchet and Sir Richard Blunt in Sweeney Todd's house, the shoemaker and his wife had had an adventure which created in their minds abundance of surprise. It will be recollected that the shoemaker's wife had decided upon what was to be done regarding the new lodger—namely, that under the pretence that a Mr. Jones was a more satisfactory lodger, he was to be asked to be so good as to quit the attic he had so strangely taken. The arrival of Mr. Crotchet with so different a story from that told by Sir Richard Blunt certainly had the effect of engendering many suspicions in the minds of Sir Richard's new landlord and landlady.

"Well, my dear," said the shoemaker, "if you are willing to come up stairs, I will say what you wish to this man, particularly as his pretended friend don't seem to be coming down stairs again."

"Very well, my dear; I'll take the kitchen poker and follow you, and while I am behind you, if I think he is a pleasant man, you know, and we had better let him stay, I will give you a slight poke."

"A-hem! Thank you—yes."

Armed with the poker, the lady of the mansion followed her husband up the staircase, and perhaps we may fairly say that curiosity was as strong a feeling with her as any other in the business. To tell the truth, the shoemaker did not half like the job; but what will a man, who is under proper control at home, not do to keep up the shallow treaty of peace which his compliance produces between him and his better half? Is there anything which a hen-pecked husband dares say he will not do, when the autocrat of his domestic hearth bids him do it? Up—up the long dark staircase they went! Our ancestors, as one of their pieces of wisdom, had a knack of making steep dark staircases; and, to tell the truth, there are many modern architects equally ingenious. At length the attic landing was reached. The shoemaker knew the localities of his house better than to make such a mistake as Crotchet had done; so the old lady, with her feet in the pan of water, was saved such another interruption as had already taken place into her peaceful domains.

"Now, my dear, knock boldly," said the lady of the mansion. "Knock like a man."

"Yes, my love."

The shoemaker tapped at the door with about the energy of a fly. The soft appeal produced no effect whatever, and the lady growing impatient, then poised the poker, and dealt the door a blow which induced her husband to start aside, lest the lodger should open it quickly, and rush out in great wrath. All was profoundly still, however; and then they tried the lock, and found it fast.

"He's gone to bed," said the shoemaker.

"He can't," said the lady, "for there are no sheets on the bed. Besides, they have not both gone to bed. I tell you what it is. There's some mystery in this that I should like to find out. Now, all the keys of all the attics are alike. Just wait here, and I'll borrow Mrs. Macconikie's."

The shoemaker waited in no small amount of trepidation, while this process of key-borrowing from the old lady who enjoyed a pan of water, took place upon the part of his wife.

CHAPTER XL.
CROTCHET ASTONISHES MR. TODD.

The key was soon procured, but it will be recollected that Crotchet had fastened the door rather too securely for it to be opened by any such ordinary implement as a key, and so disappointment was the portion of the shoemaker's wife.

"Don't you think, my love," said the shoemaker, "that it will be just as well to leave this affair until the morning, before taking any further notice of it?"

"And pray, then, am I to sleep all night, if I don't know the rights of it, I should like to know? Perhaps, if you can tell me that, you are a little wiser than I think you. Marry, come up!"

"Oh, well, I only—"

"You only! Then only don't. That's the only favour I ask of you, sir, is to only don't."

What extraordinary favour this was, the lady did not condescend to explain any more particulars, but it was quite enough for the husband to understand that a storm was brewing, and to become humble and submissive accordingly.

"Well, my dear, I'm sure I only wish you to do just what you like; that's all, my dear, I'm sure."

"Very good."

After this, she made the most vigorous efforts to get into the attic, and if any one had been there—which at that juncture there was not—they might truly have asked "Who's that knocking at the door?" Finding that all her efforts were ineffectual, she took to peeping through the key-hole, but nothing was to be seen; and then, for the first time, the idea struck her that there was something supernatural about the business, and in a few moments this notion gained sufficient strength to engender some lively apprehensions.

"I tell you what," she said to her husband, "if you don't fetch a constable at once, and have the door opened, and see all about, I'm afraid—indeed I'm quite sure—I shall be very ill."

"Oh, dear—oh, dear."

"It's of no use your standing here and saying 'Oh, dear,' like a great stupid as you are—always was and always will be. Go for a constable, at once."

"A constable?"

"Yes, There's Mr. Otton, the beadle of St. Dunstan's, lives opposite, as you well know, and he's a constable. Run over the way and fetch him, this minute."

She began hastily to descend the stairs, and the shoemaker followed her, remonstrating, for the idea of fetching a constable, and making him and his house the talk of the whole neighbourhood, was by no means a proposition that met with his approval. The lady was positive, however, and Mr. Otton, the beadle of St. Dunstan's, was brought from over the way, and the case stated to him at length.

"*Conwulsions!*" exclaimed Otton, "what can I do?"

"*Burst* open the door," said the lady.

"*Burst* a door open, mum! What is you a thinking on? Why, that's contrary to *Habus Corpus*, mum, and all that sort of thing. Conwulsions, mum! you mustn't do it. But I tell you what, now, will be the thing."

Here Mr. Otton put his finger to the side of his nose, and looked so cunning that you would hardly have believed it possible.

"What?—what?"

"Why, suppose, mum, we ask Mr. Todd, next door, to give us leave to go up into his attic, and get out at the window and look in at yours, mum?"

"That'll do. Run in—"

"Me!" cried the shoemaker. "Oh, M—Mr. Todd is a strange man—a very strange man—not at all a neighbourly sort of man, and I don't like to go to him.—I won't go, that's flat—unless, my love, you particularly wish it."

"Conwulsions!" cried the beadle. "Ain't I a-going with you? Ain't I a constabulary force, I should like to know? Conwulsions! What is yer afeard on? Come on. Lor, what's the meaning o' that, I wonders, now; I should just like to take that ere fellow up. Whoever heard of a horn being blowed at such a rate, in the middle o' Fleet-street, afore, unless it was somethin' as consarned the parish? Conwulsions! it's contrary to *Habus Corpus*, it is. Is me a constabulary force, or is me not?"

This was the bugle sound which warned Sir Richard Blunt and his friend Crotchet that Sweeney Todd had returned to his shop; and, in fact, while this very conversation was going on at the shoemaker's, Todd had lit the lamp in his shop, and actually opened it for business again, as the evening was by no means very far advanced. Mr. Otton went to the door, and looked about for the audacious bugle player, but he was not to be seen; so he returned to the back parlour of the shoemaker, uttering his favourite expletive of "Conwulsions" very frequently.

"Now, if you is ready," he said, "I is; so let's come at once, and speak to Mr. Todd. He may be a strange man, but for all that, he knows, I *dessay*, what's proper respect to a *beetle*."

With this strange transformation of his own title upon his lips, Mr. Otton stalked on rather majestically, as he thought, to the street, and thence to Todd's shop door, with the shoemaker following him. The gait of the

latter expressed reluctance, and there was a dubious expression upon his face, which was quite amusing to behold.

"Really, Mr. Otton," he said, "don't you think, after all, it would be better to leave this affair alone till the morning? We can easily tell my wife, you know, that Mr. Todd won't let us into his attic. That must satisfy her, for what can she say to it?"

"Sir," said the beadle, "when you call in the *constabullary* force, you must do just what they say, or lasteways you acts contrary to *Habus Corpuses*. Come on. Conwulsions! is we to be brought over the street, and then is we to do nothing to go down to prosperity?"

The beadle uttered these words with such an air of pomposity and importance that the shoemaker, who had a vague idea that *Habus Corpus* was some fearful engine of the law at the command of all its administrators, no longer offered any opposition, but, as meekly as any lamb, followed Mr. Otton into Sweeney Todd's shop. The door yielded to a touch, and Mr. Otton presented his full rubicund countenance to the gaze of Sweeney Todd, who was at the further end of the shop, as though he had just come from the parlour at the back of it, or was just going there. He did not at first see the shoemaker, who was rather obscured by the portly person of the beadle, and Todd's first idea was, the most natural one in the world, namely, that the beadle came upon an emergency to be shaved. Giving him an hideous leer, Todd said—

"A fine night for a clean shave."

"Werry. In course, Mr. T., you is the best judge o' that 'ere, but I does for myself."

As he spoke, Mr. Otton rubbed his chin, to intimate that it was to his shaving himself that he alluded just then.

"Hair cut?" said Todd, giving a snap to the blades of a large pair of scissors, that made Mr. Otton jump again, and nearly induced the shoemaker to run out of the shop into the street.

"No," said the beadle; and taking off his hat, he felt his hair, as though to satisfy himself that it was all there, just as usual. "No."

Todd looked as though he would have shaved him with extreme pleasure, and advancing a few steps, he added—

"Then what is it that you bring your wieldy carcase here for, you gross lump of stupidity? Ha! ha! ha!"

"What? Conwulsions!"

"Pho!—Pho! Can't you take a joke, Mr. Otton? I know you well enough. It's my funny way to call people, whom I admire very much, all the hard names I can think of."

"Is it?"

"Oh, dear, yes. I thought you and all my neighbours knew that well enough. I'm one of the drollest dogs alive. That I am. Won't you sit down?"

"Well, Mr. Todd, a joke may be a joke." The beadle looked very sententious at this discovery. "But you have the oddest way of poking your fun at any one that ever I heard of; but, I comes to you now as a respectable parishioner, to—"

"Oh," said Todd, putting his hands, very deliberately into his pockets, "how much?"

"It ain't anything to pay. It's a mere trifle. I just want to go up to your front attic, and—"

"What?"

"Your front attic, and get out of the window to look into the front attic next door. We won't trouble you if you will oblige us with a candle. That's all."

Todd advanced two steps further towards the beadle and looked peeringly in his face. All the suspicious qualities of his nature rose up in alarm. Every feeling of terror regarding the instability of his position, and the danger by which he was surrounded, rushed upon him. At once

he conjectured that danger was approaching him, and that in this covert manner the beadle was intent upon getting into the house, for the purpose of searching it to his detriment. As the footpad sees in each bush an officer, so, in the most trivial circumstances, even the acute intellect of Sweeney Todd saw dangers, and rumours of dangers, which no one but himself could have had the remotest idea of. He glared upon the beadle with positive ferocity, and so much affected was Otton by that lynx-like observation of Sweeney Todd's, that he stepped aside and disclosed that he was not alone. If anything could have confirmed Todd in his suspicions that there was a dead-set at him, it was finding that the beadle was not alone. And yet the shoemaker was well known to him. But what will lull such suspicion as Sweeney Todd had in his mind? Once engendered, it was like the jealousy that—

> "Makes the meat it feeds on!"

He advanced, step by step, glaring upon the beadle and upon the shoemaker. Reaching up his hand, he suddenly turned the lamp that hung from the ceiling clear round, so that, in lieu of its principal light falling upon him, it fell upon the faces of those who had paid him so unceremonious a visit.

"Lawks!" said the beadle.

"Excuse us, Mr. Todd," said the shoemaker, "I assure you we only meant —"

"What?" thundered Todd. Then suddenly softening his voice, he added —"You are very welcome here indeed. Pray what do you want?"

"Why, sir," said Otton, "you must know that this gentleman has a lodger."

"A what?"

"A lodger, sir, and so you see that's just the case. You understand that this lodger—lor, Mr. Todd, this is your neighbour the shoemaker, you know. The front attic, you know, and all that sort of thing. After this

explanation, I hope you'll lend us a candle at once, Mr. Todd, and let us up to the attic."

Todd shaded his eyes with his hands, and looked yet more earnestly at the beadle.

"Why, Mr. Otton," he said, "indeed you do want a shave."

"A shave?"

"Yes, Mr. Otton, I have a good razor here that will go over your chin like a piece of butter. Only take a seat, sir, and if you, neighbour, will go home comfortably to your own fireside, I will send for you when Mr. Otton is shaved."

"But really," said the beadle, rubbing his chin, "I was shaved this morning, and as I do for myself always, you see, why I don't think I require. Conwulsions! Mr. Todd, why do you look at a man so? Remember the *Habus Corpus*. That's what we call the *paladermius* of the British Constitution, you know."

By this time the beadle had satisfied himself that he did not at all require shaving, and turning to the shoemaker, he said—

"Why don't you be shaved?"

"Well, I don't care if I do, and perhaps, in the meantime you, Mr. Otton, will go up to the attic, and take a peep into the next one, and see if my lodger is up or in bed, or what the deuce has become of him. It's a very odd thing, Mr. Todd, that a man should take one's attic, and then disappear without coming down stairs."

"Disappear without coming down stairs?" said Todd.

"Yes, and my wife says—"

Todd made an impatient gesture.

"Gentlemen, I will look in my attic myself. The fact is, that the flooring is rather out of order, and unless you know exactly where to step you will be apt to fall through a hole into the second floor."

"The deuce you are!" said Otton.

"Yes; so I would not advise either of you to make the attempt. Just remain there, and I'll go at once."

The proposition suited both parties, and Mr. Todd immediately passed through a door at the back of his shop, which he immediately closed behind him again. Instead of going up stairs, however, he slid aside a small opening in the panel of this door, and placed his ear to it. "If people say anything impudent, it is the moment they are free from the company that has held them in check," was one of Sweeney Todd's maxims. His first notion that the beadle and the shoemaker had come covertly to search his house, had given way a little, and he wanted to convince himself of the innocency or the reverse of their intentions, before he put himself to any further trouble.

"I don't like it," said the shoemaker.

"Like what? Conwulsions! what don't you like?"

"Intruding upon Mr. Todd. What does he care about my lodgers? It ain't as if he let any of his own house, and had a fellow feeling with us."

"Werry good," said the beadle, "but you send for me, and you ask me what's best, and I tell yer that *Habus Corpus*, and one thing and another, what I advised was the only thing, that was to get into Mr. Todd's attic, and then get on the parapet and into yours. But if so be as there's holes in Mr. Todd's attic, that will alter the affair, you know."

"Fool—fool!" muttered Todd. "After all, they only come upon their own twaddling affairs, and I was idiot enough to suspect such muddy pated rascals."

In an instant he was in the shop again.

"Nobody there, gentlemen; I have looked into the attic, and there's nobody there."

"Well, I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Todd," said the shoemaker, "for taking so much trouble. I'll go, and rather astonish my wife, I think."

"Conwulsions!" said the beadle. "It's an odd thing, but you know, Mr. Todd, *Habus Corpus* must have his way."

CHAPTER XLI.
TODD'S VISION.

When they had left, Todd remained for some minutes in an attitude of thought.

"Is this an accident?" he said, "or is it but the elaboration of some deep design to entrap me. What am I to think?"

Todd was an imaginative man quite. He was just the individual to think, and think over the affair until he made something of it, very different from what it really was, and yet there was some hope that the matter was no more than what it appeared to be, by the character of the parties who had come upon the mission. If anything serious had come to the ears of the authorities, he thought, that surely two such people as the beadle of St. Dunstan's, and his neighbour the shoemaker, would not be employed to unravel such a mystery. He sat down in an arm chair and rested his head upon his hand, and while he was in that attitude the door of his shop opened, and a man in the dress of a carter made his appearance.

"Be this Mister Todd's?"

"Well," said Todd, "what then?"

"Why, then, this be for him like. It's a letter, but larning waren't much i' the fashion in my young days, so I can't read what's on it."

Todd stretched out his hand. An instant examination showed him it bore the Peckham post-mark.

"Ah!" he muttered, "from Fogg. Thank you, my man, that will do. That will do. What do you wait for?"

"Please to remember the carter, your honour!"

Todd looked daggers at him, and slowly handed out twopence, which the man took with a very ill grace.

"What," said Todd, "would you charge me more for carrying a letter than King George the Third does, you extortionate rascal?"

The carter gave a nod.

"Get out with you, or by—"

Todd snatched up a razor, and the carter was off like a shot, for he really believed, from the awful looks of Todd, that his life was not worth a minute's purchase. Todd opened the letter with great gravity.—It contained the following words:—

> "Dear Sir,"
>
> "The lad, T. R., I grieve to say, is no more. Let us hope he is gone where the weary are at rest, and where there is neither sin nor sorrow.
>
> "I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,
>
> "Jacob B. Fogg."

"Humph!" said Todd.

He held the letter in the flame of the lamp until it fell a piece of airy tinder at his feet.

"Humph!" he repeated, and that humph was all that he condescended to say of poor Tobias Ragg, whom the madhouse-keeper had thought proper to say was dead; hoping that Todd might never be undeceived, for the barber was a good customer.

If, however, Tobias should turn up to the confusion of Fogg and of Todd, what could the latter do for the deceit that had been practised upon him? —literally nothing.

"No sooner," said Todd, "does one cloud disappear from my route than another takes its place. What can that story mean about the attic next door? It sounds to my ears strange and portentous. What am I to think

of it?"

He rose and paced his shop with rapid strides. At length he paused as though he had come to a determination.

"The want of a boy is troublesome to me," he said. "I must get one, but for the present this must suffice."

He wrote upon a small slip of paper the words—"Gone to the Temple—will return shortly." He then, by the aid of a wafer, affixed this announcement to the upper part of the half-glass door leading into his shop. Locking this door securely on the inside, and starting a couple of bolts into their sockets, he lit a candle and left his shop. With a stealthy, cat-like movement, Todd passed through the room immediately behind his business apartment, and opening another door he made his way towards the staircase. Then he paused a moment. He thought some sound from above had come upon his ears, but he was not quite sure. To suspect, however, was with such a man as Todd to be prepared for the worst, and accordingly he went back to the room behind his shop again, and from a table-drawer he took a knife, such as is used by butchers in their trade, and firmly clutching it in his right hand, while he carried the candle in his left, he once more approached the staircase.

"I do not think," he said, "that for nine years now any mortal footsteps, but my own, have trod upon these stairs or upon the flooring of the rooms above. Woe be to those who may now attempt to do so. Woe, I say, be to them, for their death is at hand."

These words were spoken in a deep hollow voice, that sounded like tones from a sepulchre, as they came from the lips of that man of many crimes. To give Todd his due, he did not seem to shrink from the unknown and dimly appreciated danger that might be up stairs in his house. He was courageous, but it was not the high-souled courage that nerves a man to noble deeds. No, Sweeney Todd's courage was that of hate—hatred to the whole human race, which he considered, with a strange inconsistency, had conspired against him; whereas he had been the one to place an impassable barrier between himself and the amenities of society. He

ascended the stairs with great deliberation. When he reached the landing upon the first floor, he cast his eyes suspiciously about him, shading the light as he did so with his hand—that same hand that held the knife, the shadow of which fell upon the wall in frightful proportions.

"All is still," he said. "Is fancy, after all, only playing me such tricks as she might have played me twenty years ago? I thought I was too old for such freaks of the imagination."

Todd did not suspect that there was a second period in his life, when the mental infirmities of his green youth might come back to him, with many superadded horrors accumulated, with a consciousness of guilt. He slowly approached a door and pushed it open, saying as he did so—

"No—no—no. Above all things, I must not be superstitious. If I were so, into what a world of horrors might I not plunge. No—no, I will not people the darkness with horrible phantasies, I will not think that it is possible that men with

> "Twenty murders on their heads,"

can revisit this world to drive those who have done them to death with shrieking madness—this world do I say? There is no other. Bah! Priests may talk, and the weak-brained fools who gape at what they do not understand, may believe them, but when man dies—when the electric condition that has imputed to his humanity what is called life, flies, he is indeed

> "Dust to dust!"

Ha! ha! I have lived as I will die, fearing nothing and believing nothing."

As he uttered those words—words which found no real echo in his heart, for at the bottom of it lay a trembling belief in, and a dread of the great God that rules all things, and who is manifest in the meanest seeming thing that crawls upon the earth—he entered one of the rooms upon that floor, and glanced uneasily around him. All was still. There were trunks

—clothes upon chairs, and a vast amount of miscellaneous property in this room, but nothing in the shape of a human being. Todd's spirits rose, and he held the long knife more carelessly than he had done.

"Pho! pho!" he said. "I do, indeed, at times make myself the slave of a disturbed fancy. Pho! pho! I will no more listen to vague sounds, meaning nothing; but wrapping myself up in my consciousness of having nothing to fear, I will pursue my course, hideous though it may be."

He turned and took his way towards the landing place of the staircase again. He was now carrying both the light and the knife rather carelessly, and everybody knows that when a candle is held before a person's face, that but little indeed can be seen in the hazy vapour that surrounds it. So it was with Todd. He had got about two paces from the door, when a strange consciousness of something being in his way came over him. He immediately raised his hand—that hand that still carried the knife, to shade the light, and then, horror! horror! He saw standing upon the landing a figure attired in faded apparel, whose face was dabbled in blood, and the stony eyes which were fixed upon the face of Todd, with so awful an expression, that had the barber's heart been made of much more flinty materials than it was, he could not have resisted the terrors of that awful moment. With a shriek that echoed through the house, Todd fell upon the landing. The light rolled from stair to stair until it was finally extinguished, and all was darkness.

Sweeney Todd Astonished By Crotchet, The Bow-Street Officer.

Sweeney Todd Astonished By Crotchet, The Bow-Street Officer.

"Good," said Crotchet, for it was he who had enacted the ghost. "Good! I'm blessed if I didn't think that ere would nail him. These sort o' chaps are always on the look-out for something or another to be frightened at, and you have only to show yourself to put 'em almost out of their seven

senses. It was a capital idea that of me to cut my finger a little, and get some blood to smear over my face. It's astonishing what a long way a little drop will go, to be sure. I dare say it makes me look precious rum."

Mr. Crotchet was quite right regarding the appearance which the blood, smeared over his face, gave to him. It made him look perfectly hideous, and any one whose conscience was not—

> "With injustice corrupted!"

might well have been excused for a cold chill, and, perchance, even a swoon, like Sweeney Todd's, at his appearance.

"I rather think," added Crotchet, "that's a settler; so I'll just take the liberty, old fellow, of lighting your candle again, and then *mizzling*, for I don't somehow think much good is to be done in this crib just now."

By the aid of his phosphorus match Crotchet soon succeeded in re-illumining the candle, which he found on a mat in the passage; but notwithstanding his opinion that he had seen about as much as there was to see in Todd's house, he, when he had the candle alight, thought he might just as well peep into the parlour immediately behind the shop, before going up-stairs again. The door offered no opposition, for Todd had certainly not expected any one down stairs, and Mr. Crotchet found himself in the parlour about as soon as he had formed the wish to be there. This parlour was perfectly crammed with furniture, and all of the bureau kind, that is to say, large shapeless looking pieces of mahogany, with no end of drawers. Crotchet made an attempt at several before he found one that yielded to his efforts to open it, and that only did so because the hasp into which the lock was shot had given way, and no longer held it close. This drawer was full of watches.

"Humph!" said Crotchet, "Todd ought to know the time of day certainly, and no mistake. Ah, these ere machines, if they had tongues now, I rather think, could tell a tale or two. Howsomedever, I'll pocket some of 'em."

Mr. Crotchet put about a dozen watches in his pocket forthwith, and then he began to think that, as he did not wish to take Mr. Todd just then into custody, it would be just as well if he left the house. Besides, the barber had only fell into a swoon through fright, so that his recovery was a matter that could be calculated upon with something like certainty in a short time.

"It would be a world of pities if he was to find out as the ghost was only me," said Crotchet, "so I'll be off before he comes to himself."

Extinguishing the light, Crotchet wound his way up the staircase again, but when he got to the landing he stopped, and said—

"Bless us! I've not got them canes and swords as Sir Richard wanted me to bring away with me. Well, the watches will answer better than them, for all he wants is to compare 'em with the descriptions of some folks as has been missed by their blessed relations in London, so that's all right. Hilloa!"

This latter ejaculation arose from Crotchet having trodden upon Todd.

"The deuce!" he added, "I thought I had got clear of him."

He paused, and heard Todd utter a deep groan. Mr. Crotchet took this as a signal that he had better be off; and accordingly he ascended the next staircase quickly, and in a very few minutes reached the attic of Todd's house. When there, he quickly made his appearance in the shoemaker's attic, and found that Sir Richard Blunt had left the door of it just upon the latch for him. He was upon the point of passing out of the room, and going down stairs, when he heard a confused sound approaching the attic, and he paused instantly. The sound came nearer and nearer, until Crotchet found that some half dozen people were upon the landing, and all talking together in anxious whispers.

"What the deuce is up now?" he thought.

He approached the door and listened.

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Otton," said a female voice. "It's now getting on for ten o'clock, and I positively can't sleep in my bed unless I know something more about this horrid attic."

"Well, but, mum—"

"Don't speak to me. Here's an attic, and two men go into it. Then all at once there's no men in it; and then all at once, one man comes down and walks out as cool as a cucumber, and says nothing at all; and then we know well enough as there was two men, and only one—"

"But, mum—"

"Don't speak to me, and only one has come down."

"And here's the t'other!" cried Crotchet, suddenly bouncing out of the attic.

The confusion that ensued baffles all description. A grand rush was made into the apartments of the lady who was fond of putting her feet into hot water; and in the midst of the confusion, Crotchet quickly enough went down stairs, and made his escape from the shoemaker's house.

CHAPTER XLII.
THE GREAT SACRIFICE.

While all these things were going on at Sweeney Todd's, in Fleet-street, Mrs. Lovett was not quite idle as regarded her own affairs and feelings. That lady's—what shall we say—certainly not affections, for she had none—passions is a better word—were inconceivably shocked by the discovery she had made of the perfidy of her flaunting and moustachied lover. It will be perceived, by this little affair of Mrs. Lovett's, how strong-minded women have their little weaknesses. The hour of the appointment, which she (Mrs. Lovett) had made with her military-looking beau, came round; and there she sat, looking rather disconsolate.

"Am I never to succeed," she muttered to herself, "in finding one with whom I can make my escape from this sea of horrors that surrounds me? Am I, notwithstanding I have so fully accomplished all I wished to accomplish, by—by"—she shuddered and paused.—"Well, well, the time will come—I must go alone. Let Todd go alone, and let me go alone. Why should he wish to trammel my actions? He cannot surely think, for a moment, that with him I will consent to pass the remainder of my life!"

The scornful curl of the lip, and the indignant toss of the head, which accompanied these words, would have been quite sufficient to convince Todd, had he seen them, of the hopelessness of any such notion.

"No," she added, after a pause, "I shall be alone in the world, or, if I make ties, they shall be made in another country. There it is possible I may be—oh, no, no—not happy; but I may be powerful, and have

cringing slaves about me, who, finding that I am rich, will tell me that I am beautiful, and I shall be able to drink deeply of the intoxicating cup of pleasure, in some land where prudery, or what is called propriety, has not set up its banner as it has in this land of outward virtue. As for Todd —I—I will try to be assured that he is a corpse before I breathe freely; and if I fail in that, I will hope that we shall be thousands of leagues asunder."

A shadow passed the window. Mrs. Lovett started to her feet.

"Ah! who comes? 'Tis he—no—God! 'tis Todd."

For a moment she pressed her hands upon her face, as though she would squeeze out the traces of passion from the muscles, and then her old set smile came back again. Todd entered the shop. For a few moments they looked at each other in silence, and then Todd said—

"Alone?"

"Quite," she replied.

He gave one of his peculiar laughs, and then glided into the parlour behind the shop. Mrs. Lovett followed him.

"News?" he said.

"None."

"Hem! The time is coming."

"The time to leave off this—"

"Yes. The time to quit business, Mrs. Lovett. All goes well—swimmingly. Ha! ha!"

She shuddered as she said—

"Do not laugh."

"Let those laugh who win," replied Todd. "How old are you, Sarah?"

"Old?"

"Yes, or to shape the question perhaps more to a woman's liking, how young are you? Have you yet many years before you in which to enjoy the fruits of our labours? Have you the iron frame which will enable you to say—'I shall revel for years in the soft enjoyments of luxury stolen from a world I hate?' Tell me."

Mrs. Lovett fell into a musing attitude, and Todd thought she was reflecting upon her age; but at length she said—

"I sometimes think I would give half of what is mine if I could forget how I became possessed of the whole."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Todd. Has no such feeling ever crossed you?"

"Never! I am implacable. Fate made me a barber, but nature made me something else. In the formation of man there is a something that gives weakness to his resolves, and makes him pause upon the verge of enterprise with a shrinking horror. That is what the world calls conscience. It has no hold of me. I have but one feeling towards the human race, and that is hatred. I saw that while they pretended to bow down to God, they had in reality set up another idol in their heart of hearts. Gold! gold! Tell me—how many men there are in this great city who do not worship gold far more sincerely and heartily than they worship Heaven?"

"Few—few."

"Few? None, I say, none. No. The future is a dream—an *ignis fatuus*—a vapour. The present we can grasp—ha!"

"What is our wealth, Todd?"

"Hundreds of thousands."

He shaded his eyes with his hands, and peered from the parlour into the shop.

"Who is that keeps dodging past the window each moment, and peeping in at every convenient open space in the glass that he can find?"

Mrs. Lovett looked, and then, after an effort, she said—

"Todd, I was going to speak to you of that man."

"Ah!"

"Listen; I suspect him. For some days past he has haunted the shop, and makes endeavours to become acquainted with me. I did not think it sound policy wholly to shun him, but gave him such encouragement as might supply me with opportunities of judging if he were a spy or not."

"Humph!"

"I think him dangerous."

Todd's eyes glistened like burning coals.

"Should he come into your shop to be shaved, Todd—"

"Ha! ha!"

The horrible laugh rang through the place, and Mrs. Lovett's lover, with the moustache, sprung to the other side of Bell Yard, for the unearthly sound even reached his ears as he was peeping through the window to catch a glimpse of the charming widow.

"You understand me, Todd?"

"Perfectly—perfectly—I shall know him again. Ah, my dear Mrs. Lovett, how dangerous it is to be safe in this world. Even our virtue cannot escape detraction; but we will live in hopes of better times. You and I will show the world, yet, what wealth is."

"Yes—yes."

Todd crept close to her, and was about to place his arm round her waist, but she started from him, exclaiming—

"No—no, Todd—a thousand times no. Have we not before quarrelled upon this point. Do not approach me, or our compact, infernal as it is, is at an end. I have sold my soul to you, but I have not bartered myself."

The expression of Todd's countenance at this juncture was that of an incarnate fiend. He glared at Mrs. Lovett as though with the horrible fascination of his ugliness he would overcome her, and then slowly rising, he said—

"Her soul—ha! She has sold her soul to me—ha! I will call to-morrow."

He left the shop, and as he passed the gent who, by force of his moustache, hoped to win the affections of Mrs. Lovett, he gave him such a look that he terrified him and the gent found himself in the shop before he was aware.

"Bless me, what a horrid looking fellow! I swear by my courage and honour I never saw such a face. Ah, my charmer! Who was that left your charming presence just now?"

"Some one who came for a pie."

"'Pon honour, he's enough to poison all the pies! Oh, you beauty, yo—ou—ou—ou—"

The gallant's mouth was so full of a veal pie that he had stuffed into it that for some few moments he could not produce an intelligible sound. When he had recovered, he walked into the parlour and sat down, saying—

"Now, Mrs. Lovett, here am I, 'pon honour, your humble servant, and stop my breath if I'd say as much to the commander-in-chief. When's the happy day to be?"

"Do you really love me?"

"Do I love you? Do I love fighting? Do I love honour—glory? Do I love eating and drinking? Do I love myself?"

"Ah, Major Bounce, you military men are so gallant."

"'Pon honour we are. General Cavendish used to say to me—'Bounce,' says he, 'if you don't make your fortune by war, which you ought to do, Bounce, 'pon honour, you will make it by love.' 'General,' says I—now I

was always ready for a smart answer, Mrs. Lovett—so 'General,' says I, 'the same to you!'"

"Very smart."

"Yes, wasn't it. 'Pon honour it was, and 'pon soul you looks more and more charming every day that I see you."

"Oh you flatterer!"

"No—no. Bar flattering—bar flattering. His Majesty has often said, 'Talk of flattery. Oh dear, Bounce is the man for me. He is right down—straight up-off handed. And no sort of mistake, on—on—on.'"

Another pie converted the oratory of the major into something between a grunt and a sigh.

"But major, I'm afraid that you will regret marrying me. If I convert all I have into money"—the major pricked up his ears—"I could not make of it more than fifty thousand pounds."

The major's eyes opened to the size of pint saucers, as he said—

"Fifty—fift—fif.—Say it again!"

"Fifty thousand pounds."

The major rose and embraced Mrs. Lovett. Tears actually came into his eyes, and gulping down the pie, he cried—

"You have fifty thousand charms. Only let me be your slave, your dog, damme—your dog, Mrs. Lovett, and I shall consider myself the luckiest dog in the world, but not for the money—not for the money. No, as the Marquis of Cleveland once said, 'If you want a thoroughly disinterested man, go to Bounce.'"

"Well, major, since we understand each other so well, there are two little things that I must name as my conditions."

"Name 'em—name 'em. Do you want me to bring you the king's eye-tooth, or her majesty's wig and snuff-box—only say the word."

"One is, that I will leave England. I have a private reason for so doing."

"Damme, so have I. That is a-hem! If you have a reason, that is a reason to me, you know."

"Exactly. In some other capital of Europe we may spend our money and enjoy all the delights of existence. Do you speak French?"

"Ah-hem! Oh, of course. I never tried particularly, but as Lord North said to the Duke of Bridgewater, 'Bounce is the man if you want anything done of an out of-the-way character.'"

"Very well, then. My next condition is, that you shave off your moustache."

"What?"

"Shave off your moustache; I have the greatest possible aversion to moustache, therefore I make that a positive condition without which I shall say no more to you."

"My charmer, do you think I hesitate? If you were to say to me, 'Bounce, off with your head,' in a moment it would roll at your feet."

"Go, then, to Mr. Todd's, the barber, in Fleet-street, and have them taken off at once, and then come back to me, for I declare I won't speak another word to you while you have them on."

"But, dear creature—"

Mrs. Lovett shook her head.

"'Pon honour!"

She shook her head again.

"I'll go at once then, 'pon soul, and have 'em taken off. I'll be back in a jiffy, Mrs. Lovett. Oh, you duck, I adore you. Confound the cash! It's you I knuckle under to. Man doats on Venus, and I love Lovett. Bye, bye; I'll get it done and soon be back. Fifty thousand—fifty—fif.—Oh, lor' why Flukes, your fortune is made at last."

These last words did not reach the ear of Mrs. Lovett. That lady threw herself into a chair, where the gallant major had left her.

"Another!" she said. "Another! Why did he try to deceive me? The fool, to pitch upon me, of all persons, to make his victim. I must have found him out, and poisoned him, if I had married him. It is better that Todd should take vengeance for me, and then the time shall come when he shall fall. Yes, so soon as I can, by cajollery or scheming, get sufficient of the plunder into my own hands, Todd's hours are numbered."

After this, Mrs. Lovett fell into a train of musing, and her face assumed an expression so different from that with which she was wont to welcome her customers in the shop, that not one of them would have known her. But we must look at Todd. It was upon his return home from several calls, the last of which had been this recent visit to Mrs. Lovett, that he had heard the noise in his house, which had terminated in his going up stairs, and being so terrified by Crotchet. It will be recollected that he fell insensible upon the staircase, and that Crotchet took that opportunity of making good his retreat. How long he lay there, he, Todd, had no means of knowing, for all was profound darkness upon the staircase, but his first sensation consisted of a tingling in his feet and hands, similar to the sensation which is properly called "your limbs going to sleep." Then a knocking noise came upon his sense of hearing.

"What's that? Where am I?" he cried. "No—no. Don't hang me. Where's Mrs. Lovett? Hang her. She is guilty!"

Knock!—knock!—knock!

"Hush! hush! What is it? Who wants me? Good God—no—no. There is no good God for me!"

Knock! knock! knock! came again with increased violence at the door of the shop below.

CHAPTER XLIII.
AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

Todd scrambled to his feet. He held his head in his hand.

"What does it all mean? What does it all mean?"

Knock! knock! knock!

Todd's senses were slowly returning to him. He began to recollect events at first confusedly, and then the proper order of their occurrence—how he had come home, and then heard a noise, and gone up stairs and seen —what? There he paused in his catalogue of events. What had he seen?"

Knock! knock! knock!

"Curses!" he muttered. "Who can that be hammering with such devilish perseverance at my door? By all that's horrible they shall pay dearly for thus disturbing me. Who can it be? Not any one to arrest me? No—no! They would not knock so long. An enforced entrance long before this would have brought them to me. What did I see? What did I see? What did I see? Dare I give it a name?"

He slowly descended the stairs, and reaching the shop, he peeped through a place in the door which he had made for such a purpose. There stood the hero of the moustachios knocking away with all his might to get the behests of Mrs. Lovett obeyed. Todd suddenly flung open the door, and in fell Major Bounce, alias Flukes.

"The devil! What do you want?"

"'Pon honour. Damn it. Is this the way to treat a military man?"

Todd turned to the side of the shop, and hastily put on a wig—by an adroit movement of his fingers, he pulled his cravat sufficiently out from his neck to be able to bury his chin in it, and when he turned to the mock major, the latter had no suspicion that he looked upon the same person who had so alarmed him by a look, in Bell Yard.

"Shaved or dressed sir?" said Todd.

"Confound you. Why did you open the door so quick?"

"Thought you knocked, sir."

"I did, but stop my breath, if you haven't given me an ugly fall. But no matter. None but the brave deserve the fair. You perceive I am a military man?"

"Oh, yes, sir, anybody may see that by your martial air."

"A-hem! You are right. Well then, Mr. Barber, I want my moustache shaved off. It's a fancy of a lady. One of the most charming of her sex. One with a fifty thousand pound charm. 'Pon my valour, she has. Ah! I am a lucky dog. Thirty-eight—handsome as Apollo, and beloved by the fairest of the fair."

> "Life is a jolly thing,
> Life is a jolly thing,
> While I drink deep and go frolicking,
> Fair maids, wives, and widows,
> Fair maids, wives, and widows
> Doat on the youth that goes frolicking."

"Ha! ha! ha! Life's a bumper. Upon my valour, Mr. Barber, I feel like a young colt, that I do."

"Really, sir. You don't say so?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Ha! ha! All's right. All's right. Now, Mr. What's-your-name. Off with the moustache. It's only in the cause of the fair that I would condescend to part with them, that's a fact, but when a lady's in the case—upon my valour, you are an ugly fellow."

"You don't say so," replied Todd, as he made a most hideous contortion. "Most people think me so fascinating that they stay with me."

"Ha! ha! A good joke."

Major Bounce—we may as well still call the poor wretch Major Bounce—placed his hat upon a chair, and his sword upon the top of it.

"Pray, sir, be seated," said Todd.

"Ah! Damme, is this seat a fixture?"

"Yes, sir, it's in the proper light, you see, sir."

"Oh, very well—I—pluff, pluff—puff, puff! Confound you, what have you filled my mouth with soap-suds for?"

"Quite an accident, sir. Quite an accident, for which I humbly beg your pardon, I assure you, sir. If you keep your mouth shut, and your eyes open, you will get on amazingly. Have you seen the paper to-day, sir?"

"No!"

"Sorry for that, sir. A very odd case, sir—a little on one side—a most remarkable case, I may say. A gentleman, sir, went into a barber's shop, and—"

"Eh!—puff! sleush! puff! Am I to be poisoned by your soap-suds? Upon my valour, I shall have to make an example of you to all barbers."

"You opened your mouth at the wrong time, sir."

"The wrong devil. Don't keep me here all night."

"Certainly not, sir. But as I was saying about this curious case in the paper. A military gentleman went into a barber's shop to be shaved."

"Well. The devil—pluff, pluff! Good God! Am I to endure all this?"

"Certainly not, sir. I'll show you the paper itself. You must know, sir, that the paragraph is headed 'Mysterious disappearance of a gentleman.'"

"Damn it, what do I care about it? Get on with the shaving."

"Certainly, sir."

Todd gave a horrible scrape to Major Bounce's face with a blunt razor.

"Quite easy, sir?"

"Easy? Good gracious, do you want to skin me?"

"Oh, dear no, sir. What an idea. To skin a military gentleman. Certainly not, sir. I see you require one of my best keen razors—one of the Magnum Bonums. Ha! ha!"

"Eh? What was that?"

"Only me giving a slight smile, sir."

"The deuce it was. Don't do it again, then, that's all; and get your keen razor at once, and make an end of the business."

"I will—make an end of the business. Sit still, sir. I'll be back in a moment."

Todd went into the parlour.

"£50,000!" muttered Major Bounce. "I am a happy fellow. At last, after so many ups and downs, I light upon my feet. A charming widow!—and she wishes to leave England. How lucky. I wish the very same thing. £50,000!—50,000 charms!"

"Good God! what's that?" said a man, who was passing Todd's window, in Fleet-street. "What a horrid shriek. Did you hear it, mum?"

"Oh dear, yes," said a woman. "I'm all of a tremble."

"It came from the barber's shop, here. Let's go in, and ask if anything is the matter?"

The man and woman crossed Todd's threshold, and opened the shop door. A glance showed them that a man's face was at a small opening of the parlour door. *The shaving chair was empty.*

"What's the matter?" said the man.

"With whom?" said Todd.

"Well, I don't know, but I thought somebody cried out."

Todd crept along the floor until he came close to the man, and then he said—

"My friend, have you anything to do?"

"Yes, thank God."

"Then, go and do it; and the next time you hear me cry out with the stomach-ache, ask yourself if it is your business to come in and ask me any questions about it. As for you, ma'am, unless you want to be shaved, I don't know, for the life of me, what you do here."

"Well, we only thought—"

Todd gave a hideous howl, which so terrified both the intruders, that they left the shop in a moment. His countenance then assumed that awful satanic expression which it sometimes bore, and he stood for the space of about five minutes in deep thought. Starting then suddenly, he took up the sword and hat of Major Bounce, and was in the act of putting both into a cupboard, when a smothered cry met his ears. Todd unsheathed the sword, and after fastening his shop door, he went into the parlour. He was absent about ten minutes, and when he returned he had not the sword, but he hastily washed his hands.

"Done!" he said.

Scratch! scratch! scratch! came something at his door, and Todd bent forward in an attitude of listening. Scratch!—scratch!—scratch!—His face turned ghastly pale, and his knees knocked together as he whispered to himself—

"What is that?—what is that?"

Todd was getting superstitious. Since his adventure with Mr. Crotchet, his nerves had been out of order, notwithstanding the exertions he had made to control himself, and to convince his judgment that it was all a matter of imagination. Yet now, somehow or another, although there was no visible connection between the two things, he could not help mentally connecting this scratching at the door with the vision on the

staircase. It is strange how the fancy will play such tricks, but it is no less strange than true that she does so, yoking together matters most dissimilar, and leading the judgment into strange disorder.

Scratch!—scratch!—scratch!

"What—what is it?" gasped Todd.

But time works wonders, and after the first shock to his nerves, the barber began to think that some one must be playing him a trick, and, for all he knew, it might be the very man whom he had snubbed so for interfering with him, or it might be some boy—the boys would at times tease Sweeney Todd. This supposition gathered strength each moment.

"It is a trick—a trick," he said. "I will be revenged!"

He took a thick stick from a corner, and stealthily approached the door. The odd scratching noise continued, and he again paused for a few moments to listen to it.

"A boy—a boy," he growled. "It is one of the infernal boys."

Opening the door a little way with great quickness, Todd aimed a blow through the opening. There was a short angry bark, and his old enemy, the dog that had belonged to the mariner, thrust in his head, and glared at Todd.

"Help!—help! Murder!" cried Todd. "The dog again!"

He made a vain effort to shut the door; but Hector was too strong for him, and, as he had got his head in, he seemed to be determined to force in his whole body, which he fully succeeded in doing. Todd dropped the stick, and rushed into the back-parlour for safety, from whence, through a small square of glass near the top of the door, he glared at the proceedings of his four-footed foe. The dog went direct to the cupboard from which he had taken his master's hat, and, opening the door, he dragged out an assemblage of miscellaneous property, as though he hoped to find among it some other vestige of the dear master he had lost. When, however, after tossing the things about, he found that they were all strange to him, he gave a melancholy howl. Hector then appeared to

be considering what he should do next, and, after a few moments' consideration, he made a general survey of the shop, and finally ended by leaping into the shaving-chair, where he sat and commenced such a series of melancholy howls, that Todd was nearly driven out of his mind at the conviction that the whole street must be soon in a state of alarm. Oh! how glad he would have been to have shot Hector; but then, although he had pistols in the parlour, he might miss him, and send the bullet into Fleet-street through his own window, and, perchance, hit somebody, and that would be a trouble. The report, too, would bring a crowd round his shop, and the old story of him and the accusing dog—for had not that dog accused him?—would be brought up again. But yet something must be done.

"Am I to be a prisoner here," said Todd, "while that infernal dog sits in the shaving chair, howling?"

Now and then, for the space of about half-a-minute, the dog would be quiet, but then the prolonged howl that he would give plainly showed that he had only been gathering breath to give it. Todd got desperate.

"I must and will shoot him," he said.

Going to a sideboard he opened a drawer, and took from it a large double-barrelled pistol. He looked carefully at the priming, and satisfying himself that all was right, he crept again to the parlour door.

"I must and will shoot him at any risk," he said. "This infernal dog will be else the bane and torment of my life. I thought I had been successful in poisoning the brute as he suddenly disappeared from my door, but he has been preserved by some sort of miracle on purpose to torment me."

Howl went the dog again. Sweeney Todd took a capital aim with the pistol. To be sure his nerves were not quite in such good order as they sometimes were, but then the distance was so short that how could he miss such an object as a Newfoundland dog?

"I have him—I have him," he muttered. "Ha! ha! I have him!"

He pulled the trigger of the pistol—snap went the lock, and the powder in the pan flashed up in Todd's face, but that was all. Before he could utter even an oath the shop door was opened, and a man's voice cried—

"Hasn't nobody seen nothing of never a great dog nowheres? Oh, there you is, my tulip. Come to your father, you rogue you. So you guved me the slip at last did you, you willain!"

CHAPTER XLIV.
TODD AND THE SILVERSMITH.

Sweeney Todd Re-Visited By The Dog Of One Of His Victims.

Sweeney Todd Re-Visited By The Dog Of One Of His Victims.

Hector whined a kind of recognition of this man, but he did not move from the chair in Todd's shop upon which he had seated himself.

"Come, old fellow," said the man, "you don't want to be shaved, do you?"

Hector gave a short bark, but he wagged his tail as much as to intimate —"Mind, I am not at all angry with you." And indeed it was quite evident, from the manner of the dog to this man, that there was a good understanding between them.

"Come now, Pison," said the man, "don't be making a fool of yourself here any more. You ain't on friendly terms here, my tulip."

"Hilloa!" cried Todd.

The man gave a start, and Hector uttered an angry growl.

"Hilloa! Who are you?"

"Why, I'm the ostler at the 'Bullfinch!' *oppesite*."

"Is that your dog?"

"Why in a manner o' speaking, for want of a better master, he's got me."

The ostler, by dint of shading his eyes with his hands, and looking very intently, at last saw Todd, and then he added—

"Oh, it's you, master, is it?"

"Take away that animal directly," cried Todd. "Take him away. I hate dogs. Curses on both you and him; how came he here?"

"Ah, Pison, Pison, why did you come here, you good for nothink feller you? You ought to have knowed better. Didn't I always say to you—leastways, since I've had you—didn't I say to you—'Don't you go over the way, for that ere barber is your natural enemy, Pison,' and yet here yer is."

As he spoke, the ostler embraced Hector, who was not at all backward in returning the caress, although in the midst of it he turned his head in the direction of the back-parlour, and gave a furious bark at Todd.

"There is some mystery at the bottom of all this," muttered Todd; and then raising his voice, he added—"How did you come by the dog?"

"Why, I'll tell you, master. For a matter of two days, you know, he stuck at your door with a hat as belonged—"

"Well, well!"

"Yes, his master, folks said, was murdered."

"Ha! ha!"

"Eh? Oh, Lord, what was that?"

"Only me; I laughed at the idea of anybody being murdered in Fleet Street, that was all."

"Oh, ah! It don't seem very likely. Well, as I was a saying, arter you had finished off his master—"

"I?"

"Oh, I begs your pardon! Only, you see, the dog would have it that you had, and so folks say so as natural as possible; but, howsomdever, I comed by and seed this here dog in the agonies o' conwulsions all along

o' pison. Now where I come from, the old man—that's my father as was—had lots o' dogs, and consekewently I knowed somethink about them ere creturs; so I takes up this one and carries him on my back over the way to the stables, and there I cures him and makes a pet of him, and I called him Pison, cos, you see, as he had been pisoned. Lor, sir, you should only have seed him, when he was a getting a little better, how he used to look at me and try to say—'Bill, don't I love you neither!' It's affection—that it is, blow me!"

Todd gave an angry snarl of derision.

"I tell you what it is, my man," he said; "if you will hang that dog, I will give you a guinea."

"Hang Pison? No, old 'un, I'd much rather hang you for half that ere money. Come along, my daffydowndilly. Don't you stay here any more. Why, I do believe it was you as pisoned him, you old bloak."

The ostler seized Hector, or Pison, as he had fresh christened him, round the neck, and fairly dragged him away out of the shop. To be sure, if Hector had resisted, the ostler, with all the power of resistance he possessed, it would indeed have been no easy matter to remove him; but it was wonderful to see how nicely the grateful creature graduated his struggles, so that they fell short of doing the smallest hurt to his preserver, and yet showed how much he wished to remain as a terror and a reproach to Sweeney Todd. When they were both fairly gone, Todd emerged from his parlour again, and the horrible oaths and imprecations he uttered will not bear transcription. With eager haste he again bundled into the cupboard all the things that the dog had dragged out of it, and then stamping his foot, he said—

"Am I, after defeating the vigilance of heaven only knows who, and for so long preserving myself from almost suspicion, to live in dread of a dog? Am I to be tormented with the thought that that fiend of an animal is opposite to me, and ready at any moment to fly over here and chase me

out of my own shop. Confound it! I cannot and will not put up with such a state of things. Oh, if I could but get one fair blow at him. Only one fair blow!"

As he spoke he took up a hammer that was in a corner of the shop, and made a swinging movement with it through the air. Some one at that moment opened the shop door, and narrowly escaped a blow upon the head, that would have finished their mortal career.

"Hilloa! Are you mad?"

"Mad!" said Todd.

"Yes: do you knock folks' brains out when they come to be shaved?"

"Mine's a sedentary employment," said Todd, "and when I am alone, I like exercise to open my chest. That's all. Ain't it rather late to be shaved? I was just about to shut up."

"Why it is rather late, Mr. Todd; but the fact is, I am going to York by the early coach from the Bullfinch Inn, opposite, and I want a shave before I get upon my journey, as I shan't have an opportunity you see, again, for some time."

"Very well, sir."

"Come in, Charley."

Todd started.

"What's that?" he said. He felt afraid that it was the dog again, under some new name. Truly, conscience was beginning to make a coward of Sweeney Todd, although he denied to himself the possession of such an article. Charley came in the shape of a little boy, of about eight years of age.

"Now you sit down, and don't do any mischief," said the father, "while I get Mr. Todd to shave me. I am a late customer indeed. You see the coach goes in two hours, and as I have got to call the last thing upon Alderman Stantons, I thought I would be shaved first, and my little lad here would come with me."

"Oh, certainly, sir," said Todd; "I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Brown, the silversmith."

"Yes—yes. The alderman gave me some jewels, worth about three thousand pounds, to re-set, and though they are not done, I really don't like to have them at home while I take such a journey, so I want to lodge them with him again until I come back."

Todd lathered away at Mr. Brown's chin, as he said with an air of innocence—

"Can you carry so many jewels about with you, sir?"

"So many? Aye, ten times as many. Why they are all in a little narrow case, that would not hold a pair of razors."

"Indeed!"

Todd began the shaving.

"And so this is your little boy? A sharp lad, no doubt."

"Tolerable."

"The whiskers as they are, sir?"

"Oh, yes—yes."

"I suppose you never trust him out alone in the streets?"

"Oh, yes; often."

"Is it possible. Well, now, I should hardly have thought it. What a sweet child he looks, and such a nice complexion, too. It's quite a pleasure to see him. I was considered myself a very fine child a good while ago."

Todd took care to lift the razor judiciously, so as to give Mr. Brown opportunities of replying; and the silversmith said—

"Oh, yes; he's a nice little fellow. He's got his mother's complexion."

"And he shan't lose it," said Todd, "if there's any virtue in *pearlometrical savonia*."

"In what?"

"Oh, that's the name I give to a soap that preserves the complexion in all its purity. I have only a small parcel of it, so I don't sell it, but I give it away now and then, to my lady customers. Excuse me for one moment."

"Oh, certainly."

Todd opened a glass case, and took out two pieces of soap, of a yellowish tint.

"There, Charley," he said as he handed them to the little fellow. "There's a piece for you, and a piece for mamma."

"Really you are very kind, Mr. Todd," said Brown.

"Oh, don't mention it. Run home at once, Charley, with them, and by the time you get back your father will be—finished. Run along."

"I won't," said Charley.

"Ah, come—come," said his father.

"I won't go, and I don't like soap."

"And why don't you like soap, my little man?" said Todd, as he recommenced operations upon the silversmith's face.

"Because I don't like to be washed at all, it scrubs so, and I don't like you, either, you are so dreadfully ugly—that I don't."

Todd smiled blandly.

"Now, Charley," said his father, "I am very angry with you. You are a very bad boy indeed. Why don't you do as Mr. Todd tells you?"

"Because I won't."

"Bless him," said Todd, "bless his heart. But don't you think, Mr. B."—here Todd's voice sank to a whisper—"don't you think that it's rather injudicious to encourage this obstinacy—if one may call it such—thus early in life? It may, you know, grow upon the dear little fellow."

"You are right, Mr. Todd; and I know that he is spoiled; but I have a more than ordinary affection for him, since, under most critical circumstances, once I saved his life. From that time, I confess that I have

been weak enough to allow him too much of his own way. Thank you, Mr. Todd. A very clean comfortable shave indeed."

Mr. Brown rose from his chair and approached the little boy.

"Charley, my dear," he said; "you will save papa's life some day, won't you?"

"Yes," said Charley.

The father kissed him; as he added—

"How affected I feel to-night. I suppose it's the thought of the long journey I am going."

"No doubt," said Todd.

"Good night, Mr. Todd. Come along, Charley."

"Won't you give me a kiss, you darling, before you go?" said Todd.

"No, ugly, I won't."

"Oh, Charley—Charley, your behaviour to Mr. Todd is really anything but right. You are a very bad boy to-night. Come along."

Away they went, and Todd stood stropping the lately-used razor upon his hand, as he glared upon them, and muttered—

"Jewels worth three thousand pounds! And so you saved the child's life, did you? By all that's devilish he has returned the obligation."

He went to the door and looked after the retreating figures of the silversmith and his child. He saw with what tender care the father lifted the little one over the road-way, and again he muttered—

"Three thousand pounds gone!—gone, when it was almost within my grasp. All this is new. I used not to be the sport of such accidents and adverse circumstances. Time was, when by the seeming irresistible force of my will, I could bend circumstances to my purposes, but now I am the sport of dogs and children. What is the meaning of it all? Is my ancient cunning deserting me? Is my brain no longer active and full of daring?"

He crept back into his shop again. The hour was now getting late, and after sitting for some time in silent musing he rose, and without a word, commenced closing his establishment for the night.

"I must have another boy," he said, as he put up the last shutter and secured it in its place. "I must have another boy. This state of things will not do. I must certainly have another boy. Tobias Ragg would have suited me very well, if he had not been so—so—what shall I call it, confoundedly imaginative. But he is dead—dead! that is a comfort. He is dead, and I must have another boy."

Bang! went Sweeney Todd's shop door. The beautiful moon climbed over the house-tops in old Fleet Street. The clock of St. Dunstan's struck the hour of eleven. The streets began to be thin of pedestrians, and the din of carriages had almost entirely ceased. London then, although it was so not long ago, presented a very different aspect at the hour of eleven to what it does now. The old hackney-coaches had not been ousted from the streets by the cabs and the omnibuses, and the bustle of the city was indeed but a faint echo then, of what it is now. Time changes all things.

CHAPTER XLV.
JOHANNA'S NEW SITUATION.

"Johanna, attend to me," said Mrs. Oakley, upon the morning after these events.

"Well, mother?"

"Your father is an idiot."

"Mother, mother! I dissent from the opinion, and if it were true, it comes with the worst possible grace from you, but I am sick at heart. I pray you to spare me reproaches or angry words, mother."

"Haity taity, one must not speak next, I suppose. Some people fancy that other people know nothing, but there is such a thing as overhearing what some people say to other people."

Johanna had not the most remote notion of what her mother meant, but Mrs. Oakley's tongue was like many pieces of machinery, that when once set in motion are not without considerable trouble brought to a standstill again, so on she went.

"Of course. I now know quite well why the godly man who would have made you a chosen vessel was refused. It was all owing to that scamp, Mark Ingestrie."

"Mother!"

"Marry come up! you need not look at me in such a way. We don't all of us see with the same eyes. A scamp he is, and a scamp he will be."

"Mother, he whom you so name is with his God. Mention him no more. The wild ocean rolls over his body—his soul is in heaven. Speak not irreverently of one whose sole crime was that he loved me. Oh, mother, mother, you—"

Johanna could say no more, she burst into tears.

"Well," said Mrs. Oakley, "if he is dead, pray what hinders you from listening to the chosen vessel, I should like to know?"

"Do not. Oh do not, mother, say any more to me—I cannot, dare not trust myself to speak to you upon such a subject."

"What is this?" said Mr. Oakley, stepping into the room. "Johanna in tears! What has happened?"

Mr. Oakley Defends Johanna From The Violence Of Her Mother.

Mr. Oakley Defends Johanna From The Violence Of Her Mother.

"Father—dear father!"

"And Mr. O.," cried Mrs. Oakley, "what business is it of yours, I should like to know? Be so good, sir, as to attend to your spectacles, and such like rubbish, and not to interfere with my daughter."

"Dear me!—ain't she my daughter likewise?"

"Oh yes, Mr. O.! Go on with your base, vile, wretched, contemptible, unmanly insinuations. Do go on, pray—I like it. Oh, you odious wretch! You spectacle-making monster!"

"Do not," cried Johanna, who saw the heightened colour of her father's cheek. "Oh, do not let me be the unhappy cause of any quarrelling. Father! father!"

"Hush, my dear, don't you say another word. Cousin Ben is coming to take a little bit of lunch with us to-day."

"I know it," cried Mrs. Oakley, clapping her hands together with a vengeance that made Oakley jump again. "I know it. Oh, you wretch. You couldn't have put on such airs if your bully had not been coming; I thought the last time he came here was enough for him. Aye, and for you too, Mr. O."

"It was nearly too much," said the spectacle-maker, shaking his head.

"Tow row, row, row, row!" cried Big Ben, popping his head into the parlour, "what do you all bring it in now? Wilful murder with the chill off or what? Ah, mother Oakley, what's the price of vinegar now, wholesale —pluck does it. Here you is. Ha, ha! Aint we a united family. Couldn't stay away from you, Mother Oakley, no more nor I could from that ere laughing hyena we has in the Tower."

"Eugh!—wretch!"

"Sit down, Ben," said Mr. Oakley. "I am glad to see you, and I am quite sure Johanna is."

"Oh, yes, yes."

"That's it," said Ben. "It's on Johanna's account I came. Now, little one, just tell me—"

Johanna had just time to place her finger upon her lips, unobserved by any one, and shake her head at Ben.

"Ah—hem! How are you, eh?" he said, turning the conversation. "Come, Mother O., stir your old stumps and be alive, will you? I have come to lunch with your lord and master, so bustle—bustle."

Mrs. Oakley rose, and placing her hands upon her hips, she looked at Ben, as she said—

"You great, horrid, man-mountain of a wretch. I only wonder you ain't afraid, after the proper punishment you had on the occasion of your last visit, to show your horrid face here again?"

"You *deludes* to the physicking, I suppose, mum. Lor bless you, it did us no end of good; but, howsomedever, we provide agin wice in animals when we knows on it aforehand, do you see. Oh, there you is."

A boy howled out from the shop—"Did a gentleman order two gallons of half-and-half here, please?"

"All's right," said Ben. "Now, Mother O., the only thing I'll trouble you for, is a knife and fork. As for the rest of the combustibles, here they is."

Ben took from one capacious pocket a huge parcel, containing about six pounds of boiled beef, and from the other he took as much ham.

"Hold hard!" he cried to the boy who brought the beer. "Take this half-crown, my lad, and get three quartern loaves."

"But, Ben," said old Mr. Oakley, "I really had no intention, when I asked you to come to lunch this morning, of making you provide it yourself. We have, or we ought to have, plenty of everything in the house."

"Old birds," said Ben, "isn't to be caught twice. A fellow, arter he has burnt his fingers, is afeard o' playing with the fire. No, Mrs. O., you gave us a benefit last time, and I ain't a-going to try my luck again. All's right —pitch into the grub. How is the chosen vessel, Mother O.? All right, eh?"

Mrs. Oakley waited until Ben had made an immense sandwich of ham and beef; and then in an instant, before he was aware of what she was about, she caught it up, and slapped it in his face with a vengeance that was quite staggering.

"Easy does it," said Ben.

"Take that, you great, fat elephant."

"Go it—go it."

Mrs. Oakley bounced out of the room. Johanna looked her sorrow; and Mr. Oakley rose from his chair, but Ben made him sit down again, saying —

"Easy does it—easy does it. Never mind her, cousin Oakley. She must have her way sometimes. Let her kick and be off. There's no harm done—not a bit. Lord bless you. I'm used to all sorts of cantankerous animals."

Mr. Oakley shook his head.

"Forget it, father," said Johanna.

"I only wish, my dear, I could forget many things; and yet there are so many others, that I want to remember, mixed up with them, that I don't know how I should manage to separate them one from the other."

"You couldn't do it," said Ben. "Here's luck in a bag, and shake it out as you want it."

This sentiment was uttered while Ben's head was deep in the recesses of the two-gallon can of beer, so that it had a peculiar solemn and sonorous effect with it. After drinking about a quart, Ben withdrew the can, and drew a long breath.

"Has he brought yours?" he said.

"What?—who?"

"Why the other two gallons for you and Johanna."

"Good gracious, Ben, you don't mean that?"

"Don't I, though. Oh, here he is. All's right. Now, my lad, get the little pint jug, with the silver top to it, and if we don't mull a drop, I'm a sinner. Now, you'll see if Mrs. O. don't come round quite handsome."

Ben, by the aid of some sugar, succeeded in making a very palatable drink, and just as the steam began to salute the nostrils of old Oakley and himself, the door of the parlour was opened, and who should heedlessly step into the room but the pious Mr. Lupin himself. Mr. Lupin was so transfixed by finding Ben there, that for a moment or two he could not gather strength to retreat; and during that brief period, Ben had shifted his chair, until he got quite behind the reverend gentleman, who, when he did step back, in consequence fell into Ben's lap.

"What do yer mean?" cried Ben, in a voice of thunder.

"Oh, murder—murder! Have mercy upon me! I only looked in as I was passing, to ask how all the family was."

"Yes," said Mr. Oakley, "and because you, no doubt, heard I was going to Tottenham, to Judge Merivale's, to fit him with a pair of spectacles."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Let me go, sir."

"I don't want you," said Ben; "but as you are here, let's make an end of all differences, and have a pint together."

"A pint?"

"Yes, to be sure. By the look of your nose, I should say it knows pretty well what a pint is."

"Oh, dear—man is sinful alway. I bear no malice, and if the truly right-minded and pious Mrs. Oakley was only here, we might drink down all differences, Mr. a—a—"

"Ben."

"Mr. Ben. Thank you, sir."

"Oh, Mr. Lupin," cried Mrs. Oakley, at this moment bursting into the parlour. "Is it possible that you can give your mind in this way to the Philistines? Is not this backsliding?"

"Let us hope for the best, sister," said Mr. Lupin, with an evangelical twang. "Let us hope for the best. If people will drink, they had much better drink with the saints, who may take some favourable opportunity of converting them, than with sinners."

"Sit down, mum," said Ben, "and let's bury all animosities in the can. Easy does it. Don't you go, Johanna."

"Yes, but, Ben, I—"

"Now don't."

Ben saw by the direction of Johanna's eyes, that the Rev. gentleman was resting one of his red raw-looking hands upon her arm, and, situated as she was, she could not get out of his way but by rising.

"Sit still," said Ben. "Easy does it."

Lifting up the can, then, he pretended to drink out of it, and then brought it with such a thundering crack upon Mr. Lupin's head, that it quite staggered him.

"Paws off," said Ben. "Just attend to that ere gentle hint, old friend."

Mr. Lupin sat down with a groan.

"Now, mum," said Ben, who all the while had held fast the stone mug of mulled porter. "Now, mum, here's some hot, that don't suit me so well as the cold, perhaps you and Mr. Lupin will take that, while I cuts a few more sandwiches."

He placed the jug before Mr. Lupin, who thereupon left off rubbing his head, and said—

"I'm sure it would be highly unchristian of me to bear any malice, so, with the Lord's leave, I will even partake of some of this worldly liquor, called mulled porter."

Now while Mr. Lupin drank the savoury stream from the jug, it assailed the senses of Mrs. Oakley, and when the porter was placed before her, she raised it to her lips, saying—

"If folks are civil to me, I'm civil to them, only I don't like my godly friends to be ill-treated. I'm sure nobody knows what I have gone through for my family, and nobody thinks what a mother and wife I have been. What would have become of Oakley if it hadn't been for me, is a question I often ask myself in the middle of the night?"

"She's a wonderful woman," sighed Lupin.

"Oh, uncommon," said Ben.

"Let me go," whispered Johanna to Ben.

"No, no! Wait for the fun."

"What fun?"

"Oh, you'll see. You don't know what a trouble it has cost me, to be sure. Only wait a bit, there's a duck, do."

Johanna did not like to say she would not, so she shrunk back in her chair in no small curiosity, to know what was about to happen. Mrs. Oakley lifted the jug to her lips and drunk deep. The aroma of the liquor must have been peculiarly grateful to the palate of Mrs. Oakley, for she certainly kept the jug at her mouth for a length of time, that, to judge by the look of impatience upon the countenance of Mr. Lupin, was something outrageous.

"Sister!" he said. "Mind your breath."

Down came the jug, and Mrs. Oakley, when she could draw breath, gasped—

"Very good indeed. A dash of allspice would make it delicious."

"Oh, sister," cried Lupin as he grasped the jug, that was gently pushed towards him by Ben after Mrs. Oakley had set it down. "Oh, sister, don't give your mind to carnal things, I beg of you. Why, she's drank it all."

Mr. Lupin peered into the jug. He shut the right eye and looked in with the left, and then he shut the left eye and looked in with the right, and then he moved the jug about until the silver lid came down with a clap, that nearly snapped his nose off.

"What's the matter?" said Ben.

"I—I—don't exactly—" Mr. Lupin raised the lid again and again, and peered into the jug in something of the fashion which popular belief supposes a crow to look into a marrow bone.

At length he turned the jug upside down, and struck the bottom of it with his pious knuckles. A huge toad fell sprawling upon the table. Mrs. Oakley gave a shriek, and rushed into the yard. Mr. Lupin gave a groan, and flew into the street, and the party in the parlour could hear them in a state of horrible sickness.

"Easy does it," said Ben, "it's only a piece of wood shaped like a toad and painted, that's all. Now I'm easy. I owed 'em one."

CHAPTER XLVI.
TOBIAS'S HEART IS TOUCHED.

Tobias is no worse all this time. But is he better? Has the godlike spirit of reason come back to the mind-benighted boy? Has that pure and gentle spirit recovered from its fearful thraldom, and once again opened its eyes to the world and the knowledge of the past? We shall see. Accompany us, reader, once again to the house of Colonel Jeffery. You will not regret looking upon the pale face of poor Tobias again. The room is darkened, for the sun is shining brightly, and an almond tree in the front garden is not sufficiently umbrageous in its uncongenial soil to keep the bright rays from resting too strongly upon the face of the boy. There he lies! His eyes are closed, and the long lashes—for Tobias, poor fellow, was a pretty boy—hung upon his cheek, held down by the moisture of a tear. The face is pale, oh, so pale and thin, and the one arm and hand that lies outside the coverlet of the bed, show the blue veins through the thin transparent skin. And all this is the work of Sweeney Todd. Well, well! heaven is patient! In the room is everything that can conduce to the comfort of the slumbering boy. Colonel Jeffery has kept his word. And now that we have taken a look at Tobias, tread gently on tip-toe, reader, and come with us down stairs to the back drawing-room, where Colonel Jeffery, his friend Captain Rathbone, the surgeon, and Mrs. Ragg are assembled. Mrs. Ragg is "crying her eyes out," as the saying is.

"Sit down, Mrs. Ragg," said the colonel, "sit down and compose yourself. Come, now, there is no good done by this immoderate grief."

"But I can't help it."

"You can control it. Sit down."

"But I oughtn't to sit down. I'm the cook, you know, sir."

"Well, well; never mind that, if you are my cook. If I ask you to be seated, you may waive all ceremony. We want to ask you a few questions, Mrs. Ragg."

Upon this Tobias's mother did sit down, but it was upon the extreme edge of a chair, so that the slightest touch to it in the world would have knocked it from under her, and down she would have gone on to the floor.

"I'm sure, gentlemen, I'll answer anything I know, and more too, with all the pleasure in life, for, as I often said to poor Mr. Ragg, who is dead and gone, and buried accordingly in St. Martin's, as he naturally might, and a long illness he had, and what with one thing and—"

"Yes! yes! we know all that. Just attend to us for one moment, if you please, and do not speak until you thoroughly understand the nature of the question we are about to put to you."

"Certainly not, sir. Why should I speak, for as I often and often said, when—"

"Hush, hush!"

Mrs. Ragg was silent at last, and then the surgeon spoke to her calmly and deliberately, for he much wished her clearly to understand what he was saying to her.

"Mrs. Ragg, we still think that the faculties of your son Tobias are not permanently injured, and that they are only suffering from a frightful shock."

"Yes, sir, they is frightfully shook."

"Hush! We think that if anything that greatly interested him could be brought to bear upon the small amount of perception that remains to him he would recover. Do you now know of anything that might exercise

a strong influence over him?"

"Lord bless you—no, sir."

"How old is he?"

"Fifteen, sir, and you would hardly believe what a time of it I had with Tobias. All the neighbours said—'Well, if Mrs. Ragg gets over this, she's a woman of ten thousand;' and Mrs. Whistlesides, as lived next door, and had twins herself, owned she never—"

"Good God, will you be quiet, madam?"

"Quiet, sir? I'm sure I haven't said two words since I've been in the blessed room. I appeal to the *kernel*."

"Well! well! it appears then, Mrs. Ragg, you can think of nothing that is at all likely to aid us in this plan of awakening, by some strong impression, the dormant faculties of Tobias?"

"No, gentlemen, no! I only wish I could, poor boy; and there's somebody else wasting away for grief about him; poor little thing, when she heard that Tobias was mad, I'm sure I thought she'd have broke her heart, for if Tobias ever loved anybody in all the world, it was little Minna Gray. Ah! it's affecting to think how such children love each other, ain't it, sir? Lord bless you, the sound of her footstep was enough for him, and his eyes would get like two stars, as he'd clap his hands together, and cry—'Ah! that's dear Minna.' That was before he went to Mr. Todd's, poor fellow."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir, oh, you haven't an idea."

"I think I have. Who is this Minna Gray, who so enthralled his boyish fancy?"

"Why, she's widow Gray's only child, and they live in Milford Lane, close to the Temple, you see, and even Tobias used to go with me to drink tea with Mrs. Gray, as we was both *bequeathed* women in a world of trouble."

"You were what?"

"Bequeathed."

"Bereaved you mean, I suppose, Mrs. Ragg; but how could you tell me that you knew of no means of moving Tobias's feelings. This Minna Gray, if he really loves her, is the very thing."

"Lor, sir. What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean that if you can get this Minna Gray here, the possibility is that it will be the recovery of Tobias. At all events, it is the only chance of that kind that presents itself. If that fails, we must only trust to time. How old is this girl?"

"About fourteen, sir, and though I say it—"

"Well, well. Do you now, as a woman of the world, Mrs. Ragg, think that she has an affection for poor Tobias?"

"Do I think? Lor bless you, sir, she doats on the ground he walks on, that she does—poor young thing. Hasn't she grizzled a bit. It puts me in mind of—"

"Yes, yes. Of course it does. Now, Mrs. Ragg, you understand it is an object with our friend the colonel here, that no one but yourself should know that Tobias is here. Could you get this young girl to come to tea, for instance, with you, without telling her what else she is wanted for?"

"Dear me, yes, sir; for, as I used to say to Mr. Ragg, who is dead and gone, and buried in St. Martin's—"

"Exactly. Now go and get her by all means, and when she comes here we will speak to her, but above all things be careful what you say."

"I think Mrs. Ragg is already aware," said Colonel Jeffery, "that her son's safety, as well as her own, depends upon her discretion in keeping his whereabouts a profound secret. We will instruct this young girl when she comes here."

Colonel Jeffery, when he heard that the medical man was of opinion that the experiment of awakening the feelings of Tobias, by bringing Minna Gray, was worth trying, at once acquiesced, and urged upon Mrs. Ragg

to go and see Minna. After many more speeches, about as much to the purpose as those which we have already formed, Mrs. Ragg got herself dressed and went upon her errand. She was instructed to say that she had found herself unequal to being a laundress in the Temple, and so had thought it was better to return to her own original occupation of cook in a gentleman's family, and that, as she had the liberty to do so, she wished Minna Gray to come and take tea with her. Thus forewarned of the part she was to play, Mrs. Ragg started upon her mission, in which we need not follow her, for the result of it is all that we particularly care about, and that consisted in her bringing Minna in great triumph to the colonel's house. Colonel Jeffery, and Captain Rathbone, who was staying to dine with him, saw the young girl as she came up the garden path. She was one of those small, delicately beautiful young creatures, who seem specially made to love and be loved. Her light auburn hair hung in dancing curls down her fair cheeks, and her beautifully shaped lips and pearly teeth were of themselves features that imparted much loveliness to her countenance. She had, too, about her face all the charm of childish beauty, which bespoke her so young as to have lost little of that springtide grace, which, alas! is so fleeting. Add to all this a manner so timid, so gentle, and so retiring, that she seemed to be an inhabitant of some quieter world than this, and you have Minna Gray, who had crept into the boyish heart of poor Tobias, before your eyes.

"What a gentle quiet looking little creature," said the captain.

"She is indeed; and what a contrast!"

"Between her and Mrs. Ragg, you mean? It does indeed look like an elephant escorting a fawn. But Mrs. Ragg has her good qualities."

"She has, and they are numerous. She is honest and candid as the day, and almost the only fault that can be laid to her charge is her garrulity."

"How do you mean to proceed?"

"Why, Rathbone, I mean to condescend to do what, under any other circumstances, would be most unjustifiable—that is, listen to the conversation of Mrs. Ragg with Minna Gray; I do so with the

concurrence of the old lady, who is to lead her to speak of Tobias, and it is solely for the purpose of judging if she really loves the boy, and making a proper report to the surgeon, that I do so."

"You are right enough, Jeffery; the end in this case, at all events, sanctifies the means, however defective such a system of philosophy may be as a general thing. May I likewise be an auditor?"

"I was going to ask you to so far oblige me, for I shall then have the advantage of your opinion; so you will do me a favour."

There was a small pantry called a butler's pantry close to the kitchen, into which Mrs. Ragg had taken Minna Gray. A door opened from this pantry into the kitchen, and another on to the landing at the foot of the kitchen stairs. Now Mrs. Ragg was to take care that the door opening to the kitchen should be just ajar, and the colonel and his friend could get into the pantry by the other mode of entrance. Colonel Jeffery was a gentleman in the fullest sense of the term, and he kept no useless bloated menials about him, so the butler's pantry had no butler to interfere with him, the colonel, in his own house. In the course of a few minutes Jeffery and Rathbone were in the pantry, from whence they could both see and hear what passed in the kitchen. To be sure there was a certain air of restraint about Mrs. Ragg at the thought that her master was listening to what passed, and that lady had a propensity to use hard words, of the meaning of which she was in the most delightful state of ignorance; but as it was to Minna Gray's conversation that the colonel wanted to listen, these little peculiarities of Mrs. Ragg upon the occasion did not much matter. Of course, Minna thought she had no other auditors than her old friend. Mrs. Ragg was quite busy over the tea.

"Well, my dear," she said to Minna, "this is a world we live in."

Mrs. Ragg, no doubt, intended this as a discursive sort of remark that might open any conversation very well, and lead to anything, and she was not disappointed, for it seemed to give to the young girl courage to utter that which was struggling to her lips.

"Mrs.—Mrs. Ragg," she began, hesitatingly.

"Yes. My dear, let me fill your cup."

"Thank you; but I was going to say—"

"A little more sugar?"

"No, no. But I cannot place a morsel in my lips, Mrs. Ragg, or think or speak to you of anything else, until you have told me if you have heard any news of poor—poor—"

"Tobias?"

"Yes—yes—yes!"

Minna Gray placed her two little hands upon her face and burst into tears. Mrs. Ragg made a snuffling sort of noise that, no doubt, was highly sympathetic, and after a pause of a few moments' duration, Minna gathered courage to speak again.

"You know, Mrs. Ragg, the last you told me of him was that—that Mr. Todd had said he was mad, you know, and then you went to fetch somebody, and when you came back he was gone; and Mr. Todd told you the next day that poor Tobias ran off at great speed and disappeared. Has anything been heard of him since?"

"Ah, my dear, alas! alas!"

"Why do you cry alas?—Have you any more sad news to tell me?"

"He was my only son—and all the world and his wife, as the saying is, can't tell how much I loved him."

Minna Gray clasped her hands, and, while the tears coursed down her young fair cheeks, she said—

"And I, too, loved him!"

"I always thought you did, my dear, and I'm sure, if you had been an angel out of Heaven, my poor boy could not have thought more of you than he did. There was nothing that you said or did that was not excellent. He loved the ground you walked on; and a little old worsted

mitten, that you left at our place once, he used to wear round his neck, and kiss it when he thought no one was nigh, and say—'This was my Minna's!'"

The young girl let her head rest upon her hands, and sobbed convulsively.

"Lost—lost!" she said, "and poor, kind, good Tobias is lost!"

"No, my dear, it's a long lane that hasn't a turning. Pluck up your courage, and your courage will pluck up you. Keep sixpence in one pocket, and hope in another. When things are at the worst they mend. You can't get further down in a well than the bottom."

Minna sobbed on.

"And so, my dear," added Mrs. Ragg, "I do know something more of Tobias."

The young girl looked up.

"He lives!—he lives!"

"Lor a mussy, don't lay hold of a body so. Of course he lives, and, what's more, the doctor says that you ought to see him—he's up stairs."

"Here?—here?"

"Yes, to be sure. That's why I brought you to tea."

Minna Gray took a fit of trembling, and then, making great efforts to compose herself, she said—

"Tell me all—tell me all!"

"Well, my dear, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good, and so here I am, cook in as good a place as mortal woman would wish to have. I can't tell you all the rights of the story, because I don't know it. But certainly Tobias is up stairs in bed like a gentleman, only they say as his brains is —is something or another that makes him not understand anything or anybody, and so you see the doctor says if you speak to him, who knows but what he may come to himself?"

With an intuitive tact that belongs to some minds, and which Minna Gray, despite the many disadvantages of her social position, possessed in an eminent degree, she understood at once the whole affair. Tobias was suffering from some aberration of intellect, which the voice and the presence of one whom he loved fondly might dissipate. Would she shrink from the trial?—would her delicacy take the alarm and overcome her great desire to recover Tobias? Oh, no; she loved him with a love that far outstripped all smaller feelings, and, if ever there was a time when that love took complete possession of her heart, it was at this affecting moment, when she was told that her voice might have the magic power of calling back to him the wandering reason that harshness and ill-usage had for a time toppled from its throne.

"Take me to him!" she cried—"take me to him! If all that is wanted to recover him be the voice of affection, he will soon be as he was once to us."

"Well, my dear, take your tea, and I'll go and speak to the *kernel*."

It was now time for Colonel Jeffery and his friend, the captain, to retire from the pantry, where we need not say that they had been pleased and affected listeners to what had passed between Mrs. Ragg and the fair and intelligent Minna Gray, who, in beauty and intelligence, far exceeded their utmost expectations.

CHAPTER XLVII.
TOBIAS RECOVERS HIS INTELLECT.

In the course of a quarter of an hour the surgeon was sent for, and then Mrs. Ragg tapped at the drawing-room door, to give the colonel an account of the success of her mission; but he at once said to her—

"We know all, Mrs. Ragg. We merely wish to see Tobias first, so that the medical gentleman may see exactly his condition, and then if you will bring Minna Gray here I will speak to her, and, I hope, put her quite at her ease as regards what she has to do."

"Certainly, sir, certainly. Hold fast, and good comes at last."

The surgeon and the two gentlemen went to Tobias's chamber, and there they found him in the same lethargic condition that, with only occasional interruptions, he had continued in since he had been in the colonel's house. These interruptions consisted in moaning appeals for mercy, and at times the name of Todd would pass his lips, in accents which showed what a name of terror it was to him. The surgeon placed his hand upon Tobias's head.

"Tobias!" he said, "Tobias!"

A deep sigh was his answer.

"Tobias! Tobias!"

"Oh, God! God!" cried Tobias, feebly. "Spare me—I will tell nothing. Oh, spare me, Mr. Todd.—Repent now. There, there—the blood! What a crowd of dead men. Dead—dead—dead—all dead!"

"No better?" said the colonel.

"Not a bit. On the contrary, the longer he remains in this condition, the less chance there will be of his recovery. I shall lose hope, if this last experiment produces no good results. Let us go and speak to the young girl."

They all descended to the drawing-room, and Minna Gray was summoned. Colonel Jeffery took her kindly by the hand and led her to a seat, and then he said to her—

"Now, Miss Gray, remember that all here are friends to you and to Tobias, and that we all feel deeply for him and for you. You are very young, both of you, but that is no reason on earth why you should not love each other."

Minna looked up at him through her tears, as she said—

"Is he very—very ill?"

"He is indeed. We suspect—indeed, I may say we know, that his mind has received so severe a shock that, for a time, it is deranged; but we hope that, as that derangement, you understand, has not arisen from any disease, pleasant and agreeable impressions may restore him. What we want you to do is to speak to him as you, no doubt, have been in the habit of doing in happier times."

"Yes, yes, sir."

"I think you know exactly what we mean?"

"I do, sir—indeed I do."

"Oh, bless you, sir, she understands," said Mrs. Ragg. "A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, you know, gentlemen. Handsome is as handsome does—as I used to say to the late Mr. Ragg, who is naturally dead and gone, and accordingly buried in St. Martin's—"

"You can tell us that another time, madam," said the surgeon. "At present, you see we are rather busy. Now, Miss Gray, if you will have the goodness to come with me, we will see what can be done for our young

friend above stairs."

Poor Minna Gray! How her colour went and came like the sunlight of an April day, as she accompanied the three gentlemen and Mrs. Ragg up stairs to Tobias's chamber. How she trembled when they reached the landing; and what a faintness came over her when the door was opened, and she saw that dimly-lighted room.

"Courage," whispered Colonel Jeffery to her. "This is a holy errand you are upon."

"Yes, yes."

"Cut your coat according to your cloth," said Mrs. Ragg, who, provided she thought of a proverb, was not very particular with regard to its applicability to the circumstances under which she uttered it. "Keep your feet to the length of your sheet."

"Pray, madam," said the surgeon, who seemed to have quite a horror of Mrs. Ragg. "Pray, madam, oblige me by being silent."

"A still tongue makes a wise head."

"Good God, colonel! will you speak to her?"

"Hush, Mrs. Ragg!" said Colonel Jeffery. "Hush! You will perhaps be the means of spoiling this important effort for the recovery of your son if you are not perfectly quiet."

Thus admonished, Mrs. Ragg shrank into the background a little, and the colonel went to the window and let in a little more light. The surgeon conducted Minna Gray to the bed-side, and she looked upon the boy who had won her childish heart through a world of tears.

"It is—it is—Tobias!"

"Is he much altered?"

"Oh, yes; much—much. He—he used to look so happy. His—his face was like a piece of sunshine!"

She sank upon a chair that was by the bed-side, and sobbed.

"This will never do," said the surgeon.

"Wait—oh, wait a little," she whispered. "Only wait a little.—I shall be better soon."

The surgeon nodded; and then stepping back to the colonel and the captain, he said—

"This burst of grief must have its way, or it will mar all. We must have patience."

They all hid themselves behind the folds of the bed furniture, and Mrs. Ragg sat down in an obscure corner of the room, working her knee up and down, as though she were nursing an imaginary baby. Gradually the sobs of Minna Gray subsided, until all was still. She then gently took one of the thin wasted hands of poor Tobias in her own, and looked at it. Oh, how changed it was. She then bent over him, and looked in his face. What permeative lines of care were there, battling with rounded muscles of early youth! Then she summoned all her courage to speak. She placed her lips close to his ear, and in the soft sweet accents that had long before sank deep into his heart, she said—

"Tobias!—my Tobias!"

The boy started.

"Dear Tobias, it is I. Minna!"

He opened his eyes, which had been closed and seemingly cemented by tears.

"Tobias! Tobias, dear!"

A smile—a heavenly smile. It was the first that had played upon his lips since he set foot in the shop of Sweeney Todd, now broke like a sunbeam over his face.

"I am mad—mad!" he said, gently, "or that is the voice of my Minna."

"It is your Minna. It is—it is, Tobias; look at me."

He rose up in the bed—he cast one glance at the well-known and dearly remembered face, and then, with a gasping sob of joy, he clasped her in his arms.

"It's done," said the surgeon.

"Thank God!" said Colonel Jeffery.

Mrs. Ragg drew her breath so hard through her nose that she made a noise like some wild animal in the agonies of suffocation.

"You really know me, Tobias?"

"Know you, dear? Oh, why should I not know you, Minna? God bless you!"

"May He bless you, Tobias."

They wept together; Minna forgot that there was anybody in the world but herself and Tobias, and parting the long straggling masses of his hair from before his face, she kissed him.

"For my sake, Tobias, now you will take care of yourself, and recover quickly."

"Dear—dear Minna."

He seemed never tired of holding her hands and kissing them. Suddenly the surgeon stepped forward with a small vial in his hand.

"Now, Tobias," he said, "you are much better, but you must take this."

The look of surprise and consternation with which Tobias regarded him was beyond description. Then he glanced at the bedstead and the rich hangings, and he said—

"Oh, Minna, what is all this? Where am I? Is it a dream?"

"Give it to him," said the surgeon, handing the vial to Minna. She placed the neck of it to his lips.

"Drink, Tobias."

Had it been deadly poison she had offered him, Tobias would have taken it. The vial was drained. He looked in her face again with a smile.

"If this is indeed a dream, my Minna, may I never awaken—dear—dear—one—I—I—"

Tobias Restored To His Senses By Minna's Assistance.

Tobias Restored To His Senses By Minna's Assistance.

He fell back upon the pillow. The smile still lingered upon his face, but the narcotic which the surgeon had had administered to him had produced its effect, and the enfeebled Tobias fell into deep sleep. Minna Gray looked rather alarmed at this sudden falling off of Tobias from waking to sleeping, but the surgeon quieted her fears.

"All is right," he said. "He will awaken in some hours wonderfully refreshed, and I have the pleasure of now predicting his perfect cure."

"You do not know," said Colonel Jeffery, "what pleasure that assurance gives me."

"And me," said the captain.

Minna looked all that she thought, but she could not speak, and Mrs. Ragg, still kept up the mysterious noise she produced by hard breathing with her mouth close shut.

"Now, madam," said the surgeon to her, "our young friend must be left alone for some hours. It is now six o'clock, and I do not expect he will awaken until twelve. When he does so, I am very much mistaken if you do not all of you find him perfectly restored and composed, although very weak."

"I will take care to be at hand," said the colonel. "Miss Gray, perhaps you will call and see how he is to-morrow, and all I can say is, that you will be quite welcome to my house whenever you think proper, but let me impress upon you one thing."

"What is it, sir?"

"The absolute necessity of your keeping Tobias's place of abode and anything concerning him a most profound secret."

"I will do so."

"If you do not, you will not only endanger the cause of justice, but in all probability his life, for he has an enemy with great resources, and of the most unscrupulous disposition in the use of them: I say this much to you, because the least indiscretion might be fatal."

"I will guard the secret, sir, as I would guard his life."

"That will do—now come down stairs, and let us have a glass of wine to drink to the speedy restoration to perfect health of Tobias. Come, Rathbone, what do you think? Shall we be one too many yet for Todd?"

"I begin to think we shall."

"I feel certain of it. So soon as we see that Tobias is sufficiently well to make any statement, it will be necessary to send for Sir Richard Blunt."

"Certainly."

"And then I hope and trust that we shall get at something that will elucidate the mystery that is still attached to the fate of poor Thornhill."

"Ah, I fear he is gone!"

"Dead?"

"Yes. That fatal string of pearls has heralded him to death, I fear; but, perhaps we shall hear a something concerning that yet from Tobias."

They all sat down in the drawing-room, and with tearful pleasure Minna Gray drank a glass of wine to the health of Tobias, after which Mrs. Ragg saw her home again to Milford Lane, and no doubt all the road from this

colonel's house to there did not want for a prolific subject of conversation. How happy Minna felt when she put up to Heaven her simple prayer that night, previous to seeking repose.

CHAPTER XLVIII.
JOHANNA MAKES A NEW CONFIDANT.

We left the spectacle-maker and his family rather in a state of confusion. Big Ben the Beef-eater had had his revenge upon both Mrs. Oakley and the Saint, and it was a revenge that really did them no harm, so that in that respect it had turned out well. The Rev. Josiah Lupin did not return to the house, but Mrs. Oakley, in a terrible state of prostration from the effects of the sickness that had come over her, staggered again into the parlour. She looked at Mr. Oakley, as she said—

"If you were half a man you would take the life of that villain for treating me in the way he has; I have no doubt but he meant to take the life of the pious Mr. Lupin, and so add him to the list of martyrs."

"My dear," said the spectacle-maker, "if Mr. Lupin intrudes himself into my house, and any friend of mine turns him out, I am very much obliged to him."

"Perhaps you would be equally obliged to this monster, whom you call your friend, if he would turn me out?"

Mr. Oakley shook his head as he said—

"My dear, there are some burthens which can be got rid of, and some that must be borne."

"Come—come, Mother Oakley," said Ben. "Don't bear malice. You played me a trick the last time I came here, and now I have played you one. That's all. It wasn't in human nature not to do it, so don't bear malice."

Mrs. Oakley, if she had been in a condition to do so, no doubt would have carried on the war with Big Ben, but she decidedly was not, and after a shudder or two, which looked as though she thought the toad was beginning again to oppress her, she rose to leave the room.

"Mother," said Johanna, "it was not a real toad."

"But you are!" said Mrs. Oakley, sharply. "You have no more feeling for your mother than as if she were a brickbat."

Feeling now that at all events she had had the last word at somebody, Mrs. Oakley made a precipitate retreat, and sought the consolations and solitude of her own chamber. Mr. Oakley was about to make some speech, which he prefaced with a sigh, when some one coming into the shop called his attention, and he left Johanna and Big Ben the Beef-eater together in the parlour. The moment they were alone, Ben began shaking his head and making some very mysterious signs, which completely mystified Johanna. Indeed she began to be afraid that Ben's intellects were not quite right, although an ordinary observer might have very well supposed there was something the matter with his nether garments, for he pointed to them repeatedly, and shook his head at Johanna.

"What is the matter, cousin?" she said.

"Oh, dear!—oh, dear!—oh—oh—oh!"

"Are you ill?"

"No, but I only wonder as you ain't. Didn't I see you in Fleet-street with these here on?—oh!—oh!—not these here exactly, but another pair. These would be a trifle too large for you. Oh, dear-a-me! my heart bled all for to see such a young and delicate little puss as you a taking to wear the thingamies so soon."

Johanna now began to understand what Ben meant, namely, that he had seen her in Fleet-street disguised in male attire, with her young friend Arabella Wilmot.

"Oh, Ben," she said, "you must not think ill of me on that account."

"But—but," said Ben, rather hesitatingly, as if he were only putting a doubtful proposition, "wasn't it rather unusual?"

"Yes, Ben, but there were reasons why I put on such garments. Surely it was better to do so than—than—to—"

"Than to go without any?" said Ben.

"No—no, I did not say that—I mean it was better for me to forget a little of that maiden delicacy which—which—than to let him—"

She burst into tears.

"Holloa!" cried Ben, as he immediately folded her in an immense embrace, that went very near to smothering her. "Don't you cry, and you may wear what you like, and I'll come and help you to put 'em on. Come, come, there's a nice little dear, don't you cry. Lord bless you! you know how fond I am of you, and always was since you was a little tottering thing, and couldn't say my name right. Don't you cry. You shall wear 'em as often as you like, and I'll go behind you in the street, and if anybody only so much as says half a word to you, I'll be down upon 'em. Fetch 'em now and put 'em on, my dear."

Johanna must have laughed if her life had depended upon her gravity, for all that Ben said upon the subject was uttered in the sheer simplicity of a kind heart, and well she knew that in his rough way he doated on her, and thought there was not such another being in the whole world as she. And yet he looked upon her as a child, and the imperceptible flight of time had made no difference in Ben's ideas concerning Johanna. She was still to him the sweet little child he had so often dandled upon his knee, and brought fruit and sweetmeats to, when such things were great treasures. After a few moments he let her go, and Johanna was able to draw breath again.

"Ben," she said, "I will tell you all."

"All what?"

"How I came to put on—the—the—"

"Oh, these here—very good. Cut on, and let's know all the particulars. I suppose you felt cold, my dear, eh?"

"No—no."

"No? Well then, tell it quick, for I was always a mortal bad hand at guessing. Your father is fitting an old gentleman with a pair of spectacles, and he seems hard to please, so we shall have lots of time. Go on."

"Your good opinion is of such moment to me," said Johanna, "for I have very few to love me; now that you have seen me in such a disguise, I should feel unhappy if I did not tell why I wore it."

Ben lent the most attentive ear to what she said, and then Johanna briefly and distinctly told him all the story of Mark Ingestrie, and how he had, as she thought, mysteriously disappeared at the barber's shop in Fleet-street. It will be seen that she still clung to the idea that the Thornhill of the arrived ship was no other than her lover. Ben heard her all out with the most fixed attention. His mouth and eyes gradually opened wider and wider as she proceeded, partly from wonder at the whole affair, and partly from intense admiration at the way in which she told it, which he thought was better than any book he had ever read. When she had concluded, Ben again folded her in his arms, and she had to struggle terribly to get away.

"My dear child," he said, "you are a prodigy. Why, there's not an animal as ever I knew comes near you; and so the poor fellow had his throat cut in the barber's for his string of pearls?"

"I fear he was murdered."

"Not a doubt of it."

"You really think so, Ben?"

The tone of agony with which this question was put to him, and the look of utter desolation which accompanied it, alarmed Ben, and he hastily said—

"Come, come, I didn't mean that. No doubt something has happened; but it will be all right some day or another, you may depend. Oh, dear!—oh, dear! The idea of your going to watch the barber with some boy's clothes on!"

"Tell me what I can do, for my heart and brain are nearly distracted by my sufferings?"

Ben looked all round the room, and then up at the ceiling, as though he had a hope and expectation of finding some startling suggestion written legibly before his eyes somewhere. At length he spoke, saying—

"I tell you what, Johanna, my dear, whatever you do, don't you put on them things again. You leave it all to me."

"But what will you do?—what can you do, Ben?"

"Well, I don't know exactly; but I'll let you know when it's done."

"But do not run into any danger for my sake."

"Danger? danger? I should like to see the barber that would interfere with me. No, my dear, no; I'm too well used to all sorts of animals for that. I'll see what I can do, and let you know all about it to-morrow, and in the meantime, you stick to the petticoats, and don't be putting on those thingamies again. You leave it to me—will you now?"

"Until to-morrow?"

"Yes, I'll be here to-morrow about this time, my dear, and I hope I shall have some news for you. Well, I declare, it's just like a book, it is. You are quite a prodigy."

Ben would have treated Johanna to another of the suffocating embraces, but she contrived to elude him; and, as by this time the old gentleman in the shop was suited with a pair of spectacles, Mr. Oakley returned to the parlour. Johanna placed her finger upon her lips as an indication to Ben that he was to say nothing to her father of what had passed between them, for, although Mr. Oakley knew generally the story of his daughter's attachment to Mark Ingestrie, as the reader is aware, he knew

nothing of the expedition to Fleet-street in disguise. Ben, feeling that he had now an important secret to keep, shut his mouth hard, for fear it should escape, and looked so mysterious, that any one more sharp-sighted than the old spectacle-maker must have guessed that something very unusual was the matter. Mr. Oakley, however, had no suspicions; but as this state of things was very irksome to Ben, he soon rose to take his leave.

"I shall look in again to-morrow," he said, "Cousin Oakley."

"We shall be glad to see you," said Mr. Oakley.

"Yes," added Johanna, who felt it incumbent upon her to say something, "we shall be very glad to see you indeed."

"Ah," said her father, "you and Ben were always great friends."

"And we always shall be," said Ben. Then he thought that he would add something wonderfully clever, so as completely to ward off all suspicions of Oakley's, if he had any, and he added—"She ain't like some young creatures that think nothing of putting on what they shouldn't. Oh dear, no—not she. Bye, bye. I'll come to-morrow."

Ben was quite pleased when he got out of the house, for among the things that he (Ben) found it difficult to do, was to keep a secret.

"Well," he said, when he was fairly in the open air, "if I ain't rather nonplussed at all this. What shall I do?"

This was a question much easier asked than answered, as Ben found; but, however, he felt an irresistible desire to go and have a look at the shop of Sweeney Todd.

"I can easily," he said, "go to Fleet-street, and then, if I find myself late, I can take a boat at Blackfriars for the Tower-stairs, and after all get in to dinner comfortably enough."

With this conclusion, Ben set off at a good pace down Snow-hill, and was soon at the beginning of Fleet-street. He walked on until he came to Sweeney Todd's shop, and there he paused. Now we have previously

remarked that there was one great peculiarity in the shop-window of Todd, and that was that the articles in it were so well arranged that some one always was in the way of obtaining any view from the outside into the establishment. Todd was therefore secure against the dangers arising from peeping and prying. Big Ben placed himself close to the window, and made an attempt, by flattening his nose against the panes of glass, to peep in; but it was all in vain. He could not obtain the smallest glimpse into the inside.

"Confound it," he cried, "what a cunning sort of animal this is to be sure —he won't let one peep through the bars of his cage, that he won't."

Now Sweeney Todd became aware, by the additional darkness of his shop, that some one must be quite close to the window, and therefore, availing himself of a peep-hole that he had expressly for the purpose of reconnoitering the passing world without, he took a long look at Big Ben. It was some moments before Ben caught sight of a great eye in the window of Sweeney Todd glancing at him. This eye appeared as if it were set in the centre of a placard, which announced in glowing language the virtues of some condiment for the hair or the skin, and it had a most ferocious aspect. Big Ben looked fascinated and transfixed to the spot, and then he muttered to himself—

"Well, if that's his eye, it's a rum 'un. Howsomdever, it's no use staying outside: I'll pop in and get shaved, and then I shall be able to look about me. Who's afraid?"

As Ben turned round, he saw a plainly-attired man close to his elbow; but he took no notice of him, although from his close proximity to him it was quite impossible that the plain-looking man could have failed to overhear what Ben said. In another moment Big Ben was in Todd's shop.

"Shaved or dressed, sir?" said Todd.

"Shaved," said Ben, as he cast his eyes round the shop.

"Looking for anything, sir?" said Todd.

"Oh, no—nothing at all. Only a friend of mine, you see, said this was such a nice shop, you understand, to be shaved in."

"Was your friend finished off here, sir?"

"Well, I rather think he was."

"Pray sit down. Fine weather, sir, for the season. Now, pussy, my dear, get out of the way of the hot water." Todd was addressing an imaginary cat. "Are you fond of animals, sir? Lord bless me, I'm fond of all the world. God made us all, sir, from a creeping beetle to a beef-eater."

"Very likely," said Big Ben, as he seated himself in the barber's chair.

"And so," added Todd, as he mixed up a lather, and made the most horrible faces, "we ought to love each other in this world of care. How is your friend, sir, who was so kind as to recommend my shop?"

"I should like to know."

"What, is he in eternity? Dear me!"

"Well, I rather think he is."

"Was it the gentleman who was hung last Monday, sir?"

"Confound you, no. But there's somebody else who I think will be hung some Monday. I tell you what it is, Mr. Barber, my friend never got further than this infernal shop, so I'm come to enquire about him."

"What sort of man, sir?" said Todd, with the most imperturbable coolness.

"What kind of man?"

"Yes, sir. If you favour me with his description, perhaps I may be able to tell you something about him. By the bye, if you will excuse me for one moment, I'll bring you something that a gentleman left here one day."

"What is it?"

"I will satisfy you directly, sir, and I'm quite certain your mind will be at rest about your friend, sir, whoever he was. Remarkable weather, sir, for the time of year."

Todd had got only half way from the shop to the parlour, when the shop-door opened, and the plain-looking man walked in—the very same plain man who had stood so close to Big Ben at Todd's window.

"Shaved," he said.

Todd paused.

"If, sir, you will call again in a few minutes, or if you have any call to make and can conveniently look in as you come back—"

"No, I'll take a seat."

Todd And The Beefeater Have Some Words.

Todd And The Beefeater Have Some Words.

The plain-looking man sat down close to the door, and looked as calm and as unconcerned as any one possibly could. The look with which Todd regarded him for a moment, and only one moment, was truly horrible. He then quietly went into his back parlour. In a moment he entered with a common kid glove, and said to Ben—

"Did this belong to your friend?—a gentleman left it here one day."

Ben shook his head.

"I really don't know," he said. "Come, Mr. Barber, finish the shaving, for that gentleman is waiting."

Ben was duly shaved; while the plain-looking man sat quietly in the chair by the door, and when the operation was finished, Ben looked in Todd's face, and said, solemnly—

"A string of pearls."

"Sir," said Todd, without changing countenance in the least.

"A string of pearls.—Murder!"

"A what, sir?"

Ben look staggered. He well knew that if he had cut any one's throat for a string of pearls, that such words said to him would have driven him frantic, but when he saw no change in Todd's face, he begun to think that, after all, the accusation must be unfounded, and muttering to himself—

"It must be nothing but the child's fancy after all," he hastily threw down twopence and left the shop.

"Now, sir," said Todd, to the plain-looking man.

"Thank you."

The plain-looking man rose, and as he did so he seemed just to glance through the door into the street as it was opened by Ben. Immediately his face was full of smiles, as he cried—

"Ah, Jenkins, is that you? Ha, ha! I missed you this morning.—Excuse me, Mr. Barber, I'll look in again. My old friend Jenkins has just gone by."

With this, out he flew from Todd's shop like a shot, and was gone towards Temple Bar, before the barber could move or lay down the shaving cloth which he had in his hands all ready to tuck under his chin. Todd stood for a few moments in an attitude of irresolution. Then he spoke—

"What does all this mean?" he said. "Is there danger? Curses on them both, I would have—; but no matter, I must be wrong—very wrong. That string of pearls may yet destroy me.—Destroy! no—no—no. They must have yet more wit before they get the better of me, and yet how I calculated upon the destruction of that man. I must think—I must think."

Todd sat down in his own strong chair, and gave himself up to what is popularly denominated a brown study.

CHAPTER XLIX.
THE VAULTS OF ST. DUNSTAN'S.

A ponderous stone was raised in the flooring of St. Dunstan's church. The beadle, the churchwarden, and the workmen shrunk back—back—back, until they could get no further.

"Ain't it a *norrid* smell," said the beadle.

Then the plain-looking man who had been at Sweeney Todd's advanced. He was no other than Sir Richard Blunt, and whispering to the churchwarden, he said—

"If what I expect be found here, we cannot have too few witnesses to it. Let the workmen be dismissed."

"As you please, Sir Richard. Faugh! what an awful—fuff!—stench there is. I have no doubt they won't be sorry to get away. Here, my men, here's half-a-crown for you. Go and get something to drink and come back in an hour."

"Thank yer honour!" cried one of the men. "An' sure, by St. Patrick's bones, we want something to drink, for the stench in the church sticks in my blessed throat like a marrow bone, so it does."

"Get out," said the beadle; "I hates low people, and *hirish*. They thinks no more of beetles than nothink in the world."

The workmen retired, laughing; and when the church was clear of them, the churchwarden said to Sir Richard Blunt—

"Did you ever, Sir Richard, smell such a horrid charnel-house sort of stench as comes up from that opening in the floor of the old church?"

Sir Richard shook his head, and was about to say something, when the sound of a footstep upon the pavement of the church made him look round, and he saw a fat, pursy-looking individual approaching.

"Oh, it's Mr. Vickley, the overseer," said the beadle. "I hopes as yer is well, Mr. Vickley. Here's a horrid smell."

"God bless me!" cried the overseer, as with his fat finger and thumb he held his snub nose. "What's this? It's worse and worse."

"Yes, sir," said the beadle; "talking of the smell, we have let the cat out of the bag, I think."

"Good gracious! put her in again, then. It can't be a cat."

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Vickley, I only spoke *anatomically*. If you comes here, sir, you'll find that all the smell comes out of this here opening."

"What! An opening close to my pew! My family pew, where I every Sunday enjoy my repose—I mean my hopes of everlasting glory? Upon my life, I think it's a piece of—of d—d impudence to open the floor of the church, close to my pew. If there was to be anything of the sort done, couldn't it have been done somewhere among the free sittings, I should like to know?"

"Mr. Vickley," said Sir Richard, "pray be satisfied that I have sufficient authority for what I do here; and if I had thought it necessary to take up the flooring of your pew while you had been in it, I should have done it."

"And pray, sir," said Mr. Vickley, swelling himself out to as large a size as possible, and glancing at his watch chain, to see that all the seals hung upon the convexity of his paunch as usual—"who are you?"

"Oh, dear—oh, dear," said the beadle. "Conwulsions!—conwulsions! What a thing it is to see authorities a-going it at each other. Gentlemen—gentlemen. Conwulsions!—ain't there lots of poor people in the world?

Don't you be a-going it at each other."

"I am a magistrate," said Sir Richard.

"And I am an over—seer. Ah!"

"You may be an overseer or an underseer, if you like. I am going to search the vaults of St. Dunstan's."

The churchwarden now took the overseer aside, and after a while succeeded in calming down his irascibility.

"Oh, well—well," said Mr. Vickley. "Authorities is authorities; and if so be as the horrid smell in the church can be got rid of, I'm as willing as possible. It has often prevented me sleeping—I mean listening to the sermon. Your servant, sir—I shall, of course, be very happy to assist you."

The beadle wiped his face with his large yellow handkerchief as he said—

"Now this here is delightful and affecting, to see authorities agreeing together. Lord, why should authorities snap each other's noses off, when there's lots o' poor people as can be said anything to and done anything to, and they may snap themselves?"

"Well, well," added Mr. Vickley. "I am quite satisfied. Of course, if there's anything disagreeable to be done in a church, and it can be done among the free seats, it's all the better; and indeed, if the smell in St. Dunstan's could have been kept away from the respectable part of the congregation, I don't know that it would have mattered much."

"*Conwulsions!*" cried the beadle. "It wouldn't have mattered at all, gentlemen. But only think o' the bishop smelling it. Upon my life, gentlemen, I did think, when I saw the Right Rev. Father in God's nose a looking up and down, like a cat when she smells a bunch o' lights, and knowed as it was all owing to the smell in the church, I did think as I could have gone down through the floor, cocked hat and all, that I did. *Conwulsions*—that was a moment."

"It was," said the churchwarden.

"Mercy—mercy," said Mr. Vickley.

The beadle was so affected at the remembrance of what had happened at the confirmation, that he was forced to blow his nose with an energy that produced a trumpet-like sound in the empty church, and echoed again from nave to gallery. Sir Richard Blunt had let all the discourse go on without paying the least attention to it. He was quietly waiting for the foul vapours that arose from the vaults beneath the church to dissipate a little before he ventured upon exploring them. Now, however, he advanced and spoke.

"Gentlemen, I hope I shall be able to rid St. Dunstan's of the stench which for a long time has given it so unenviable a reputation."

"If you can do that," said the churchwarden, "you will delight the whole parish. It has been a puzzle to us all where the stench could come from."

"Where is the puzzle now?" said Sir Richard Blunt, as he pointed to the opening in the floor of the church, from whence issued like a steamy vapour such horrible exhalations.

"Why, certainly it must come from the vaults."

"But," said the overseer, "the parish books show that there has not been any one buried in any of the vaults directly beneath the church for thirty years."

"Then," said the beadle, "it's a very wrong thing of respectable parishioners—for, of course, them as has waults is respectable—to keep quiet for thirty years and then begin stinking like blazes. It's uncommon wrong—*conwulsions*!"

Sir Richard Blunt took a paper from his pocket and unfolded it.

"From this plan," he said, "that I have procured of the vaults of St. Dunstan's, it appears that the stone we have raised, and which was numbered thirty, discloses a stone staircase communicating with two passages, from which all the vaults can be reached. I propose searching them; and now, gentlemen, and you, Mr. Beadle, listen to me."

They all three looked at him with surprise as he took another letter from his pocket.

"Here," he said, "are a few words from the Secretary of State. Pray read them, Mr. Vickley."

The overseer read as follows—

"The Secretary of State presents his compliments to Sir Richard Blunt, and begs to say that as regards the affair at St. Dunstan's, Sir Richard is to consider himself armed with any extraordinary powers he may consider necessary."

"Now, gentlemen," added Sir Richard Blunt, "if you will descend with me into the vaults, all I require of you is the most profound secrecy with regard to what you may see there. Do you fully understand?"

"Yes," stammered Mr. Vickley, "but I rather think I—I would as soon not go."

"Then, sir, be silent regarding the going of others. Will you go, sir?" to the churchwarden.

"Why yes, I—I think I ought."

"I shall be obliged to go. I may feel the want of a witness. We will take you with us, Mr. Beadle, of course."

"Me—me? Conwulsions!"

"Yes—yes. You go, you know, *ex officio*."

"Ex, the deuce, I don't want to go. Oh conwulsions! conwulsions!"

"We cannot dispense with your services," said the churchwarden. "If you refuse to go, it will be my duty to lay your conduct before the vestry."

"Oh—oh—oh!"

"Get a torch," said Sir Richard Blunt, "and I will lower it down the opening in the floor. If the air is not so bad as to extinguish the light, it will not be too bad for us to breathe for a short space of time."

Most reluctantly, and with terrible misgivings of what might be the result of the frightful adventure into which he was about to be dragged, the beadle fetched a link from the vestry. It was lighted, and Sir Richard Blunt tying a string to it, let it down into the passage beneath the church. The light was not extinguished, but it burnt feebly and with but a wan and sickly lustre.

"It will do," said Sir Richard. "We can live in that place, although a protracted stay might be fatal. Follow me; I will go first, and I hope we shall not have our trouble only for our pains."

CHAPTER L.
THE DESCENT TO THE VAULTS.

Sir Richard commenced the descent.

"Come on," he said. "Come on."

He got down about half a dozen steps, but finding that no one followed him he paused, and called out—

"Remember that time is precious. Come on!"

"Why don't you go?" said the churchwarden to the beadle.

"What! Me go afore a blessed churchwarden? Conwulsions—no! I thinks and I hopes as I knows my place better."

"Well, but upon this occasion, if I don't mind it—"

"No—no, I could not. Conwulsions—no!"

"Ah!" said Sir Richard Blunt. "I see how it is; I shall have to do all this business alone, and a pretty report I shall have to make to the Secretary of State about the proceedings of the authorities of St. Dunstan's."

The churchwarden groaned.

"I'm a coming, Sir Richard—I'm a coming. Oh dear, I tell you what it is, Mr. Beadle, if you don't follow me, and close too, I'll have you dismissed as sure as eggs is eggs."

"Conwulsions! conwulsions! I'm a coming."

The churchwarden descended the stairs, and the beadle followed him. Down—down they went, guided by the dim light of the torch carried by Sir Richard, who had not waited for them after the last words he had spoken.

"Can you fetch your blessed breath, sir?" said the beadle.

"Hardly," said the churchwarden, gasping. "It is a dreadful place."

"Oh, yes—yes."

"Stop—Stop. Sir Richard—Sir Richard!"

There was no reply. The light from the torch grew more and more indistinct as Sir Richard Blunt increased his distance from them, and at length they were in profound darkness.

"I can't stand this," cried the churchwarden; and he faced about to ascend to the church again. In his effort to do so quickly, he stretched out his hand, and seized the beadle by the ancle, and as that personage was not quite so firm upon his legs as might be desired, the effort of this sudden assault was to upset him, and he rolled over upon the churchwarden, with a force that brought them both sprawling to the bottom of the little staircase together. Luckily they had not far to fall, for they had not been more than six or eight steps from the foot of the little flight. Terror and consternation for a few moments deprived each of them of the power of speech. The beadle, however, was the first to recover, and he in a stentorian voice called—

"Murder! Murder!"

Then the churchwarden joined in the cries, and they buffeted each other in vain efforts to rise, each impeding the other to a degree that rendered it a matter of impossibility for either of them to get to their feet. Mr. Vickley, who was waiting in the church above, with no small degree of anxiety, the report from below, heard these sounds of contention and calls for help with mingled horror. He at once made a rush to the door of

the church, and, no doubt, would have endangered the success of all Sir Richard Blunt's plans, if he had not been caught in the arms of a tall stout man upon the very threshold of the church door.

"Help! murder! Who are you?"

"Crotchet they calls me, and Crotchet's my name. London my birth place, is yourn the same? What's the row?"

"Call a constable. There's blue murder going on in the vaults below."

"The devil there is. Just you get in there, will you, and don't you stir for your life, old fellow."

So saying, Mr. Crotchet, who knew the importance of secrecy in the whole transaction, and who had been purposely awaiting for Sir Richard Blunt, thrust Vickley into a pew, and slammed the door of it shut. Down fell the overseer to the floor, paralysed with terror; and then Mr. Crotchet at once proceeded to the opening in the floor of the church, and descended without a moment's hesitation.

"Hilloa!" he cried, as he alighted at the bottom of the stairs upon the churchwarden's back. "Hilloa, Sir Richard, where are you?"

"Here," said a voice, and with the torch nearly extinguished, Sir Richard Blunt made his appearance from the passage. "Who is there?"

"Crotchet, it is."

"Indeed. Why, what brought you here?"

"What a row."

"Why—why, what's all this? You are standing upon somebody. Why bless my heart it's—"

Out went the torch.

"Fire!—help!—murder!" shouted the beadle, "I'm being suffocated. Oh, conwulsions! Here's a death for a beadle. Murder! robbery. Fire—oh—oh—oh."

The churchwarden groaned awfully.

"Ascend, and get a light," said Sir Richard. "Quick, Crotchet, quick! God only knows what is the matter with all these people."

Both Crotchet and Sir Richard Blunt scrambled over the bodies of the churchwarden and the beadle, and soon reached the church. The churchwarden made a desperate effort, and, shaking himself free of the beadle, he ascended likewise, and rolled into a pew, upon the floor of which he sat, looking a little deranged.

"If you don't come up," said Sir Richard Blunt, directing his voice down the staircase, "we will replace the stone, and you may bid adieu to the world."

"Conwulsions!" roared the beadle. "Oh, don't—conwulsions!"

Up he tumbled, with the most marvellous celerity, and rolled into the church, never stopping until he was brought up by the steps in front of the communion-table, and there he lay, panting and glaring around him, having left his cocked hat in the regions below. Sir Richard Blunt looked ghastly pale, which Crotchet observing, induced him to take a small flask from his pocket, filled with choice brandy, which he handed to his chief.

"Thank you," said Sir Richard.

The magistrate took a draught, and then he handed it to the churchwarden, as he said—

"I'll fill it again."

"All's right."

The churchwarden took a pull at the brandy, and then the beadle was allowed to finish it. They were both wonderfully recovered.

"Oh, Sir Richard," said the churchwarden, "what have you seen?"

"Nothing particular."

"Indeed!"

"No. You can have the stone replaced as soon as you like, over the opening to the vaults."

"And you have seen nothing?" said the beadle.

"Nothing to speak of. If you have any doubts or any curiosity, you can easily satisfy yourself. There's the opening. Pray descend. You see I have escaped, so it cannot be very dangerous to do so. I will not myself go again, but I will wait for either of you, if you please. Now, gentlemen, go, and you will be able to make your own discoveries."

"Me?" cried the beadle. "Me? Oh, conwulsions! I thinks I sees me."

"Not I," said the churchwarden. "Cover it up—cover it up. I don't want to go down. I would not do so for a thousand pounds."

A covert smile was upon the lips of Sir Richard Blunt as he heard this, and he added—

"Very well; I have no objection, of course, to its being at once covered up; and I think the least that is said about it, will be the better."

"No doubt of that," said the churchwarden.

"Conwulsions! yes," said the beadle. "If I was only quite sure as all my ribs was whole, I shouldn't mind; but somebody stood a-top of me for a good quarter of an hour, I'm sure."

Some of the workmen now began to arrive, and Sir Richard Blunt pointed to them, as he said to the churchwarden—

"Then the stone can be replaced without any difficulty, now; and, sir, let me again caution you to say nothing about what has passed here to-day."

"Not a word—not a word. If you fancy somebody stood upon your ribs, Mr. Beadle, I am quite sure somebody did upon mine."

The workmen were now directed to replace the stone in its former position; and when that was completely done, and some mortar pressed into the crevices, Sir Richard Blunt gave a signal to Crotchet to follow him, and they both left the church together.

"Now, Crotchet, understand me."

"I'll try," said Crotchet.

"No one, for the future, is to be shaved in Sweeney Todd's shop alone."

"Alone?"

"Yes. You will associate with King, Morgan, and Godfrey; I will stand all necessary expenses, and one or the other of you will always follow whoever goes into the shop, and there wait until he comes out again. Make what excuses you like. Manage it how you will; but only remember, Todd is never again to have a customer all to himself."

"Humph!"

"Why do you say humph?"

"Oh, nothing partickler; only hadn't we better grab him at once?"

"No; he has an accomplice or accomplices, and their discovery is most important. I don't like to do things by halves, Crotchet; and so long as I know that no mischief will result from a little delay, and it will not, if you obey my instructions, I think it better to wait."

"Very good."

"Go at once, then, and get your brother officers, and remember that nothing is to withdraw your and their attention from this piece of business."

"All's right. You know, Sir Richard, you have only to say what's to be done, and it's as good as done. Todd may shave now as many people as he likes, but I don't think he'll polish 'em off in his old way quite so easy."

"That's right. Good day."

"When shall we see you, Sir Richard?" "About sunset."

By the time this little conversation was over, Sir Richard Blunt and Crotchet had got through Temple Bar, and then they parted, Crotchet taking his way back to Fleet Street, and Sir Richard Blunt walking hastily to Downing Street. When he got there he entered the official residence of the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and being well known to the clerk, he was at once conducted into a little room carefully hung

round with crimson cloth, so as to deaden the sound of any voices that might be raised in it. In the course of a few minutes a small door was opened, and a shabby looking man entered, with a hesitating expression upon his face.

"Ah, Sir Richard Blunt," he said, "is that you?"

"Yes, your lordship, and if you are disengaged for a few minutes, I have something to communicate."

"Ah, some new plot. Confound those Jacobin rascals!"

"No, my lord, the affair is quite domestic and social. It has no shade of politics about it."

The look of interest which the face of the secretary had assumed was gone in a moment, but still he could not very well refuse now to hear what Sir Richard Blunt had to say, and the conference lasted a quarter of an hour. At its termination, as Sir Richard was leaving the room, the secretary said—

"Oh, yes, of course, take full discretionary powers, and the Home-office will pay all expenses. I never heard of such a thing in all my life."

"Nor I, my lord."

"It's really horrible."

"It is even so far as we know already, and yet I think there is much to learn. I shall, of course, communicate to your lordship anything that transpires."

"Certainly—certainly. Good day."

Sir Richard Blunt left the Secretary of State, and proceeded to his own residence, and while he is there, making some alteration in his dress, we may as well take a glance at Crotchet, and see what that energetic but somewhat eccentric individual is about. After parting with Sir Richard Blunt at Temple Bar, he walked up Fleet Street, upon Sweeney Todd's side of the way, until he overtook a man with a pair of spectacles on, and a stoop in his gait, as though age had crept upon him.

"King," said Crotchet.

"All right," said the spectacled old gentleman in a firm voice. "What's the news?"

"A long job, I think. Where's Morgan?"

"On the other side of the way."

"Well, just listen to me as we walk along, and if you see him, beckon him over to us."

As they walked along Crotchet told King what were the orders of Sir Richard Blunt, and they were soon joined by Morgan. The other officer, Godfrey, who had been mentioned by the magistrate, was sent for.

"Now," said Crotchet, "here we are, four of us, and so you see we can take it two and two for four hours at a stretch as long as this confounded barber's shop keeps open."

"But," said Morgan, "he will suspect something."

"Well, we can't help that. It's quite clear he smugs the people, and all we have got to do is to prevent him smugging any more of 'em you see."

"Well, well, we must do the best we can."

"Exactly; so now keep a bright look out, and hang it all, we have been in enough rum adventures to be able to get the better of a rascally barber, I should think. Look out—look out; there's somebody going in now."

CHAPTER LI.
JOHANNA RUSHES TO HER DESTINY.

Johanna had enough confidants now. Her father—Colonel Jeffery—Big Ben—and Arabella Wilmot, all knew

"The sad story of her love."

It will be a hard case if, among so many councillors, she hits upon the worst—a most truly hazardous course of proceeding; but then it is a fault of the young to mistake daring for ability, and to fancy that that course of proceeding which involves the most personal risk is necessarily the most likely to be successful. Colonel Jeffery was, of all Johanna Oakley's advisers, the one who was most likely to advise her well, but unfortunately he had told her that he loved her, and from that time, with an instinctive delicacy of feeling which no one could have to greater perfection than Johanna, she had shunned him. And yet the reader, who knows the colonel well, knows that, quite irrespective of the attachment that had sprung up in his bosom for the beautiful and heart-stricken girl, he would have played the part of a sincere friend to her and stood manfully between her and all danger. But it was not to be. From the moment that he had breathed to her the secret of his attachment, a barrier was, in her imagination, raised between them. Her father evidently was not one who could or who would advise anything at all energetic; and as for Big Ben, the conversation she had had with him upon the subject had quite been sufficient to convince her that to take him out of the ordinary routine of his thoughts and habits was thoroughly to bewilder him, and that he was as little calculated to plot

and to plan in any emergency as a child. She would indeed have trembled at the result of the confidential communication to Big Ben, if she had been aware of the frightfully imprudent manner in which he had thrown himself into communication and collision with Todd, the consequences of which glaring act of indiscretion he was only saved from by Sir Richard Blunt entering the shop, and remaining there until he (Ben) was shaved. Under all these circumstances, then, Johanna found herself thrown back upon her old friend Arabella Wilmot. Now, Arabella was the worst adviser of all, for the romantic notions she had received from her novel reading, imparted so strong a tone to her character, that she might be said in imagination to live in a world of the mind. It was, as the reader will recollect, to Arabella Wilmot that Johanna owed the idea of going to Todd in boy's apparel—a measure fraught with frightful danger, and yet, to the fancy of the young girl, fascinating upon that very account, because it had the appearance as though she were doing something really serious for Mark Ingestrie. To Arabella, then, Johanna went, after Ben had left her, and finding her young friend within, she told her all that had occurred since they last met.

"What shall I do?" she said. "I tell my tale of woe, and people look kind upon me, but no one helps me."

"Oh, Johanna, can you say that of me?"

"No, no. Not of you, Arabella, for you see I have come to you again; but of all others, I can and may say it."

"Comfort yourself, my dear Johanna. Comfort yourself, my dear friend. Come, now—you will make me weep too, if I see those tears."

"What shall I do?—what shall I do?"

"There, now, I am putting on my things; and as you are dressed, we will go out for a walk, and as we go along we can talk of the affair, and you will find your spirits improve by exercise. Come, my dear Johanna. Don't you give way so."

"I cannot help it. Let us go."

"We will walk round St. Paul's Churchyard."

"No—no. To Fleet Street—to Fleet Street!"

"Why would you wish to add to your sorrows, by again looking upon that shop?"

"I do not know, I cannot tell you; but a horrible species of fascination draws me there, and if I come from home, I seem as though I were drawn from all other places towards that one by an irresistible attraction. It seems as though the blood of Mark Ingestrie called aloud to me to revenge his murder, by bringing the perpetrators of it to justice. Oh, my friend—my Arabella, I think I shall go mad."

Johanna sunk upon her knees by a chair, and hid her fair face in her hands, as she trembled with excess of emotion. Arabella Wilmot began to be really alarmed at the consequences of her friend's excited and overwrought feelings.

"Oh, Johanna—Johanna!" she cried, "cheer up. You shall go when you please, so that you will not give way to this sorrow. You do not know how much you terrify me. Rise—rise, I implore you. We will go to Fleet Street, since such is your wish."

After a time, Johanna recovered from the burst of emotion that had taken such certain possession of her, and she was able to speak more calmly and composedly to her friend than she had yet done during that visit. The tears she had shed, and the show of feeling that had crept over her, had been a great relief in reality.

"Can you pardon me for thus tormenting you with my grief?" said Johanna.

"Do not talk so. Rather wonder how I should pardon you if you tell your griefs elsewhere. To whom should you bring them but to the bosom of one who, however she may err in judgment regarding you, cannot err in feeling."

Johanna could only press her friend's hand in her own, and look the gratitude which she had not the language to give utterance to. It being then settled that they were to go to Fleet Street, it next became a matter of rather grave debate between them whether they were to go as they were, or Johanna was to again equip herself in the disguise of a boy.

"This is merely a visit of observation, Johanna; I will go as I am."

"Very well, dear."

They accordingly set out, and as the distance from the house of Arabella Wilmot's father was but short to the shop of Sweeney Todd, they soon caught sight of the projecting pole that was his sign.

"Now be satisfied," said Arabella, "by passing twice; once up Fleet Street, and once down it."

"I will," said Johanna.

Todd's shop was closed as usual. There was never an open door to that establishment, so that it was, after all, but a barren satisfaction for poor Johanna to pass the place where her imagination, strengthened by many circumstantial pieces of evidence, told her Mark Ingestrie had met with his death; still, as she had said to Arabella before starting, a horrible sort of fascination drew her to the spot, and she could not resist the fearful attraction that the outside of Todd's shop had for her. They passed rather rapidly, for Arabella Wilmot did not wish Johanna to pause, for fear she should be unable to combat her feelings, and make some sort of exhibition of them in the open street.

"Are you content, Johanna?" she said. "Must we pass again?"

"Oh, yes—yes. Again and again; I can almost fancy that by continued looking at that place I could see what has been the fate of Mark."

"But this is imagination and folly."

"It may be so, but when the realities of life have become so hideously full of horrors, one may be excused for seeking some consolation from the fairy cave. Arabella, let us turn again."

They had got as far as Temple Bar, when they again turned, and this time Johanna would not pass the shop so abruptly as she had done before, and any one, to see the marked interest with which she paused at the window, would have imagined that she must have some lover there whom she could see, notwithstanding the interior of the shop was so completely impervious to all ordinary gazers.

"There is nothing to see," said Arabella.

"No. But yet—ha!—look—look!"

Johanna pointed to one particular spot of the window, and there was the eye of Sweeney Todd glaring upon them.

"We are observed," whispered Arabella; "it will be much better to leave the window at once. Come away—oh, come away, Johanna."

"Not yet—not yet. Oh, if I could look well at that man's face, I think I ought to be able to judge if he were likely to be the murderer of Mark Ingestrie."

Todd came to his door.

"Good God, he is here!" said Arabella. "Come away. Come!"

"Never. No! Perhaps this is providential. I will, I must look at this man, happen what may."

Todd glared at the two young girls like some ogre intent upon their destruction, and as Johanna looked at him, a painter who loved contrast, might have indeed found a study, from the wonderful difference between those two human countenances. They neither spoke for some few moments, and it was reserved for Todd to break the silence.

"What do you want here?" he cried, in a hoarse rough voice. "Be off with you. What do you mean by knocking at the window of an honest tradesman? I don't want to have anything to say to such as you."

"He—he did it!" gasped Johanna.

"Did what?" said Todd, advancing in a menacing attitude, while his face assumed a most diabolical expression of concealed hatred. "Did what?"

"Stop him! Stop him!" cried a voice from the other side of the street. "Stop Pison, he's given me the slip, and I'm blessed if he won't pitch into that ere barber. Stop him. Pison! Pison! Come here, boy. Come here! Oh, lor, he's nabbed him. I knew'd he would, as sure as a horse's hind leg ain't a gammon o' bacon. My eyes, won't there be a row—he's nabbed the barber, like ninepence."

Before the ostler at the Bullfinch, for it was from his lips this speech came, could get one half of it uttered, the dog—who is known to the readers by the name of Hector, as well as his new name of Pison—dashed over the road, apparently infuriated at the sight of Todd, and rushing upon him, seized him with his teeth. Todd gave a howl of rage and pain, and fell to the ground. The whole street was in an uproar in a moment, but the ostler rushing over the way, seized the dog by the throat, and made him release Todd, who crawled upon all fours into his own shop. In another moment he rushed out with a razor in his hand.

Hector's Attack On Sweeney Todd.

Hector's Attack On Sweeney Todd.

"Where's the dog?" he cried. "Where's the fiend in the shape of a dog?"

"Hold hard!" said the ostler, who held Hector between his knees. "Hold hard. I have got him, old chap."

"Get out of the way. I'll have his life."

"No you won't."

"Humph!" cried a butcher's boy who was passing. "Why that's the same dog as said the barber had done for his master, and collected never such a lot of halfpence in his hat to pay the expenses of burying of him."

"You villain!" cried Todd.

"Go to blazes!" said the boy. "Who killed the dog's master? Ah, ah! Who did it? Ah, ah!"

The people began to laugh.

"I insist upon killing that dog!" cried Todd.

"Do you?" said the ostler; "now, this here dog is a partickler friend of mine, so you see I can't have it done. What do you say to that now, old stick-in-the-mud? If you walk into him, you must walk through me first. Only just put down that razor, and I'll give you such a wolloping, big as you are, that you'll recollect for some time."

"Down with the razor! Down with the razor!" cried the mob, who was now every moment increasing.

Johanna stood like one transfixed for a few moments in the middle of all this tumult, and then she said with a shudder—

"What ought I to do?"

"Come away at once, I implore you," said Arabella Wilmot. "Come away, I implore you, Johanna, for my sake as well as for your own. You have already done all that can be done. Oh, Johanna, are you distracted?"

"No—no. I will come—I will come."

They hastily left the spot and hurried away in the direction of Ludgate Hill, but the confusion at the shop door of the barber did not terminate for some time. The people took the part of the dog and his new master, and it was in vain that Sweeney Todd exhibited his rent garments to show where he had been attacked by the animal. Shouts of laughter and various satirical allusions to his beauty were the only response. Suddenly, without a word, Todd then gave up the contest and retired into his shop, upon which the ostler conveyed Pison over the way and shut him up in one of the stables of the Bullfinch. Todd, it is true, retired to his shop with an appearance of equanimity, but it was like most appearances in this world—rather deceitful. The moment the door was closed between him and observation he ground his teeth together and positively howled with rage.

"The time will come—the time will come," he said, "when I shall have the joy of seeing Fleet Street in a blaze, and of hearing the shrieks of those who are frying in the flames. Oh, that I could with one torch ignite London, and sweep it and all its inhabitants from the face of the earth. Oh, that all those who are now without my shop had but one throat. Ha! ha! how I would cut it."

He caught up a razor as he spoke, and threw himself into a ferocious attitude at the moment that the door opened, and a gentleman neatly dressed looked in, saying—

"Do you dress artificial hair?"

CHAPTER LII.
TODD'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

"Yes," said Todd, as he commenced stropping the razor upon his hand as though nothing at all was the matter. "I do anything in an honest and religious sort of way for a living in these bad times."

"Oh, very well. A gentleman is ill in bed and wants his peruke properly dressed, as he has an important visit to make. Can you come to his house?"

"Yes, of course. But can't the peruke be brought here, sir?"

"Yes. But he wants a shave as well, and although he can go in a sedan chair to pay his visit, he is too ill to come to your shop."

Todd looked a little suspicious, but only a little, and then he said—

"It's an awkward thing that I have no boy at present, but I must get one—I must get one, and in the meantime, when I am called out I have no resource but to shut up my shop."

At this moment a stout man came in, saying—

"Shaved—oh, you are busy. I can wait, Mr. Todd—I can wait," and down he sat.

Todd looked at the new-comer with a strange sort of scowl, as he said—

"My friend, have not I seen you here before, or somewhere else?"

"Very likely," said the man.

"Humph, I am busy and cannot shave you just now, as I have to go out with this gentleman."

"Very well, I can wait here and amuse myself until you come back."

Todd fairly staggered for a moment, and then he said—

"Wait here—in my shop—and amuse yourself until I come back? No, sir, I don't suffer any one. But it don't matter. Ha! ha! Come in, I am ready to attend you. But stop, are you in a very great hurry for two minutes, sir?"

"Oh, dear no, not for two minutes."

"Then it will only just take me that time to polish off this gentleman; and if, you will give the address I am to come to, I will be with you almost as soon, sir, as you can get home, I assure you."

"Oh, dear no," cried the stranger, who had come in to be shaved, suddenly starting up, "I really could not think of such a thing. I will call again."

"It's only in Norfolk Street," said the applicant for the dressing of the artificial hair, "and two minutes can't make any difference to my friend, at all."

"Do you think," said the other, "that I would really interrupt business in this way? No, may I perish if I would do anything so unhandsome—not I. I will look in again, Mr. Todd, you may depend, when you are not going out. I shall be passing again, I know, in the course of the day. Pray attend to this gentleman's orders, I beg of you."

So saying, the shaving customer bounced out of the shop without another word; and as he crossed the threshold, he gave a wink to Crotchet, who was close at hand, and when that gentleman followed him, he said—

"Crotchet, Todd very nearly got me into a line. He was going out with the person we saw go to the shop, but I got away, or else, as he said, he would have polished me off."

"Not a doubt of it, in this here world, Foster," said Crotchet. "Ah, he's a rum 'un, he is. We haven't come across sich a one as he for one while, and it will be a jolly lot o' Sundays afore we meets with sich another."

"It will, indeed. Is Fletcher keeping an eye on the shop?"

"Oh, yes, right as a trivet. He's there, and so is Godfrey."

While this brief conversation was going on between the officers who had been left to watch Sweeney Todd's shop, that individual himself accompanied the customer, whom he had been conversing with, to Norfolk Street, Strand. The well-dressed personage stopped at a good-looking house, and said—

"Mr. Mundell only lodges here for the present. His state of mind, in consequence of a heavy loss he has sustained, would not permit him to stay in his own house at Kensington."

"Mr. Mundell?" said Todd.

"Yes. That is the gentleman you are to shave and dress."

"May I presume to ask, sir, what he is?"

"Oh, he is a—a—kind of merchant, you understand, and makes what use of his money he thinks proper."

"The same!" gasped Todd.

The door of the house was opened, and there was no retreat, although, at the moment, Todd felt as though he would much rather not shave and dress the man of whom he had procured the £8,000 upon the string of pearls; but to show any hesitation now might beget enquiry and enquiry might be awkward, so summoning all his natural audacity to his aid, Todd followed his guide into the house. He was a little puzzled to know who this person could be, until a woman made her appearance from one of the rooms upon the ground floor, and cried—

"There now, go out, do. We don't want you any more; you have got your pocket money, so be off with you, and don't let me see your face again till night."

"No, my dear," said the well-dressed personage. "Certainly not. This is the barber."

"Good God, Blisset, do you think I am blind, that I can't see the barber. Will you go? The captain is waiting for me to pour out his coffee, and attend to his other concerns, which nobody knows better than you, and yet you will be perpetually in the way."

"No, my dear. I—I only—"

"Hoity toity, are we going to have a disturbance, Mr. B? Recollect, sir, that I dress you well and give you money, and expect you to make yourself agreeable while I attend to the gentlemen lodgers, so be off with you; I'm sure, of all the troublesome husbands for a woman to have, you are about the worst, for you have neither the spirit to act like a man, nor the sense to keep out of the way."

"Ha!" said Todd.

Both the lodging-house keeper and his wife started at the odd sound.

"What was that?" said the woman.

"Only me, madam," said Todd, "I laughed slightly at that blue-bottle walking on the ceiling, that's all."

"What a laugh," said Blisset, as he left the house; and then the lady of the mansion turning to Todd, said—

"You are to attend to Mr. Mundell, poor man. You will find him in the front room on the second floor, poor man."

"Is he ill, madam?"

"Oh, I don't know, I rather think he's grizzling about some of his money, that's all, but it don't matter one way or the other. They say he is as rich as a Jew, and I'll take good care he pays enough here."

"Mrs. B—Mrs. B," cried a voice from the parlour.

"Yes, captain, I'm coming.—I'm coming, captain."

The lady bounced into the breakfast-parlour and closed the door, leaving Todd to find his way up stairs as he best could. After a hideous chuckle at the thought of Mr. Blisset's singular position in society, he commenced ascending the stairs. He accomplished the first flight without meeting with any one, but upon the second he encountered a servant girl with a pail, and Todd gave her such a hideous glance, accompanied by such a frightful contortion of his visage, that down went the pail, and the girl flew up stairs again, and locked herself in one of the attics. Without waiting to ascertain what effect the descent of the pail might have upon the nerves of the captain and the landlady, Todd pursued his course to the room whither he had been directed, and tapped at the door.

"Come in," said a meek, tremulous voice. "Come in."

Todd opened the door, and stood in the presence of the man over whose long tried skill and habitual cunning he had obtained such a triumph in the affair of the pearls at Mundell Villa. John Mundell now, though, was far from looking like the John Mundell of the villa. He sat by the fire, wrapped up in a flannel dressing-gown, with a beard of portentous length. His cheeks had fallen in. His brow was corrugated by premature wrinkles, and the corners of his mouth were drawn down as though a look of mental distress had become quite a thing of habit with him now.

"Who are you?" he growled out, as Todd came into the room, and with a show of carefulness closed the door after him. "Who are you, eh?"

"Come to shave you, sir, and dress your hair."

"Ah!" cried Mundell, as he gave a start. "Where have I heard that voice before? Why does it put me in mind of my loss? My £8000! My money—my money. Am I to lose another £8000? That will make £16,000. Oh, dear. Oh, dear. Oh dear! Who are you? Speak, friend. Who are you?"

"Only a barber, sir," said Todd, "come to shave you, and dress your hair. Ain't you well, sir? Shall I call again?"

"No—no—no! My losses distracts me. Only the barber? Ah, yes to be sure—only the barber. I must go to court, and ask for the duke of something. Good God, yes! I will see all the dukes, until I find out my duke. He who had my £8000, and has left me so poor and so wretched. Oh, dear! Oh, dear, my money—my hard-earned money. Oh, gracious, if I were to lose another £8000, I should go mad—mad—mad!"

"Shall I begin, sir?" said Todd.

"Begin? Begin what? Oh, yes, my hair; and I must be shaved too, or they won't let me in at all. I will have the pearls or my money. I will see all the dukes, and pounce upon *my* duke. Oh, yes, I will have the pearls or the money."

"Pearls, sir?" said Todd, as he began to arrange the shaving apparatus he had brought with him. "Did you say pearls?"

"Bah! what do you know about pearls, who, I dare say, never saw one. Bah! You—a poor beggarly barber. But I will have them back, or my money. I will raise London, but I will find them. I will see the queen herself, and know what duke she gave the pearls to, and then I will find him and have my money."

"Now, sir. A little this way." "Oh, dear—oh, dear! What do you charge?"

"Anything you please, sir. When I come to a gentleman, I always leave it to his generosity to pay me what he pleases."

"Ah! more expense. More expense. That means that I am to pay for the service done me, and something else besides for the sake of a compliment upon my liberality. But I ain't liberal. I won't be generous. Where's my money, my pearls; and now to go to all sorts of expense to go to court, and see dukes. Oh, the devil. Eh? Eh?"

"Sir?"

"Stop. What an odd thing. Why, you are very—very—"

"Very what, sir?" said Todd, making a hideous face.

"Like the duke, or my fancy leads me astray. Wait a bit. Don't move."

Mundell placed his hands over his eyes for a moment, and then suddenly withdrawing them he looked at Todd again.

"Yes, you are like the duke. How came you to be like a duke, the villain. Oh, if I could but see my pearls."

"What duke, sir?"

"I would give £500—no, I mean £100, that is £50, to know what duke," screamed Mundell with vehemence. Then suddenly lapsing into quietness, he added—"Shave me. Shave me, I will go to court, and St. James's shall ring again with the story of my pearls. Lost! lost! lost! Did he abscond from his wife with them, or was he murdered? I wonder? I wonder?—£8000 gone all at once. I might have borne such a loss by degrees, but d—n it—"

"Really, sir, if you will go on talking about pearls and dukes, the shaving brush will go into your mouth, and there's no such thing as avoiding it."

"Confound you. Go on. Shave me and have done with it. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

John Mundell now contented himself by uttering drawn sighs, with now and then the accompaniment of a hideous groan, while Todd lathered his face with great affected care. The sighs and the groans both, however, ceased soon, and Todd became aware that the eyes of John Mundell were fixed upon him with a steady stare. No doubt, the usurer was recalling bit by bit to his memory the features of the sham duke, and comparing them with Todd's. To be sure, upon the occasion of his visit to Mundell Villa, Todd had taken every precaution to disguise his features; but then it must be admitted that the features of the barber were rather peculiar, and that John Mundell was professionally a more than ordinary keen observer, and thus it was that, as Todd lathered away, he became more and more impressed by the fact that there was a startling resemblance between Todd and the nobleman who had borrowed £8000 upon the string of pearls.

"What's your name?" he said.

"Todd."

"Humph! a well-to-do man?"

"Poor as Job."

"How very like you are to a great man. Do you ever go to court? I think—I am sure I have seen you somewhere."

"Very likely," said Todd, "for I often go there."

"What, to court?"

"Nay, sir, not to court, but somewhere. Will you have the whiskers left just as they are, or taken off entirely, sir?"

Tap! tap! came at the chamber door, and a boy peeped in, saying—

"Please, sir, the tailor has brought the things."

CHAPTER LIII.
THE MURDER OF THE USURER.

"Come in! Come in! More expense. More losses. As if an honest man, who only does what he can with his own, could not come to the court with a hope of meeting with a civil reception, unless he were decked out like a buffoon. Come in. Well, who are you?"

"Augustus Snipes, sir, at your service. Brought home the clothes, sir. The full dress suit you were so good as to order to be ready to-day, sir."

"Oh, you are a tailor?"

"Oh, dear no, sir. We are not tailors now a days. We are artists."

"Curse you, whatever you are. I don't care. Some artist I'm afraid has done me out of £8000. Oh, dear. Put down the things. What do they come to?"

"Eighteen pounds ten shillings and threepence, sir."

John Mundell gave a deep groan, and the tailor brushed past Todd to place the clothes upon a side table. As he returned he caught sight of Todd's face, and in an instant his face lighting up, he cried—

"Ah! how do? How do?"

"Eh!" said Todd.

"How did the Pompadour coloured coat and the velvet smalls do, eh?—Fit well? Lord, what a rum start for a barber to have a suit of clothes fit for a duke."

"Duke!" cried Mundell.

Todd lifted one of his huge feet and gave the "artist" a kick that sent him sprawling to the door of the room.

"That," he said, "will teach you to make game of a poor man with a large family, you scoundrel. What, you won't go, won't you? The—"

The artist shot out at the door like lightning, and flew down the stairs as though the devil himself was at his heels. Todd carefully closed the door again, and fastened it by a little bolt that was upon it. A strange expression was upon the countenance of John Mundell. His face looked perfectly convulsed, and he slowly rose from his chair. Todd placed one of his huge hands upon his breast and pushed him back again.

"What's the matter?" said Todd.

"He—he—knows you."

"Well."

"The Pompadour coloured coat! Ah, I recollect the Pompadour coloured coat, too. I thought I knew your face. There was a something, too, about your voice that haunted me like the remembrance of a dream. You—you—are—"

"What?"

"Help—help! Tell me if I be mad, or if you are a duke in the disguise of a barber, or a barber in the likeness of a duke. Ah, that Pompadour coloured coat, it sticks—sticks in my throat."

"I wish it did," growled Todd. "What do you mean, Mr. Mundell?—Pray express yourself. What do you mean by those incoherent expressions?"

"Are you human?"

"Dear me, I hope so. Really, sir, you look quite wild."

"Stop—stop—let me think—the face—the voice—the Pompadour coat—the costume fit for a duke. It must be so.—Man or devil, I will grapple with you, for you have got my pearls and my money. My £8000—my gold that I have lived, that I have toiled for—that I have schemed, and

cheated to keep up—that I have shut my eyes to all sights for—and my heart to all tender emotions. You have my money, and I will denounce you!"

"Stop," said Todd.

The usurer paused in what he was saying, but he still glared at Todd fiercely, and his eyes protruded from their orbits, while the muscles of his mouth worked as though he were still trying to utter audible sounds, but by some power was denied the capacity to utter them.

"You say you have lost pearls?"

"Yes—yes.—Orient pearls."

Todd dived his hand into the breast of his apparel and produced the string of pearls. He held them before the ravished and dazzled eyes of John Mundell, as he said—

"Were they like these?"

With a cry of joy Mundell grasped at the pearls. Tears of gratified avarice gushed from his eyes.

"My own—my own pearls—my beautiful pearls!—Oh, blessed chance—my pearls back again. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha!" echoed Todd, as he stepped behind the chair on which John Mundell was sitting.

With his left hand he took one vigorous grasp of the remaining hair upon the head of the usurer, and forced his back against the chair. In another instant there was a sickening gushing sound. Todd, with the razor he held in his right hand, had nearly cut John Mundell's head off. Then he held him still by the hair. Gasp—gasp—gasp—bubble—gasp—bubble.—Ah! ah! ah!—Goggle—goggle. A slight convulsive movement of the lashes, and the eyes set, and became opaquely dim. The warm blood still bubbled, but John Mundell was dead. Todd picked up the pearls and carefully replaced them in his bosom again.

"How many strange events," he said, "hang upon these baubles. Ah, it's only one more—a dirty job rather—but business is business!"

He stood in the room as silent as a statue, and listened intently. Not the slightest sound indicative of the proximity of any one came upon his ears. He felt quite convinced that the deed of blood had been done in perfect secrecy. But then there he was.—Who but he could be accused? There he stood, the self-convicted murderer. Had he not done the deed with the weapon of his handicraft that he had brought to the house? How was Todd to escape the seeming inevitable cold-blooded murder? We shall see. Huddled up in the chair, was the dead body. Mundell had not fallen out of the capacious easy seat in which he sat when he breathed his last. The blood rolled to the floor, where it lay in a steaming mass. Todd was careful—very careful not to tread in it, and he looked down his garments to see if there were any tell-tale spots of gore; but standing behind the chair to do the deed, as he had done, he had been saved from anything of the sort. There he stood, externally spotless, like many a seeming and smirking sinner in this world—but oh, how black and stained within!

"Humph!" said Todd; "John Mundell was half distracted by a heavy loss. He was ill, and his mind was evidently affected. He could not even shave himself. Oh, it is quite evident that John Mundell, unable to bear his miseries, real or ideal, any longer, in a fit of partial insanity, cut his throat. Yes, that will do."

Todd still kept the razor in his grasp. What is he going to do?—Murder again the murdered?—Is he afraid that a man,

> "With twenty murders on his head!"

will jostle him from his perilous pinnacle of guilty safety?—No. He takes one of the clammy dead hands in his own—he clasps the half rigid fingers over the handle of the razor, and then he holds them until, in the course of a minute or so, they have assumed the grasp he wishes, and the razor, with which he, Todd, did the deed of blood, is held listlessly, but most significantly, in the hand of the dead.

The Murder Of The Usurer.

"That will do," said Todd.

The door is reached and unfastened, and the barber slips out of the room. He closes the door again upon the fetid hot aroma of the blood that is there, fresh from the veins of a human being like himself—no—no—not like himself.—No one can be like Sweeney Todd. He is a being of his own species—distinct, alone, an incarnation of evil! Todd was in no particular hurry to descend the stairs. He gained the passage with tolerable deliberation, and then he heard voices in the parlour.

"What a man you are!" said Mrs. Blisset.

"Ah, my dear, I am indeed. Who would not be a man for your sake? As for Mr. Blisset, I don't think him worth attention."

"Nor I," said the lady, snapping her fingers, "I don't value him that. The poor mean-spirited wretch—he's not to be compared to you, captain."

"I should think not, my love. Have you got any change in your pocket?"

"Yes. I—I-think I have about seven shillings or so."

"That will do. Much obliged to you, madam—I mean, my dear Mrs. B. Ah, if you would but smother Blisset, so that I might have the joy of making you Mrs. Captain Coggan, what a happy man I should be."

Todd tapped at the door.

"What was that?" cried the captain in evident alarm; "Is it Blisset?"

"No, captain—oh, no; I should like to see him interrupt me, indeed. A pretty thing that I cannot do what I like in the house I keep. Come in."

Todd just opened the door far enough to introduce his hideous head; and having done so, stared at the pair with such a selection of frightful physiognomical changes, that they both sat transfixed with horror. At length Todd broke the silence by saying—

"He's frightfully nervous."

"What?—what?—who?" gasped the captain.

"What?" repeated Mrs. Blisset.

"What's his name, upstairs, that I was sent for to shave just now."

"What, Mr. Mundell. Ah, poor man, he has been in a very nervous state ever since he has been here. He continually talks of a heavy loss he has had."

"Yes," said Todd, "I suppose he means you to pay me."

"Me?"

"Yes, ma'am. He says he is too nervous and excited for me to shave him just now, but he has borrowed a razor from me and says he will shave himself in the course of an hour or so, and send it back to me."

"Oh, very well. Your money will be sent with the razor, no doubt; for although Mr. Mundell is so continually talking of his losses, they tell me he is as rich as a Jew."

"Thank you, ma'am. Good morning; good morning, sir."

The captain cast a supercilious glance upon Todd, but did not deign to make the remotest reply to the mock civility with which he was bidden good morning. No one stands so much upon his dignity, as he whose title to any at all is exceedingly doubtful. The female heart, however, is mollified by devotion, and Mrs. Blisset returned the adieu of Todd. When he got into the passage, he uttered one of his extraordinary laughs, and then opening the street door, he let himself out. Todd by no means hurried back to Fleet Street, but as he walked along he now and then shrugged his shoulders and shook his huge hands, which, to those acquainted with his peculiarities, would have been sufficient indications of the fact that he was enjoying himself greatly. At length he spoke—

"So—so—what a Providence we have, after all, watching over us. The moment I am in any real danger as regards the string of pearls, up starts some circumstance that enables me to ward it off. Well, well, some day I

almost think I shall turn religious and build a church, and endow it. Ha!"

Todd was so tickled at the idea of his building a church and endowing it, that he stopped at the corner of Milford Lane, to enjoy an unusual amount of laughter; as he did so he saw no other than Mrs. Ragg, slowly coming towards him.

"Ah," he said, "Tobias's mother. The mother of the Tobias that was!—I will avoid her."

He darted on, and was through Temple Bar before Mrs. Ragg could make up her mind which way to run, for run she fully intended to do, when she saw Todd standing at the corner of Milford Lane. But she had no occasion for hurrying from him, as he walked in the direction of his shop as speedily as possible. Although he was perfectly satisfied with the clever manner he had ridded himself of the usurer, who probably might have been a source of annoyance to him, and who might eventually have been the means of bringing him to justice, he thought that he might be losing opportunities of making more victims for the accumulation of his ill-gotten wealth.

CHAPTER LIV.
SIR RICHARD BLUNT'S PROGRESS.

We will now return, and see with what zeal Sir Richard Blunt and his active co-operators are at work, and how that persevering gentleman has taken the cause of humanity in hand, with a determined will to bring the atrocious criminals to a just tribunal. Sir Richard and his men continued to pass and repass Todd's window, and one or other had an eye upon the door, so that it was almost impossible for any one to go in without the officers seeing them; and as some one of the officers followed each customer into the shop, under some pretence, and did not return till the strangers had been shaved, it was impossible that he could continue his murderous trade. The barouet, however, could not continue to remain long in the vicinity of Todd's shop without exciting the suspicions of that crafty demon in human form. Todd seemed very ill at ease, and his eye was more frequently at the hole which commanded a view of everything within range of his window, and in spite of the various guises the officers assumed, he seemed to take a more close survey of their features than he had done when they had first visited his shop. It was rarely that his customers came in pairs, otherwise it would have continually prevented his schemes; but now none came alone, each one had his companion or attendant. One morning, almost as soon as the barber had opened his shutters, a seafaring man entered his shop in haste, and throwing himself on a chair, requested to be shaved immediately. He appeared to have but lately returned from India, or some other hot climate, for his features were well bronzed, and from his general aspect and conversation, he appeared to be a man of superior station in life.

However, in this manner, the barber reasoned and came to the conclusion that he should have a good morning's work if none of his tormentors came to avert his intentions.

"A fine morning, sir," said Todd.

"Very," said the stranger; "but make haste and accomplish your task; I have a payment to make to a merchant in the city this morning by nine o'clock, and it is now more than half-past eight."

"I will polish you off in no time," said the barber, with a grin; "then you can proceed and transact your business in good time. Sit a little nearer this way, sir, the chair will only stand firmly in one position, and it is exceedingly uncomfortable for gentlemen to remain, even for a few moments, on an unsteady chair."

Todd adjusted the chair, by dint of what appeared to the stranger to be a deal of unnecessary trouble, and he said—

"You seem remarkably anxious to put the chair in what you call a comfortable position, but we sailors are rather rough, therefore you need not make so much fuss about my comfort for so short a time, but proceed with the business."

Todd seemed rather disconcerted at the stranger's remarks, and could not understand whether his words were uttered by chance, or imported more than Todd liked.

"It is a maxim of mine, sir," said Todd, "to make everybody that comes to my shop as comfortable as possible during the short time they remain with me. One half-inch further this way, sir, and you will be in a better position."

As he spoke he drew the chair to the spot he wished it, which circumstance seemed to please him, for he looked around him, and indulged in one of those hideous grins he executed just when he was on the point of committing some diabolical act. The gurgling noise he made in his throat caused the seaman to give a sudden start, which Todd perceiving, said—

"Did you hear the noise my poor old cat made, sir? she often does so when strangers come in, sir."

"It did not sound much like a cat; but if I had an animal that made such a demoniacal noise, I should soon send her to rest. Every one to their taste, though; I suppose you term the noise, that almost startled me, agreeable."

"Yes, sir," said the barber; "I like to hear her, because I think she is enjoying herself; and you know men and beasts require a something to stimulate the system."

By this time the lather was over the seaman's face. He could not speak, except at the imminent risk of swallowing a considerable quantity of the soap that Todd had covered his face with. The barber seemed dexterously to ply a razor on the seaman's face, which caused him to make wry faces, indicating that the operation was painful; the grimaces grew more fantastic to the beholder, but evidently less able to be withstood by the person operated upon.

"Good God, barber," he at length ejaculated, "why the devil don't you keep better materials?—I cannot stand this. The razor you are attempting to shave me with has not been ground, I should think, for a twelvemonth. Get another and finish me off, as you term it, in no time."

"Exactly, sir—I will get one more suited to your beard, and will return in one minute, when you will be polished off to my satisfaction."

He entered the little parlour at the back of the shop, but previously he took the precaution of putting his eye to the hole that gave a sight into the street; turning round, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, he went in search of the superior razor he spoke of. A low grating sound, like that of a ragged cord commencing the moving of pullies, was to be heard, when Sir Richard Blunt threw the door open, and took a seat in the shop near where the stranger was sitting. He was so disguised that Todd could not recognise him as the same person that had been in his shop so many

times before. The barber's face was purple with rage and disappointment; but he restrained it by an immense effort, and spoke to Sir Richard in a tolerably calm tone—

"Hair cut, sir, or shaved, sir? I shall not be long before I have finished this gentleman off—perhaps you would like to call in again in a few minutes?"

"Thank you; I am not in a particular hurry, and being rather tired I will rest myself in your shop, if you have no objection."

"My shop is but just open, and our ventilation being bad, it is much more pleasant to inhale the street air for a few minutes, than the vitiated air of houses in this neighbourhood."

"I am not much afraid of my health for a few minutes, therefore would rather take rest."

Todd turned his face away and ground his teeth, when he found that all his arguments were unavailing in moving the will of his new customer; therefore he soon finished shaving the first customer.

"At your service, sir," said Todd to Sir Richard, who seemed absorbed in reading a newspaper he took from his pocket. He looked up, and saw that the stranger was nearly ready to leave, therefore he continued reading till the stranger was in the act of passing out of the shop, when he said—

"What time do the royal family pass through Temple-bar to the City this morning?"

"Half-past nine," said Todd.

"Then I have not time to be shaved now—I will call in again. Good morning." Saying which he also left the shop.

In a few minutes after leaving the shop of Todd, Sir Richard and the men employed by him were in consultation; and he urged strongly that the men should remain nearer to the shop than they had hitherto done, for if

Sir Richard had been two minutes later, most likely he who had escaped the angry billows, would have been launched into eternity by the villanous barber.

For the remainder of the day Todd was more closely besieged than ever, and when night came on, Sir Richard Blunt, with two of his men, set watch upon the house of Mrs. Lovett. Sir Richard had provided himself with skeleton keys, candles, and other housebreaking implements, for the purpose of entering Mrs. Lovett's house after that lady had retired, as he had the full sanction of the law to use every means he could think of in bringing the culprits to justice. About eleven o'clock Mrs. Lovett was seen in her bedroom, with a candle in her hand, and making every preparation for retiring; in a few minutes the light was put out, and everything seemed still as death. Nothing was to be heard in the adjoining streets but the monotonous tread of the watchmen, with an occasional drawling forth of the hour of the night. This was the time Sir Richard had waited for—it was the time for him to act. He approached the street door and applied his implements with success, for the door yielded to the baronet's tools, and he soon was in the shop of the piemaker. As complete a silence reigned within as was maintained without.

He waited for some time yet, though, before he moved. Finding, at length, that all was profoundly still, and feeling quite convinced that Mrs. Lovett had really retired for the night, the magistrate set about procuring a light. By the aid of some chemical matches that he had with him, this was soon accomplished, and a faint blue light shone upon the various articles in the pie-shop of Mrs. Lovett. He then took a small piece of wax taper from his pocket, and lit it. This gave him sufficient light to enable him to distinguish with accuracy any object in the place. Once again he listened, in order to be quite sure that Mrs. Lovett was not stirring, and then, finding himself perfectly satisfied upon that head, he fearlessly commenced an examination of the shop. There was nothing to excite any very particular attention, except the apparatus for lowering the platform upon which the pies were sent up from the ovens below,

and in a few moments the whole attention of Sir Richard Blunt was concentrated upon that contrivance. He did not meddle with it further, than looking at it sufficiently to fully comprehend it, for he had other views just then. After, then, making himself quite master of the details of that piece of machinery, he turned his whole attention to the parlour. By the aid of a skeleton-key which he took from his pocket, he opened the door with ease, and at once entered that room, where lay the remains of the supper which Mrs. Lovett had so liberally provided for Sweeney Todd. This parlour was rather a large rambling-room, with a number of snug, handy looking cupboards in various corners. It was towards those cupboards that Sir Richard Blunt directed his attention. They were all locked, but with the means he had with him, ordinary locks presented no impediment to the prosecution of his research.

CHAPTER LV.
MRS. LOVETT'S WALK.

Suddenly he heard, or fancied he heard a noise above in the house, like the sudden shutting of a door.

"Oh," thought Sir Richard, "all is safe. She is shutting herself in for the night, I suppose. Well, Mrs. Lovett, we will see what we can find in your cupboards."

The little bit of wax light, which Sir Richard had lighted, gave but a weak kind of twilight while he moved about with it in his hand, but when he stuck it on a corner of the mantel-shelf it burnt much clearer, and was sufficient to enable him just to see what he was about. So thoroughly impressed was he with the idea that Mrs. Lovett had retired to rest, that he paid no sort of attention to the house, and may be said, in a manner of speaking, to have negligently shut his ears to all sounds that did not violently attack them. He opened a cupboard, in which were some books, and on the top-shelf, lying in a confused kind of heap, were some watches, and several sets of very rich buckles for shoes. There were, likewise, several snuff-boxes in the lot. Were these little trifles presented to Mrs. Lovett, by Todd, as proofs of the thriving business he was carrying on? Sir Richard put two of the watches in his pocket.

"These may be identified," he said. "And now, if I can but find the door by which she descends to the oven below, I—"

At this moment he was startled by a sudden accession of light in the room. His first idea, and a natural enough one too, was, that the little wax light was playing some vagaries incidental to all lights, and he

turned rapidly from the cupboard to look at it. What was his astonishment to see the door that led to the upper part of the house open, and Mrs. Lovett, partially undressed, standing upon the threshold with a chamber-candlestick in her hand in which was a rushlight, the dim and dubious rays from which had produced the extra illumination that had first startled Sir Richard Blunt. No wonder that, with amazement upon his countenance, he now glanced upon this vision, for such it looked like at the moment; and yet he saw that Mrs. Lovett it was to all intents and purposes, and that he was discovered in his exploring expedition in her parlour appeared to be one of those facts it would have required no small share of moral hardihood to dispute. Seeing, however, should not always be believing, despite the venerable saying which asserts as much.

Mrs. Lovett In A State Of Somnambulism.

Mrs. Lovett In A State Of Somnambulism.

"I must apprehend her, now," thought Sir Richard Blunt; "I have no resource but to apprehend her at once."

With this object he was about to dart forward, when something strange about the appearance of Mrs. Lovett arrested his attention, and stayed his progress. He paused and remained leaning partly upon the back of a chair, while she slowly advanced into the room, and then as she came nearer to him he became convinced of what he had begun to suspect, namely—that she was walking in her sleep. There is something awful in this wandering of the mortal frame when its senses seem to be locked up in death. It looks like a resurrection from the grave—as though a corpse was again revisiting

> "The glimpses of the pale moon;"

and even Sir Richard Blunt, with all his constitutional and acquired indifference to what would be expected to startle any one else could not help shrinking back a little, and feeling an unusual sort of terror. This transient nervousness of his, though, soon passed away, and then he set himself to watch the actions of Mrs. Lovett with all the keenness of intense interest and vividly awakened curiosity. She did not disappoint him. Moving forward into the room with a slow and stately action, so that the little flame of the rushlight was by no means disturbed, she reached the middle of the parlour and then she paused. She assumed such a natural attitude of listening, that Sir Richard Blunt voluntarily shrunk down behind the chair, for it seemed to him at the moment that she must have heard him. Then, in a low and slightly indistinct tone, she spoke—

"Hush! hush! So still. The poison! Where is the poison?—Will he take it? Ah, that is the question, and yet how clear it is. But he is fiend-like in his suspicions. When will he come?"

She moved on towards the cupboard, in which the decanter of poisoned wine had been placed, and opening it, she felt in vain upon the shelf for it. It was still upon the table, and if anything more than another could have been a convincing proof of the mere mechanical actions of the somnambulist, this fact, that she passed the wine where it was, and only recollected where it had been, would have been amply sufficient. After finding that her search was ineffectual, she turned from the cupboard, and stood for a few moments in silence. Then a horror shook her frame, and she said—

"They must all die. Bandage your eyes, and you will shut out the death shrieks. Yes, that will be something, to get rid of those frightful echoes. Bandage after bandage will, and shall do it."

Sir Richard stood silently watching; but such was the horror of the tones in which she spoke, that even his heart felt cold, as though the blood flowed but sluggishly through its accustomed channels.

"Who," he thought to himself, "for the world's wealth, would have this woman's memory of the past?"

She still held the light, and it appeared to him as though she were about to go into the shop, but she paused before she reached the half-glass door of communication between it and the parlour, and shook like one in an ague.

"Another!—another!" she said. "How strange it is that I always know. The air seems full of floating particles of blood, and they all fall upon me! Off, off. Oh, horror! horror! I choke—I choke. Off, I say. How the hot blood steams up in a sickly vapour. There—there, now! Why does Todd let them shriek in such a fashion?"

She now shook so, that Sir Richard Blunt made sure she would either drop the light she carried, or, at all events, shake it out, but neither of these contingencies took place; and, after a few moments, she got more calm. The violent agitation of her nerves gradually subsided. She spoke horrors, but it was in a different tone; and abandoning, apparently, the intention of going into the shop, she approached a portion of the parlour which had not yet been subjected to the scrutiny of Sir Richard Blunt, although it would not ultimately have escaped him. The appearance of this part of the room was simply that there was there a cupboard, but the back of this seeming cupboard formed, in reality, the door that led down the flight of stairs to the other strong iron door that effectually shut in the captive cook to his duties among the ovens. This was just the place that Sir Richard Blunt wanted to find out; and here we may as well state, that Sir Richard had an erroneous, but very natural idea, under the circumstances, that the cook or cooks were accomplices of Mrs. Lovett in her nefarious transactions. Had he been at all aware of the real state of affairs below, our friend, who had become so thoroughly disgusted with the pies, would not have been left for so long in so precarious a situation. Mrs. Lovett paused, after opening the lock of the cupboard, and in a strange, sepulchral sort of voice, she said—

"Has he done it?"

"Done what?" Sir Richard would fain have asked; but, although he had heard that people, when walking in their sleep, will answer questions put to them under such circumstances, he was doubtful of the fact, and by no means wished to break the trance of Mrs. Lovett.

"Has he done it?" she again repeated. "Is he no more? How many does it make? One—two—three—four—five—six—seven. Yes, seven, it must be the seventh, and I have heard all. Hush! hush! Todd—Todd—Todd, I say. Are you dead? No—no. He would not drink the wine. The devil, his master, whispered to him that it had in it the potent drug that would send his spirits howling to its Maker, and he would not drink. God! he would not drink! No—no—no!"

She pronounced these words in such a tone of agony, that her awakening from the strange sleep she was in, seemed to be a natural event from such a strong emotion, but it did not take place. No doubt Mrs. Lovett had been long habituated to these nocturnal rambles. She now began slowly and carefully the descent of the stairs leading to the oven; but she had not got many paces, when a current of air from below, and which, no doubt, came through the small grating in the iron door, extinguished her light. This circumstance, however, appeared to be perfectly unnoticed by her, and she proceeded in the profound darkness with the same ease as though she had had a light. Sir Richard would have followed her as he was, but in the dark he did not feel sufficient confidence in her as a guide to do so; and with as noiseless a tread as possible, he went back, and fetched from the chimney-piece shelf his own little wax light, which was still burning, and carefully guarding its flame from a similar catastrophe to what had happened to Mrs. Lovett's light, he descended the staircase, slowly and cautiously, after her. She went with great deliberation, and it was not until being rather surprised at the total absence of sound from her tread, that upon looking down to her feet, he found that they were bare. After this, he could have no doubt but that, almost immediately upon her lying down in bed, this somnambulistic trance had come over her, and she had risen to creep below, and go through the singular scene we are describing. Step by step they both descended, until Mrs. Lovett

came to the iron door. She did not attempt to open it. If she had, Heaven only knows what might have resulted from the desperate risk the captive cook might have made to escape. But even in the madness of Mrs. Lovett —for a sort of madness the scene she was enacting might be called— there was a kind of method, and she had no idea of opening the iron door that shut the cook from the upper world. Pausing, then, at the door leading to the ovens, she, with as much facility as though she had had broad daylight to do it in, unfastened the small square wicket in the top part of the window. A dull reddish glare of light came through it from the furnaces, which night nor day were extinguished.

"Hist! hist!" said Mrs. Lovett.

"Who speaks?" said a dull hollow voice, which sounded as if coming from the tomb. "Who speaks to me?"

Mrs. Lovett shut the small wicket in a moment.

"He has not done it, yet," she said. "He has not done it yet. No—no—no. But blood will flow—yes. It must be so. One—two—three—four—five—six —seven. The seventh, and not the last. Horrible! horrible!—most horrible! If, now, I could forget—"

She began rapidly to ascend the stairs, so that Sir Richard Blunt had to take two at a step, and once three, in order to be up before her, and even then she reached the parlour so close upon him, that it was a wonder she did not touch him; but he succeeded in evading her by a hair's breadth, and then she stood profoundly still for a few moments with her hands clasped. This quiescent state, however, did not last long, for suddenly, with eagerness, she leaned forward, and spoke again.

"No suspicion!" she said; "all is well!—Dear me, heap up thousands more. Oh, Todd, have we not enough?—There, clean up that blood!— Here is a cloth!—Stop it up—don't you see where it is running to, like a live thing?—He is not dead yet.—How clumsy.—Another blow with the hammer!—There—there—on the forehead!—What a crash!—Did the bone go that time?—Why the eyes have started out!—Horror! horror!— Oh, God, no—no—no—I cannot come here again.—Oh, God!—Oh, God!"

She sunk down upon the floor in a huddled up mass, and Sir Richard Blunt, who could not forbear shuddering at the last words that had come from her lips now he thought that her trance was over, rapidly approaching her, said—

"Wretched woman, your career is over."

She suddenly rose, and with the same stately movement as before, she made her way from the parlour by the door leading to the staircase. During all the strange scenes she had gone through, she had not abandoned the light, and although the air in the narrow passage of the staircase had extinguished it, she still continued to carry it with the same care as though it lit her on her way. Seeing that she still walked in that strange and hideous sleep, the magistrate let her pass him, nor did he make any attempt to follow her.

"Be it so," he said. "Let her awaken once again in the fancied security of her guilt. The doom of the murderess is hanging over her, and she shall not escape. But there is time yet."

He watched her until, by the turn of the stairs, she disappeared from his sight, and then he sat down to think. And there, for a brief space, we leave Sir Richard, while we take a peep at Tobias.

CHAPTER LVI.
TOBIAS UNBOSOMS HIMSELF.

Mrs. Ragg, when she met Sweeney Todd, after he had so comfortably put out of this world of care, John Mundell, the usurer, was really upon a mission to Minna Gray, to tell her that Tobias was, to use her own expressive phraseology—"Never so much better." Together with this news, Mrs. Ragg, at the colonel's suggestion, sought the company of Minna to tea upon that afternoon; and the consent of all parties whom it might concern being duly obtained to that arrangement, we will suppose Minna upon her way to Colonel Jeffery's. Timidly, and with a bashful boldness, if we may use the expression, did the fair young girl ring the area bell at the colonel's. But he and his friend, Captain Rathbone, were both in the parlour, and saw her advance, so that she was at once welcomed into that portion of the house. The colonel, like most gentlemen, had the happy knack of making those with whom he spoke at their ease, so that Minna in a very short time recovered her first agitation—for if she had gone a thousand times to that house, agitated she would have been at first—and was able to discourse with all that gentle fervour and candid simplicity which belongs to such minds as hers.

"A most favourable change," said the colonel, "has taken place in Tobias—a change which I attribute to the strong influence which your visit had upon him; such an opinion is not a mere fancy of mine, for the medical gentleman who is in attendance upon him fully concurs in that view of the case."

Minna had no need to say that she was pleased, for she looked all the delight that such a communication was calculated to give her.

"Under these circumstances, then," continued the colonel, "that which was only a faint hope of his recovery, has become a certainty."

Minna's eyes filled with tears.

"Yes," added Captain Rathbone, "and we expect that to you he will make such revelations as shall bring proper punishment upon all those who have in any way been the cause of this calamity."

"Oh, forgive them all, now," said Minna. "Since he recovers, we can forgive them all, you know, now."

"That cannot be, for the persecution that Tobias has endured is but part of a system which he will be the means of exposing. Will you come up stairs at once now, Miss Gray, and see him?"

"Oh, yes—yes."

How her heart beat as she ascended the staircase, and how quickly she inspired and respired when she actually got to the door of Tobias's room. But then she heard the kind, although not very musical voice of Mrs. Ragg from within, say—

"But, my dear, you will give her time to come?"

"A long time, mother," said Tobias.

Ah, how well Minna knew that voice. It was the voice of Tobias as of old. The same voice, in tone perhaps only a little weakened, and rendered more soft by sickness than it had been, but to her it was like the soft memory of some well remembered tone that she had heard, and wept with joy to hear in happier days.

"I am here, Tobias! I am here."

"Minna—Minna!"

She entered the room radiant and beautiful as some fairy come to breathe joy by the magic of some spell, Tobias stretched out his arms towards her. She paused a moment, and then with a soft and gentle movement, embraced him. It was but for an instant she held him in her arms, and then she stepped back a pace or two and looked at him.

"Quite well," said Tobias, understanding the look.

"Quite?"

"Oh, yes, Minna, and as happy—as—as—fifty kings."

"Are kings happy?"

"Well, I don't know that they are, Minna, but at all events if they are, they can't possibly be happier than I am."

"Bless the boy," said Mrs. Ragg, "how he does talk, to be sure."

"Why, Tobias," said Colonel Jeffery, "you are wonderfully improved within this last hour."

"Yes, sir, and still more wonderfully since the best physician in the world has come to see me."

The direction of his eyes towards Minna Gray let them know, if they had not guessed it before, who Tobias considered the best physician in the world to him. Minna shook her head, and said—

"But, Tobias, it is to this gentleman that you owe your life."

"Yes," replied Tobias, "and if ever I forget to be grateful to him for all that he has done for me, I shall consider myself the worst person in the world. Aye, as bad, quite as—as Sweeney Todd."

Tobias shuddered perceptibly as he pronounced Todd's name, and it was quite evident that even in safety, as he could not but feel himself, and profoundly protected from the deadly malice of his late master, he could not divest himself of the absolute horror which even a mere remembrance of him engendered.

"Well, Tobias," said the colonel, as he drew a chair close to him, "since you have named Todd, pray tell us all about him."

"All?"

"Yes, all, Tobias."

"I will tell all I know. Come closer to me, Minna; I feel, when you are near me, as though God had sent one of his angels to keep Todd from me. Oh, yes, I will tell all I know. How can he harm me now?"

"How indeed, Tobias?" said Minna.

Tobias still trembled. What a shock that bold, bad, unscrupulous man had given to the nerves of that boy. His bodily health might be restored, and his mind once more be brought back to sanity, but if Tobias Ragg were to live to the age of a patriarch, the name of Todd would be to him a something yet to shrink from, and the tone of his nervous system could never be what it once was. Minna looked up in his face, and the colonel, too, gazed fully upon him, so that Tobias found he was absolutely called upon to say something.

"Yes," he began, "I remember that people came to the shop, and—and that they never went out of it again."

"Can you particularise any instance?"

"Yes, the gentleman with the dog."

Colonel Jeffery showed by his countenance how much he was interested.

"Go on," he said. "What about the gentleman with the dog?"

"I don't know how it was," added Tobias, "but that circumstance seemed to tell more upon my fancy than any other. I suppose it was the conduct of the dog."

"What sort of a dog was it?"

"A large handsome dog, and Todd would not let it remain in the shop, so his master made him wait outside."

"Did he name the dog?"

Tobias passed his hand across his brow several times, and then his countenance suddenly brightening up, he said—

"Hector! Yes, Hector!"

Colonel Jeffery nodded.

"What then happened, Tobias?" said Minna.

"Why, I think Todd sent me out upon some message, and when I came back the gentleman was gone, but not the dog."

"Now, Tobias, can you tell us what sort of a man the man with the dog was?"

"Yes, fresh-coloured, and good-looking rather, with hair that curled. I should know him again."

"Ah, Tobias," said the colonel, "I am afraid we shall none of us ever see him again in this world."

"Never!" said Tobias. "Todd killed him. How he did it, or what he did with the body, I know not; but he did kill him, and many more, I am certain as that I am now here. Many people came into the shop that never left it again."

"No doubt; and now, Tobias, how came you in the street by London Bridge so utterly overcome and destitute?"

"The madhouse."

"Madhouse?"

"Yes, I shall recollect it all. Where are you, mother?"

"Bless us and save us!—here, to be sure," said Mrs. Ragg.

"Did I not come to you at your room and find you ironing, and did I not tell you that I had something to say about Todd, and ask you to fetch somebody?"

"To be sure."

"Well, when you left, Todd came, and after once looking in his face, I almost forgot what happened, except that there was a madhouse and a man named Watson."

"Watson?" said Colonel Jeffery, as he made a note of the name.

"Yes," added Tobias, "and Fogg."

"Good! Fogg, I have it. Now, Tobias, where did you encounter this Fogg and Watson?"

"That I cannot tell. I recollect trees, and a large house, and rooms, and a kind of garden, and some dark and dismal cells, and then my mind seems, when I think of all those things, like some large room full of horrors, and anything comes before me just like some dreadful dream. I recollect falling, I think, from some wall, and then running at my utmost speed until I fell, and then the next thing that I remember was hearing the voice of Minna in this house."

"One thing," said Captain Rathbone, "is pretty certain, and that is, that this madhouse, if it were one in reality, must be in the immediate vicinity of London, or else the strength of Tobias would not have enabled him to run so far as to London from it."

"Mrs. Ragg, I believe Todd told you that he had placed Tobias in a madhouse, did he not?" said the colonel.

"Yes, sir, he did, the wagabone!"

"Well, I am inclined to think that it was a madhouse—one of those private dens of iniquity which are, and have been for many years, a disgrace to the jurisprudence of this country."

"If so, then," said the captain, "there will be no great difficulty in finding it with the clue that Tobias has given us respecting the names."

"I will not be satisfied until I have rooted out that den," said the colonel, "but at present all our exertions must be directed to ascertain the fate of poor Ingestrie. Every circumstance appears really to combine in favour

of the opinion of Johanna Oakley, to the effect that this Thornhill and Mark Ingestrie were the same."

"It does look marvellously probable," said the captain.

"Do you recollect any more, Tobias?" said Minna.

"Not clearly, Minna, and I am afraid that what I have recollected is not very clear, but it was the dog that made an impression upon my memory. Many things are, however, now each moment crowding to my mind, and I think that I shall soon be able to recollect much more."

"Not a doubt, Tobias. Do not attempt to strain your memory too far now. Things will come back to you gently, and by degrees."

"I have no doubt of that, sir, but—but—"

"But what, Tobias?"

"Oh, sir, you are quite sure—"

"Sure of what?"

"That when I least expect it, round the curtains of my bed, or from behind some chair, or from some cupboard about twilight, I shall not see the hideous face of Sweeney Todd, and feel his eyes glancing upon me?"

Poor Tobias covered his eyes with both his hands, as he gave almost frenzied utterance to these words, and both Colonel Jeffery and his friend, the captain, looked on with aspects of deep commiseration. The former, after the pause of a few moments, to allow the renewed excitement of Tobias fully to subside, spoke to him in a kind but firm voice.

"Tobias, listen to me. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir—oh, yes."

"Then I have to tell you that it is impossible Sweeney Todd can now come upon you in the way you mention, or in any other way."

"Impossible, sir?"

"Yes, quite. He is now watched by the officers of justice, day and night. His house door is never lost sight of for a moment while he is within it, and when he is abroad, he is closely followed and carefully watched by men, any one of whom is more than a match for him; so be at peace upon that head, for Sweeney Todd is more securely kept now than any wild beast in his den."

CHAPTER LVII.
SIR RICHARD BLUNT'S ADVENTURES CONTINUED.

All left Sir Richard Blunt, not in a critical situation, but in what may be called an embarrassing one, inasmuch as he could not very well make up his mind what to do next. He had heard much towards her enunciation from the lips of Mrs. Lovett, and he had possessed himself of some property, which he hoped would be authenticated as having belonged to some of Todd's victims. He had likewise found out the mode of secret communication with the ovens below, but whether or not to make any further use of that information just then was a question. While he was debating these matters in his mind, he saw that his little wax light was expiring. He accordingly produced another from his pocket, and lit it, and during the process of so doing, he made up his mind to risk a descent into the regions below, so far as the iron door. He at first took his light in his hand to take it with him, but a few moments' reflection decided him to go in the dark, and placing it upon a corner of the shelf, as he had done before, he opened the cupboard, at the back of which was the secret door, and soon found himself upon the little staircase. Of course, the object of Sir Richard Blunt was to make what discovery he could, without betraying the fact of his own presence; and, accordantly with such a design, hastened lightly as foot could fall, so that he was some few minutes in reaching the iron door, which he felt with his left hand, which he kept during his progress outstretched before him. The next object was to get the little wicket open without noise, for he recollected that Mrs. Lovett had made a sharp sound by the sudden

withdrawal of a bolt that secured it on the side next to the staircase. By carefully feeling over the door, he at last lit upon this bolt, and then, by taking his time over it, he succeeded in drawing it back without creating the least sound. When this was done, the wicket yielded easily, for it had no other fastening than that bolt, and when it opened, which it did towards the stairs, the same dull reddish glare came through the small aperture that he had noticed when Mrs. Lovett was there, but he found what he had not noticed upon that occasion, namely, that when the wicket was removed there were iron bars farther securing the opening, so that it was quite clear it was intended to be a thing of strength. When, however, the magistrate found that there was nothing between him and the region of the ovens but this grating, he placed his ear close to it, in order to listen if any one was stirring. After a few moments, he heard a deep groan. Somewhat startled at this sound—for it was certainly unexpected—he tried to pierce with his eyes the obscurity of the place, but the darkness, although not absolute, was of that puzzling character that the more he looked the more all sorts of odd images seemed to be conjured up before his eyes. He began, too, to think that the groan must have been only some accidental sound that he had mistaken, but he was quickly relieved from such an opinion by hearing it again, much more distinctly and unequivocally than it had before sounded upon his ears. There was no possibility of mistaking this groan now; but while the certainty that a groan it was came upon his ears, he became only the more puzzled to account for it; and this state of feeling in him certainly arose from the difficulty he naturally had in conceiving the possibility of any one being upon the premises, and engaged in the service of Mrs. Lovett, unless they were accomplices of that lady. The idea of the captive cook was not at all likely to cross the imagination of any one, and in her revelations upon that head, during her somnambulistic tour, Mrs. Lovett had not been sufficiently explicit to enable Sir Richard Blunt to come to a different conclusion.

"I will listen for it again," he thought.

After a few moments more he was rewarded for his patience by not only hearing another groan, but a voice, in accents of the most woe-begone character, said—

"I cannot sleep. It is of no avail. Alas! who dare sleep here! God help me, for I am past all human aid."

"Who on earth can this be?" said the magistrate to himself.

"It would be better for them to kill me at once," continued the voice. "Anything would be preferable to this continued horror; but I suppose they have not suited themselves yet with some one to take my place, so I am not to be sent to see my old friends. Oh, bitter—bitter fate. I would that I were dead!"

The Captive Piemaker Contemplates Suicide.

The Captive Piemaker Contemplates Suicide.

There was a heartiness in the pronunciation of the last word, that quite convinced Sir Richard Blunt of their sincerity; but yet he thought he ought to listen to a little more before he ran the risk of falling into any trap that might be laid for him by Mrs. Lovett or her satellites, if she had any. He had not to wait long, for whoever it was that was speaking had got into a good train of groaning, and did not seem inclined to leave off for some time.

"Is she a woman, or the devil in petticoats?" said the voice.

"Humph!" thought Sir Richard Blunt, "that would be rather a hard question to answer upon oath."

"How much longer am I to bear this load of misery?" continued the voice. "No sleep—no food, but just what will sustain nature in her continued sufferings. Oh, it is most horrible. Have I been preserved from death under many adventurous and fearful circumstances, at last to die here like a rat in a hole?"

"What on earth can be the matter with this man?" thought Sir Richard.

There was a pause in the lamentations of the man now for a few seconds, during which he only groaned once or twice, just as if by way of letting any one know, who might be listening, that he was not pacified. At length, with a sudden burst of passion, he cried—

"I can bear it no longer. Death of my own seeking, and by my own choice as to method, is far preferable to this state of existence. Farewell, all—farewell to you, fair and gentle girl, whom I loved and whose falseness first gave me a pang such as the assassin's dagger could not have inflicted. Farewell, dear companions of my youth, whom I had hoped to see again!"

"Stop!" said Sir Richard Blunt.

The captive cook was still.

"Stop!" cried Sir Richard Blunt again.

"Good God! who is that?" said the voice from the region of the oven.

"Your good genius, if I save you from doing anything rash; who and what are you? Tell me all."

"To be betrayed. Ah, you are some spy of Mrs. Lovett's of course, and you only wish to draw me into conversation for my destruction."

"What were you going to do just now?"

"Take my own life."

"Well, if you find I am an enemy instead of a friend, as I profess to be, you can but carry out your intention."

"That's true."

The captive cook pronounced these two words in such a solemn tone, that the magistrate was more than ever convinced of his sincerity, and that he was far more a victim of Mrs. Lovett and her associate, the barber, than an accomplice.

"Speak freely," said Sir Richard. "Who and what are you?"

"I am the most unhappy wretch that ever breathed. I am cribbed and cabined and confined, I live upon raw flour and water. I curse the hour that I was born, and wish I had been a blind kitten and drowned, rather than what I am."

"But what do you do here?"

"Make numberless pies."

"Well?"

"It's all very fine for you to say well, whoever you are, but it is anything but well with me. Where are you?"

"Upon the staircase, near an iron door."

"Ah, you are at the aperture through which that abominable Mrs. Lovett issues to me her commands and her threats. If you have any compassion in your nature, and the smallest desire to hear a story that will curdle your blood, you will find out the means of opening that door, and then I will climb up to it and make one effort for freedom."

"My good friend, I am very much afraid it would materially derange my plans to do so."

"Derange your what?"

"My plans."

"And are any plans to be placed in competition with my life and liberty? Oh, human nature—human nature, what a difference there is in you when you are upon the right side of the door from what you are when you are upon the wrong."

"My friend," said Sir Richard Blunt, "that is a very philosophical remark, and I compliment you upon it. But now answer me truly one question, and for your own sake, and for the sake of justice, I beg you to answer me truly."

"What is it?"

"Are you in present fear of death?"

"No. Not while I continue to make the pies."

"Very good!"

"Very good? Now by all that's abominable, I only wish you had but to make them here for one week, and at the same time know as much as I know—I rather suspect that you would never say very good again."

"One week?"

"Yes, only a week."

"Pray how long have you been here?"

"I have lost count of the long weary days and the anxious nights. Oh, sir, be you whom you may, do not sport with me, for I am very—very wretched!"

"If I could but be sure that you are a victim of the woman who lives above," said Sir Richard.

"Sure that I am a victim? Oh, God, you suspect me of being her accomplice. Well, well, it is but natural, finding me here—I ought to expect as much. What can I say—what can I do to convince you of the contrary?"

"Reveal all."

"Do you not know then that—that—"

"That what? I may suspect much, but I know nothing."

"Then—then—"

The man's voice sunk to a husky whisper, and when he had spoken a few words there was a death-like silence between him and Sir Richard Blunt. The latter at length said—

"And you affirm this?"

"I am willing to swear to it. Release me from here and take me to any court of justice you please, and I will affirm it. If you have any suspicion of my good faith, manacle me—bind me up in iron until I tell all."

"I am convinced."

"Oh, joy, I shall look upon the blessed sun again. I shall see the green fields—I shall hear the lark sing, and drink in the odour of sweet flowers. I—I am not quite desolate."

Sir Richard Blunt could hear him sobbing like a child. The magistrate did not interrupt this burst of feeling. He was, on the contrary, quite glad to be a witness of it, for it convinced him of the sincerity of the man. He could not think it possible he should find attending upon Mrs. Lovett's ovens so consummate an actor as it would have taken to play that part. After a few moments, however, he spoke, saying—

"Now, my friend, are you one who will listen to reason in preference to merely acting upon the feelings and suggestions of the moment?"

"I hope so."

"Well, then, I think I could set you free to-night, but to do so would materially interfere with the course of that justice which is about speedily to overtake Mrs. Lovett. By remaining here you will keep things as they are for the present, and that, I assure you, is a great object. You say that while you continue making pies, your life is not in positive peril; I ask of you, for the sake of justice, to put up with your present position a short time longer."

"Liberty is sweet."

"It is, but you would not like such a woman as Mrs. Lovett to take the alarm and escape the consequences of her crimes."

"Oh! no—no. I will remain. For how long will it be?"

"I cannot say exactly, but the time may be counted by hours, and not one shall be lost. Have but a little patience, and I will come to you again. When next you hear my voice at the grating, it will be to give the signal of liberty."

"How can I thank you?"

"Never mind that. Good night, and take care of yourself. All will be well."

"Good night. Good night."

CHAPTER LVII.
BIG BEN MAKES A DISCOVERY.

At seven o'clock on the morning following these strange events, there were early prayers at St. Dunstan's, and the bells called together the devout at half-past six. Todd was there! Is the reader surprised? Has he never yet in his mundane experience met with a case of sanctimonious villany? Does he think that going to prayer is incompatible with such a life as Todd's? Pho—pho! Live and learn. Todd met the beadle upon the steps of the church.

"Ah, Mr. T.," said that functionary. "It does one good to see you, that it does—a deal of good. I say that, of all the tradesmen in Fleet Street, you is the *piousest*."

"We owe a duty to our creator," said Todd, "which all the pomps and vanities of this world ought to make us neglect."

"Have you heard o' the suicide in Norfolk Street?"

Todd shook his head.

"Why, the beadle of St. Clement's was asking of me only last night, what sort of man you was."

"I?"

"Yes, to be sure. It's a gentleman as you went to shave, and as you lent a razor to, as has cut his blessed throat in Norfolk Street."

"God bless me," said Todd, "you don't mean that? Dear! dear! We are indeed here to-day and gone to-morrow. How true it is that flesh is grass;—and so the gentleman cut his throat with my razor, did he?"

"Above a bit."

"Well, well, it is to be hoped that the Lord will be merciful to the little frailties of his creatures."

"Conwulsions! Do you call that a little frailty?"

Todd had passed on into the body of the church, and any minute observer might have noticed, that when he got there, there was a manifest and peculiar twitching of his nose, strongly resembling the evolutions of a certain ex-chancellor. Then, in a low tone to himself, Todd muttered—

"They make a great fuss about the smell in St. Dunstan's, but I don't think it is so very bad after all."

Perhaps one of Todd's notions in going to early morning prayers was to satisfy himself upon the point of the stench in the church. The morning service was very short, so that Todd got back to his shop in ample time to open it for the business of the day. He gave a glance at the window, to be quite sure that the placard announcing the want of a pious lad was there, and then with all the calmness in the world he set about sharpening his razors. Not many minutes elapsed ere a man came in, leading by the hand a boy of about thirteen years of age.

"Mr. Todd," he said, "you want a lad."

"Yes."

"You don't know me, but I am Cork, the greengrocer in the market."

"Oh," said Todd.

"You see this is Fred, by the first Mrs. C., and the second Mrs. C. thinks he'd better go out to something now; if you will take him 'prentice we will provide him, and he can run into our place for his meals and tell us

all the gossip of the shop, which will amuse Mrs. C., as she's in a delicate condition, and I have no doubt you will find him just the lad for you."

"Dear! dear!" said Todd.

"What's the matter, Mr. T.?"

"I'm so aggravated.—Is he pious?"

"Decidedly."

"Does he know his catechism and his belief?"

"Oh, yes. Only ask him, Mr. Todd. Only ask him."

"Come here, my dear boy. Who was Shindrad, the great uncle of Joshua, and why did Nebuchadnezar call him Zichophobattezer the cousin of Neozobulcoxacride?"

"Eh?" said the boy. "Lor!"

"What learning!" said the greengrocer. "Ah, Mr. Todd, you are one too many for Fred, but he knows his catechiz."

"Well," said Todd, "if the boy that I have promised to think about don't suit me, I'll give you a call, Mr. Cork. But, you see, I am such a slave to my word, that if I promise to think about anything, I go on thinking until it would astonish you how I get through it."

"Well, I'm sure we are very much obliged to you, Mr. Todd. Come along, Fred."

"Indeed!" said Todd, when he was once more alone. "That would suit me certainly. A lying, gossiping boy, to be running home three or four times a day with all the news of the shop. Good—very good indeed."

Todd stropped away at the razors with great vehemence, until he suddenly became aware that some one must be blocking up nearly the whole of the window, for a sudden darkness, like an eclipse, had stolen over the shop. We have before had occasion to remark that Todd had a kind of peephole amid the multifarious articles which blocked up his windows, so that he was enabled to look out upon the passing world

when he pleased. Upon this occasion he availed himself of this mode of ascertaining who it was that had stopped the light from making its way into the shop. It was no other than our old acquaintance, Big Ben from the Tower, who was on his way to Mr. Oakley's. The heart of Ben had been sensibly touched by the distress of Johanna, and he was going to give her a word or two of comfort and encouragement, which would wholly consist of advising her to "never mind." But still Ben's intention was good, however weak might be the means by which he carried it out. As for passing Todd's window without looking in, he could no more help having a good stare, than he could help doing justice to a flagon of old ale, if it were placed before him; and upon this occasion the little placard, announcing the want of a pious youth, fixed the whole of Ben's wonder and attraction.

"A pious lad!" said Ben. "Oh, the villain. Never mind. Easy does it—easy does it."

"Curses on that fellow!" muttered Todd. "What is he staring at?"

"A pious lad!" ejaculated Ben. "Pious—oh—oh. Pious!"

"Shaved this morning, sir?" said Todd, appearing at his door with a razor in his hand. "Shaved or dressed? Polish you off surprisingly, in no time, sir."

"Eh?"

"Walk in, sir—walk in. A nice comfortable shave makes a man feel quite another thing. Pray walk in, sir. I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you before."

Ben cast an indignant look at Sweeney Todd; and then, as upon the spur of the moment—for Ben was rather a shrewd thinker—he could not find anything strong enough to say, he wisely held his peace, and walked on. Todd looked after him with a savage scowl.

"Not much plunder," he muttered, "but suitable enough in another point of view. Well—well, we shall see—we shall see."

Ben continued his course towards the city, ever and anon repeating as he went—"A pious lad!—a pious lad. Oh, the rascal."

When he reached within a few doors of the spectacle-maker's, he saw a boy with a letter in his hand looking about him, and probably seeing that Ben had a good-humoured countenance, he said to him—

"If you please, sir, can you tell me which is Mr. Oakley's?"

"Yes, to be sure. Is that letter for him?"

"No, sir, it's for Miss Oakley."

Ben laid his finger upon the side of his nose, and tried to think.

"Miss Oakley," he said. "A letter for Miss Oakley;" and then, as nothing very alarming consequent upon that proposition presented itself to him, he said, "Easy does it."

"Do you know the house, sir?" asked the boy.

"Yes, to be sure. Come along, boy."

"Yes, sir."

"Who's the letter from?"

"A gentleman, sir, as is waiting at the Unicorn, in Addle Street."

"A gentleman as is waiting at the Addle in Unicorn Street," said Ben; and then, not being able still to hit upon anything very outrageous in all that, he contented himself once more with an "Easy does it."

The boy accompanied him to the door of Mr. Oakley's, and then Ben said to him—

"I'll give the letter to Miss Oakley if you like, and if you don't like, you can wait till I send her to you. Easy does it."

"Thank you, sir," said the boy, "I'd rather give it to the young lady myself."

"Very good," said Ben. "Rise betimes, and hear early chimes."

With this effort of proverbial lore, Ben marched into the shop, where old Oakley was, with a magnifying glass fitted to his eyes, performing some extraordinary operation upon a microscope. Ben merely said "How is you?" and then passed on to the back-room, having received from the old optician a slight nod by way of a return of the friendly salutation. Ben always esteemed it a stroke of good fortune when he found Johanna alone, which, in the present instance, he did. She rose to receive him, and placed one of her small hands in his, where for a moment or two it was completely hidden.

"All right?" said Ben.

"Yes, as usual. No news."

"I saw a boy at the door with a letter from a unicorn."

"From a what?"

"No, an addle—no. Let me see. A unicorn, waiting with a gentleman in addle something. Easy does it. That ain't it, neither. Where is she?"

Guessing that it was some one with a communication from some friend to her, Johanna had glided to the door, and got the letter from the boy. She came with it to the parlour at once, and opened it. It was from Colonel Jeffery, and ran as follows:—

> "Dear Miss Oakley,—If you will oblige me with another meeting in the Temple Gardens this evening, at or about six, I have something to tell you, although I am afraid nothing cheering.—Believe me to be your sincere friend,
>
> "John Jeffery."

She read it aloud to Ben, and then said—

"It is from the gentleman who, I told you, Ben, had interested himself so much in the fate of poor Mark."

"Oh, ah," said Ben. "Easy does it. Tell him, if he'd like to see the beasts at the Tower any time, only to ask for me."

"Yes, Ben."

"Well, my dear, I came by the barber's, and what do you think?"

Johanna shook her head.

"Guess again."

"Spare me, Ben. If you have any news for me, pray tell me. Do not keep me in suspense."

Ben considered a little whether what he had to say was news or not; and then taking rather an enlarged view of the word, he added—

"Yes, I have. Todd wants a pious boy."

"A what?"

"A pious boy. He's got a bill in his window to say that he wants a pious boy. What do you think of that, now? Did you ever hear of such a villain? Easy does it. And he came out, too, and wanted to 'polish me off.'"

"Oh, Ben."

"Oh, Johanna. Take things easy."

"I mean that you should be very careful indeed not to go into that man's shop. Promise me that you will never do so."

"All's right. Never be afeard, or you'd never tame the beastesses. If I was only to go into that fellow's shop and fix a eye on him so—you'd see!"

Ben fixed one of his eyes upon Johanna in such a manner, that she was glad to escape from its glare, which was quite gratifying to him (Ben), inasmuch as it was a kind of tacit acknowledgment of the extraordinary powers of his vision.

"Easy does it," he said. "All's right. Do you mean to meet this colonel?"

"Yes, Ben."

"All's right. Only take care of yourself down Fleet Street, that's all."

"I will, indeed."

"What do you say to taking me with you?"

"Where, Ben?"

"Why, where you go to meet the colonel, my dear."

"Personally, I should not entertain the smallest objection; but there is no danger in the transaction. I know that Colonel Jeffery is a man of honour, and that in meeting him upon such an occasion I am perfectly safe."

"Good again," said Ben. "Easy does it. Hilloa! what's that in the shop?"

"Only my mother come home."

"Only? The deuce! Excuse me, my dear, I must be off. Somehow or another your mother and I don't agree, you see, and ever since I had that dreadful stomach ache one night here, it gives me a twinge to see her, so I'll be off. But remember—easy does it."

CHAPTER LVIII.
THE GRAND CONSULTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

With this sage aphorism, Ben effected a hasty retreat from the optician's house by the private door, so that he should not run the risk of encountering Mrs. Oakley, who had made her appearance by the shop way. When Johanna was alone, she once again read the little missive from the colonel; and then, burying her face in her hands, she tried still to think that it was possible he might have some good news to tell her. And yet, if such had been the case, would he not have written it? Would he, feeling for her as she knew he did, have kept her in a state of suspense upon such a subject? Ah, no. He would rather have, in spite of all obstacles, made his way into the shop, and called to her—"Johanna, Mark Ingestrie lives," if he had really been in a position to say so much. As these thoughts chased each other through the mind of the young girl, she shed abundance of tears; and so absorbed was she in her grief, that she was not aware that any one was present, until she felt a light touch upon her shoulder, and upon starting round suddenly, she saw her friend Arabella Wilmot standing close to her.

"Johanna?"

"Yes—yes, Arabella. I am here."

"Yes, dear Johanna. But you are weeping."

"I am—I am. To you these tears shall be no secret, Arabella. Alas! alas! You, who know my heart, know how much I have to weep for. You can bear with me. You are the only one in all the world whom I would willingly let see these bitter—bitter tears."

At those words, Johanna wept afresh, and the heart of her young friend was melted; but recovering sooner than Johanna, Arabella was able to speak somewhat composedly to her, saying—

"Have you heard anything, Johanna, new?"

"No—no. Except that Mr. Jeffery wishes to see me again to tell me something, and as he has not said in his letter what it is, I can guess it is no good news."

"Nay; is not that assuming too much?"

"No—no. I know he would, if he had had any joyous intelligence for me, have written it. He would feel of what a suspense even a few hours would be upon such a subject. No, Arabella, I feel that what he has to say is some terrible confirmation of my worst fears."

Arabella found it no easy task to combat this course of reasoning upon the part of Johanna. She felt its force, and yet she felt at the same time that it was somewhat incumbent upon her to resist it, and to make at least the endeavour to ward off the deep depression that had seized upon Johanna.

"Now listen to me," she said. "Perhaps what Colonel Jeffery has to say to you is, after all, a something hopeful; but, at the same time, being only hopeful, and nothing positive, he may have felt how difficult it was to write it, without exciting undue effects in your mind, and so prefers saying it, when he can accompany it by all the little collateral circumstances which alone can give it its proper value."

There was something like a gleam of sunshine in this idea.

"Do you understand me, dear Johanna?"

"Yes—yes."

Johanna spoke more firmly than before. The last argument of her friend had had all its weight with her, and had chased away many of the gloomy thoughts that had but a few moments before possessed her. What a strange compound is the human mind, and how singularly does it take its texture, cameleon-like, from surrounding circumstances? But a few moments since, and, to Johanna the brief epistle of the colonel was suggestive of nothing but despair. How different now was its aspect? Arabella Wilmot had, by a few simple words, placed it in a new light, so that it started to the imagination of Johanna symbols of life.

"Ah! you are hoping now," said Arabella.

"I am—I am. Perhaps it is as you say, Arabella. I will think it is."

Miss Wilmot was now almost afraid that she had gone too far, and conjured up too much hope; but she could not bear the idea of dashing down again the fairy fabric of expectation she had moved in the bosom of Johanna, and merely added—

"Well, Johanna, since you find that the letter will, at all events, bear two interpretations, I am sure that, until you may be convinced it owns to the worst, you will be as composed as possible."

"I will. And now, Arabella, will you, and can you accompany me this evening to the Temple Gardens, to meet Colonel Jeffery?"

"Yes, Johanna. I both can and will, if such is your wish."

"It is, Arabella, much my wish, for I feel that if what our friend, the colonel, has to say, should not be of a hopeful character, I should never be able to repeat it to you, so as to have your opinion of it."

"Then we will go together. But we will not pass that dreadful man's shop."

"Todd's?"

"Yes."

"Why not, Arabella? I feel, the moment that I leave this house, as though some irresistible fascination dragged me there, and I think I could no more pass down Fleet Street without directing my eyes to that building, which perchance has proved fatal to poor Mark, than I could fly."

"But—but, I shrink from that man recognising us again."

"We will pass upon the other side of the way, Arabella; but do not say nay to me, for pass I must."

There was such a frantic sort of earnestness in the manner in which Johanna urged this point, that Arabella no longer made any sort of opposition to it, and the two young girls soon arranged a time of meeting, when they would proceed together to the Temple Gardens, to give Colonel Jeffery the meeting he so much desired. As nothing of a very particular character occurred that day, we will at once follow Arabella and Johanna upon the mission, premising that the hours have slipped away which intervened between the time of Johanna receiving the note from Colonel Jeffery, and the time when, if she kept the appointment with him, it would be necessary for her to start from home to do so. Both the young girls made as great alterations in their attire as they could upon this occasion, so that they should not be strikingly recognisable again by Todd; and then Arabella reminding Johanna that the bargain between them was to pass upon the other side of the way, they both set off from the old spectacle-maker's. As they neared Fleet Street, the agitation of Johanna became more and more apparent, and Arabella was compelled to counsel her to calmness, lest the passers-by should notice how much she felt, from some cause to them unknown.

"My dear Johanna," she said. "Your arm trembles in mine. Oh! pray be calm."

"I will—I will. Are we near?"

"Yes. Let us cross."

They reached the other side of the way from that on which Todd's shop was situated, to the great relief of Arabella, who as yet knew not of the placard that Todd had exhibited in his window, announcing the want of a pious youth. The sight of the shop, however, seemed to bring that circumstance to the mind of Johanna, and she told her young friend of it at once.

"Oh! Johanna," said Arabella, "does it not seem as though—"

She paused, and Johanna looked enquiringly at her, saying—

"What would you say, Arabella? What would you say?"

"Nothing now, Johanna. Nothing now. A thought struck me, and when we return from this meeting with your friend, the colonel, I will communicate it to you. Oh! do not look opposite. Do not."

All such injunctions were thrown away upon Johanna. Look opposite she did, and as she herself had truly said, it would have been quite impossible for her to avoid the doing so, even if the greatest personal risk had been risked in the action. But Todd's shop, to look at from the other side of the way, presented no terrors. It simply presented the idea of a little barber's shop, of no very great pretensions, but of sufficient respectability, as barber's shops were in those days, not to make any decent person shrink from going into it. No doubt, in the crowd of Fleet Street—for Fleet Street was then crowded, although not to the extent it is now—Johanna and her friend passed quite unnoticed by Todd, even if he had been looking out. At all events, they reached Temple Bar without any obstruction or adventure. Finding, then, that they had passed the main entrance to the Temple, they went down the nearest adjacent street, and pursuing a circuitous route through some curious-looking courts, they reached their destination yet a little before the appointed hour. Colonel Jeffery, however, was not likely to keep Johanna Oakley waiting.

"There," said Arabella. "Is that the colonel?"

Johanna looked up just as the colonel approached, and lifted his hat.

"Yes, yes."

In another moment he was with them. There was a look upon the countenance of Colonel Jeffery of deep concern, and that look, at one glance that was bestowed upon it by Johanna Oakley, was quite sufficient to banish all hidden hopes that she might yet have cherished regarding the character of the news that he had to impart to her. Arabella Wilmot, too, was of the same opinion regarding the physiognomical expression of the colonel, who bowed to her profoundly.

Johanna And Arabella Meet And Consult Colonel Jeffery,
In Temple Gardens.

Johanna And Arabella Meet And Consult Colonel Jeffery,
In Temple Gardens.

"I have brought my dearest friend with me," said Johanna, "from whom I have no secrets."

"Nor I," said the colonel, "now that I hear she stands in such an enviable relation to you, Miss Oakley."

Arabella slightly bowed; and Johanna fixing her eyes, in which tears were glistening, upon him, said—

"You have come to tell me that I may abandon all hope?"

"No—no; Heaven forbid!"

A bright flush came over the face of the young girl, and clasping her hands, she said—

"Oh, sir, do not play with feelings that perhaps you scarcely guess at. Do not tamper with a heart so near breaking as mine. It is cruel—cruel!"

"Do I deserve such a charge," said the colonel, "even by implication?"

"No—no," said Arabella. "Recollect yourself, Johanna. You are unjust to one who has shown himself to be your friend, and a friend to him whom you hope to see again."

Johanna held out her little child-like hand to the colonel, and looking appealingly in his face, she said—

"Can you forgive me? It was not I who spoke, but it was the agony of my heart that fashioned itself at the moment into words my better judgment and my better feelings will not own. Can you forgive me?"

"Can I, Miss Oakley! Oh, do not ask me. God grant that I could make you happy."

"I thank you, sir, deeply and truly thank you; and—and—now—now—"

"Now, you would say, tell me my news."

"Yes. Oh, yes."

"Then let us walk upon this broad path, by the river, while, in the first instance, I tell you that it was only from a deep sense of duty, and a feeling that I ought not, upon any consideration, to keep anything from you, that I came here to-day to give you some more information, and yet fresh information."

"You are very—very good to me, sir."

"No—no, do not say that, Miss Oakley. I am a friend. I am only very selfish; but, in brief, the lad who was in the barber's service at the time we think Mark Ingestrie called at the shop with the string of pearls in his possession, has told us all he knows upon the subject, freely."

"Yes—yes; and—and—"

"He knows very little."

"But that little?"

"Just amounts to this:—That such a person did come to the shop, and that he is quite clear that he never left it."

"Quite clear that he never left it!" repeated Johanna—"that he never left it. Quite clear that—that—"

She burst into tears, and clung to Arabella Wilmot for support. The colonel looked inexpressibly distressed, but he did not speak. He felt that any common-place topics of consolation would have been an insult; and he had seen enough of human feelings to know that such bursts of passionate grief cannot be stemmed, but must have their course, and that such tears will flow like irresistible torrents into the ocean of eternity. Arabella was greatly distressed. She had not expected that Johanna would have given way in such a manner, and she looked at Colonel Jeffery as though she would have said—"Is it possible that you can say nothing to calm this grief?" He shook his head, but made no reply in words. In a few moments, however, Johanna was wonderfully recovered. She was able to speak more composedly than she had done since the commencement of the interview.

"Tell me all, now," she said. "I can bear to hear it all."

"You know all, Miss Oakley. The poor boy, in whose fate I have felt sufficiently interested to take him into my care, says that such a man as Thornhill did come to his master's shop. That he (the boy) was sent out upon some trivial errand, merely to get him out of the way, and that, pending his return, the visitor disappeared. He deposes to the fact of the dog watching the door."

"The dog?"

"Yes. Thornhill, it seems, had a faithful dog with him."

"Ah, Arabella, we must have seen that dog."

"Has not the creature, then, fallen a victim to Todd's malevolence?"

"We think not, sir," said Arabella.

"Go on—go on," said Johanna; "what more?"

"The boy states that he is certain he saw the hat of the visitor with the dog in Todd's house, after Todd had declared he had left, and proceeded to the city."

"The hat—the dog. Alas! alas!"

"Nay, Miss Oakley, do not forget one thing, and that is, that neither you nor any one else have as yet identified this Mr. Thornhill as Mr. Ingestrie."

"No, not positively; but my heart tells me—"

"Ah, Miss Oakley, the heart is the slave of the feelings and of the imagination. You must not always trust to its testimony or emotions upon cold fact."

"There is yet hope, then, Johanna," said Arabella. "A bright hope for you to cling to, for, as this gentleman says, there is nothing positive to prove that Mr. Thornhill was Mark Ingestrie. I would not, were I you, abandon that hope on any account, while I lived, and could still clutch it. Would it not be a great thing, sir, if any papers or documents which this Thornhill might have had about him, could be recovered?"

"It would indeed."

Arabella at first seemed upon the point of saying something contingent upon this remark of the colonel's, or rather this acquiescence of his in her remark, but she thought better of it, and was silent, upon which Johanna spoke, saying—

"And that is really all, sir?"

"It is, Miss Oakley."

"But will nothing be done? Will no steps be taken to bring this man, Todd to justice?"

"Yes, everything will be done; and indeed, anything that can be done consistently with sound policy is actually now. Sir Richard Blunt, one of the most acute, active, and personally daring of the magistrates of London, has the affair in hand, and you may be quite assured that he will pursue it with zeal."

"And what is he doing?"

"Collecting such evidence against Todd, that at a moment the law will be enabled to come upon him with a certainty that by no ingenious quibble can he escape."

Johanna shuddered.

"I thank you, sir, from my heart," she said, "for all the kindness and—and—I need not again trespass upon your time or your patience."

"Ah, Miss Oakley, will you deny me your friendship?"

"Oh, no—no."

"Then why deny me the privilege of a friend to see you sometimes. If I cannot say to you anything positively of a consoling character regarding him whom you so much regret, I can at least share your sorrows, and sympathise with your feelings."

Johanna was silent, but after a few moments she began to feel that she was acting both with harshness and injustice towards one who had been all that the kindest and most generous friend could be to her. She held out her hand to the colonel, saying—

"Yes, sir, I shall be always happy to see you."

The colonel pressed her hand in his, and then turning to Arabella Wilmot, they parted at the garden.

CHAPTER LIX.
THE PROPOSAL OF ARABELLA.

"Johanna," said Arabella Wilmot, as they passed out of the Temple by the old gate at Whitefriars, "Johanna, if there had been no Mark Ingestrie in the world, could you not have loved some one else truly?"

"No, no—oh, no."

"Not such a one as Colonel Jeffery?"

"No, Arabella, I respect and admire Colonel Jeffery. He comes fully up to all my notions of what a gentleman should be, but I cannot love him."

Arabella sighed. The two young girls passed Todd's shop upon the other side of the way, and Johanna shuddered as she did so, and repeated in a low voice—

"He went there, but he never left."

"Nay, but you should remember that was Thornhill."

"Yes, Thornhill, alias Ingestrie."

"You will cling to that idea."

"I cannot help it, Arabella. Oh, that I could solve the dreadful doubt. You speak to me of finding consolation and hope from the possibility that this Thornhill might not have been Ingestrie; but I feel, Arabella, that the agony of that constant doubt, and the pangs of never ending thought and speculation upon that subject will drive me mad. I cannot endure them—I must be resolved one way or the other. It is suspense that will

kill me. I might in the course of time reconcile myself to the fact that poor Mark had gone before me to that world where we shall assuredly meet again; but the doubt as to his fate is—is indeed madness!"

There was a manner about Johanna, as she pronounced these words, that was quite alarming to Arabella. Perhaps it was this alarm which went a long way towards inducing her, Arabella, to say what she now said to Johanna—

"Have you forgotten your idea of going disguised to Todd's, Johanna? And have you forgotten what Mr. Ben, your friend from the Tower, told you?"

"What? Oh, what, Arabella—what did he tell me that I should remember?"

"Why that Todd had placed a placard in his window, stating that he wanted a boy in his shop. Oh, Johanna, it would be so romantic; and to be sure, I have read of such things. Do you think you would have courage sufficient to dress yourself again in my cousin's clothes, and go to Todd's shop?"

"Yes, yes—I understand you—and apply for the vacant situation."

"Yes, Johanna; it might, you know, afford you an opportunity of searching the place, and then, if you found nothing which could assure you of the presence at one time there of Mark Ingestrie, you would come away with a heart more at ease."

"I should—I should. He could but kill me?"

"Who? who?"

"Sweeney Todd."

"Oh, no—no, Johanna, your stay would not exceed a few short hours."

"Oh, what long hours they would be."

"Well, Johanna, I almost dread the counsel I am giving to you. It is fraught probably with a thousand mischiefs and dangers, that neither you nor I have sufficient experience to see; and now that I have said

what I have, I beg of you to think no further of it, and from my heart I wish it all unsaid."

"No, Arabella, why should you wish it unsaid? It is true that the course you suggest to me is out of the ordinary way, and most romantic, but, then, are not all the circumstances connected with this sad affair far out of the ordinary course?"

"Yes, yes—and yet—"

"Arabella, I will do it."

"Oh, Johanna, Johanna—if any harm should come to you—"

"Then absolve yourself, Arabella, from all reproach upon the subject. Remember always that I go upon my own responsibility, and against your wishes, feelings, and advice. All that I now ask of you is that you will once more lend me that disguise, and assist me in further making myself look like that I would represent myself, and I shall then, perhaps, ask no more of your friendship in this world."

Arabella was horrified. The plan she had proposed had, from her course of romantic reading, such charms for her imagination, that she could not have forborne mentioning it, but, now that in earnest Johanna talked of carrying it out, she became terrified at what might be the consequences. In the open streets she was afraid of making a scene by any further opposition to Johanna, whose feelings, she saw, were in a great state of excitement; but she hoped that she would be able yet to dissuade her from her purpose when she got her home.

"Say no more now of it, Johanna, and come home with me, when we will talk it over more at large."

"I am resolved," said Johanna. "The very resolution to do something bold and definite has given me already a world of ease. I am different quite in feeling to what I was. I am sure that God is, even now, giving me strength and calmness to do this much for him who would have risked anything for me."

To reason with any one impressed with such notions would have been folly indeed, and Arabella forbore doing so at that juncture. She could not but be amazed, however, at the firmness of manner of Johanna now, in comparison with the frantic burst of grief which she had so recently been indulging in. Her step was firm, her lips were compressed, and her countenance, although more than usually pale, was expressive in every feature of highly-wrought determination.

"She will do it or die," thought Arabella, "and if anything happens to her, I shall wish myself dead likewise."

In this state of feeling—not a very amiable one—the two young girls reached the abode of Arabella Wilmot. The strongly marked feeling of composure and determination by no means left Johanna, but, if anything, seemed to be rather upon the increase, while occasionally she would mutter to herself—

"Yes—yes; I will know all—I will know the worst."

When they were alone in the little chamber of Arabella—that little chamber which had witnessed so many of the mutual confidences of those two young girls—Arabella at once began to say something that might provoke a discussion about the propriety of the hazardous expedition to Todd's, but Johanna stopped her by saying as she laid her hands gently upon her arm—

"Arabella, will you do me two favours?"

"A hundred; but—"

"Nay, hear me out, dear friend, before you say another word. The first of those favours is, that you will not, by word or look, try to dissuade me from my purpose of going in disguise to Todd's. The second is, that you will keep my secret when I do go."

"Oh! Johanna! Johanna!"

"Promise me."

"Yes. I do—I do."

"I am satisfied. And now, my own dear Arabella, let me tell you that I do not think that there is any such danger as you suppose in the expedition. In the first place, I do not think Todd will easily discover me to be aught else than what I pretend to be, and if I should see that I am in any danger, Fleet Street, with all its living population, is close at hand, and such a cry for aid as I, being, as I am, forearmed by being forewarned, could raise, would soon bring me many defenders."

Arabella sobbed.

"And then, after all, I only want to stay until, by one absence of Todd's from the house, I shall be able to make a search for some memorial of the visit of Mark Ingestrie there. If I find it not, I return to you at once better satisfied, and with better hopes than I went forth. If I do find it, I will call upon the tardy law for justice."

"Johanna—Johanna, you are not the same creature that you were!"

"I know it. I am changed. I feel that I am."

Arabella looked at the sweet childish beauty of the face before her, and her eyes filled with tears again at the thought that something near akin to despair had implanted upon it that look of unnatural calmness and determination it wore.

"You doubt me?" said Johanna.

"Oh! no—no. I feel now that you will do it, and feeling that, I likewise feel that I ought not to drive you to seek assistance from another, in your enterprise. But something must be arranged between us."

"In what respect?"

"Such as, if I should not hear of you within a certain time, I—I—"

"You would feel bound to find me some help. Be it so, Arabella. If I do not come to you or send to you, before the midnight of to-morrow, do what you will, and I shall not think that you have committed any breach of faith."

"I am content, Johanna, to abide by those conditions; and now I will say nothing to you to bend you from your purpose, but I will pray to Heaven that you may become successful, not in finding any record of Mark Ingestrie, but in procuring peace to your mind by the utter absence of such record."

"I will go now."

"No—no, Johanna. Bethink you what pain your unexplained absence would give to your father. Something must be said or done to make him feel at ease during the, perhaps, many hours that you will be absent."

"It is well thought of, Arabella. Oh! how selfish we become when overwhelmed by our own strange emotions! I had forgotten that I had a father."

It was now agreed between the two young girls that Johanna should go home, and that Arabella Wilmot should call for her, and ask Mr. Oakley's permission for her (Johanna) to come to her upon a visit for two days. It was no very unusual thing for Johanna to pass a night with her friend, so that it was thought such a course now would have the effect of quieting all anxiety on account of the absence of the young girl from her parental home.

CHAPTER LX.
TODD FINDS A BOY.

"Temporary insanity, and a dividend of one shilling upon the razor!"

Such was the enlightened verdict of twelve sapient shopkeepers in the Strand upon John Mundell—peace to his manes! He is gone where there are no discounts—no usury laws—no unredeemed pledges, and no strings of pearls! Good day to you, John Mundell!

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Sweeney Todd. "That affair is settled in an uncommonly satisfactory manner. What an odd thing it is, though, that nobody now comes into my shop, but somebody else, upon some shuffling excuse or another, comes in within two minutes afterwards. Now, if I were superstitious, which—I—I am not—"

Here Todd looked first over his right shoulder and then over his left, with two perceptible shudders.

"If, as I say, I were superstitious which—Hilloa! who's this?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Todd," said a woman in widow's weeds, as she entered the shop, "but they do say that—that—"

"What?" screamed Todd, "what?"

"That you are charitable to the poor."

"Oh, that's all. I—I. That's all. Very good. I am charitable to the poor. Very—very charitable to the poor. What may your business be, madam?"

"You don't know me, Mr. Todd, I dare say, but my name is Slick."

"Slick—Slick? No, madam, I have not the pleasure of knowing you; and may I again ask why I am honoured with the visit?"

"Why, sir, I have got up a little humble petition. You see, sir, my husband, Solomon Slick, is a watch-maker, and one day, about a month ago, he went out to go to the city with two chronometers, to take to Brown, Smuggins, Bugsby, and Podd, who employ him, and he was never afterwards heard of, leaving me with six children, and one at the breast. Now, Mr. Brown is a kind sort of man, and spoke to Podd about doing something, but Bugsby and Smuggins, they will have it that my husband ran away with the watches, and that we are only watching the best time to go to him; but my aunt, Mrs. Longfinch, in Bedfordshire, will do something for us if we go there; so I am trying to get up a pound or two to take me and the little ones."

Todd made a chuckling noise, like a hen in a farm-yard, and looked the picture of compassionate commiseration.

"Dear—dear, what a shocking thing."

"It is indeed, sir."

"And have you no idea of what has become of him, madam?"

"Not in the least, sir—not in the least. But I said to myself—'I dare say Mr. Todd will be so good as to assist us in our necessities.'"

"Certainly, madam—certainly. Do you know what is the most nourishing thing you can give to your children?"

"Alas! sir, the poor things, since their poor father went, have had little choice of one thing or another. It was he who supported them. But what is it, sir?"

"Mrs. Lovett's pies."

"Ah, sir, they had one a-piece, poor things, the very day after poor Solomon Slick disappeared. A compassionate neighbour brought them, and all the while they ate them, they thought of their father that was gone."

"Very natural, that," said Todd. "Now, Mrs. Slick, I am but a poor man, but I will give you my advice, and something more substantial. The advice is, that if anybody is moved to compassion, and bestows upon you a few pence for your children, you go and lay it out in pies at Mrs. Lovett's; and as for the more substantial something, take that, and read it at your leisure."

Todd, as he spoke, took from a drawer a religious tract, entitled "The Spiritual Quartern Loaf for the Hungry Sinner," and handed it to Mrs. Slick. The poor woman received it with a look of disappointment, and said, with a slight shudder—

"And is this all you can do, Mr. Todd?"

"All!" cried Todd. "All? Good gracious, what more do you want? Recollect, my good woman, that there is another world where the poor will have their reward, provided that in this they are not too annoying to the rich and the comfortable. Go away. Dear—dear, and this is gratitude. I must go and pray for the hardness of heart and the Egyptian darkness of the common and the lower orders in general, and you in particular, Mrs. Slick."

The woman was terrified at the extraordinary faces that Todd made during the delivery of this harangue, and hastily left the shop, having dropped the "Spiritual Quartern Loaf for Hungry Sinners" in the doorway.

"Ha! ha!" said Todd when she was gone. "They thought of their father, did they, while they ate Lovett's pies. Ha! ha!"

At this moment a man made his appearance in the shop, and looked with a sly twinkle at Sweeney Todd. The latter started, for in that man he imagined no other than an under attendant at the establishment of Mr. Fogg, at Peckham. That this man came with some message from Fogg, he did not for a moment doubt, but what could it possibly be, since he (Todd) fully believed that Tobias Ragg was no more.

"Do you know me?" said the man.

As a general proposition, Todd did not like to say yes to anything, so he looked dubious, and remarked that he thought it might rain soon, but if he (the man) wanted a clean shave, he (Todd) would soon do for him.

"But, really, Mr. Todd, don't you know me?"

"I know nobody," said Todd.

The man chuckled with a hideous grimace, that seemed habitual to him, for he at times indulged in it, when, to all appearance, no subject whatever of hilarity was on the topic, and then he said—

"I come from Fogg."

"Fogg's, not Fogg?"

The man did not at first seem to understand this nice distinction that Todd drew between coming from Fogg's establishment and coming from Fogg himself; but after knitting his brows, and considering a little, he said—

"Oh—ah—I see. No, I don't come from Fogg, confound him, he don't use me well, so I thought I'd come to tell you—"

The shop door opened, and a stout burly-looking man made his appearance. Todd turned upon him, with a face livid with passion, as he said—

"Well, sir, what now?"

"Eh?" said the stout burly man. "Ain't this a barber's shop?"

"To be sure it is; and, once for all, do you want to be shaved, or do you not?"

"Why, what else could I come in for?"

"I don't know; but you have been here more than once—more than twice—more than thrice, and yet you have never been shaved yet."

"Well, that is a good one."

"A good what?"

"Mistake, for I have only just come to London to-day; but I'll wait while you shave this gentleman. I am in no hurry."

"No, sir," said Todd; "this gentleman is a private friend of mine, and don't come to be shaved at all."

The stout burly-looking man seemed rather confused for a moment, and then he turned to the stranger, and said—

"Are you really a private friend of Mr. Todd's?"

"Very," said the other.

"Then I scorn to interrupt any one in their confidential discourse, just because my beard happens to be a day old. No; I trust that time, and old English politeness, will ever prevent me from doing such a thing; so, Mr. Todd, I will look in upon some other occasion, if you please."

"No—no," said Todd, "sit down: business is business. Pray sit down. You don't know how disappointed I shall feel if I don't polish you off, now that you are here, sir."

"Could not think of it," said the other, in whom the reader has, no doubt, recognised one of Sir Richard Blunt's officers. "Could not for a moment think of it. Good day."

Before Todd could utter another remonstrance, he was out of the shop, and when he got about twelve paces off, he met Crotchet, who said—

"Well, what do yer bring it in now?"

"I must cut it. Todd is beginning to recollect me, and to think there is something odd going on."

Mr. Crotchet gave a slight whistle, and then said—

"Wery good; but did you leave a *hindevidel* in the shaving crib, to be done for?"

"Yes; but he said he was a private friend of Todd's."

"Good agin, that will do. He's safe enough, I dare say, and if he isn't, why he ought to be more *petikler* in a-dressing of his acquaintances. Do you know where the governor is?"

"No. I have not seen him; but will you tell him, Crotchet, why I think it's better for me to be scarce for a day or two?"

"To be sure, old fellow. You can go on some other day."

"Surely—surely."

CHAPTER LXI.
TODD RECEIVES SOME STARTLING INTELLIGENCE.

It took Todd, master as he was, or used to be, in the art of dissimulation, some few minutes to recover his composure, after the officer had left the shop, and during that time, the gentleman from Fogg's looked at him with the quiet sniggering kind of laugh so peculiar to him. Todd was evidently, day by day, losing that amount of nerve which had at one time formed his principal characteristic. It was getting, in fact, clear to himself that he was not near so well fitted for the business he was carrying on as he had been. Turning to the man from Fogg's, he said, while he put on as bland a smile as he could—

"Well, my friend, I suppose you have sought me with some motive? Pray speak out, and tell me what it is."

The man laughed.

"I have had a row with Fogg," he said, "and we parted in anger. I told him I would split upon the den, but he is a deep one, and he only coughed. Fogg, though, somehow don't laugh as he used. However, as well as he could laugh, he did, and, says he, 'Peter, my lad,' says he, 'if you do split upon the old den, I'll get you transported, as safe as you think yourself.'"

"Well?"

"Well. I—I—didn't like that."

"Then you are probably," said Todd in a bland manner—"you are probably aware that you may be obnoxious to the law."

"A few!" said the fellow.

"And what followed?"

"'Why, Peter,' added Fogg, 'you may leave me if you like, and once a month there will be a couple of guineas here for you. There's the door, so away, I insist;' and it has struck me, that if Fogg gives me a couple of shiners a month to hold my tongue, other gentlemen might do as much, and through one and another, I might pick up a crust and something to moisten it with."

The man laughed again. Todd nodded his head, as much as to say—"You could not have explained yourself clearer," and then he said—

"Peter, in your way you have a certain sort of genius. I might just remark, however, that after paying Fogg handsomely for what he has done, it is rather hard that Fogg's cast-off officials should come upon Fogg's best customers, and threaten them out of any more."

"I know it's hard," said the man.

"Then why do you do it?"

"Because, to my thinking, it would be a deuced sight harder for me to want anything; and besides, I might get into trouble, and be in the hands of the police, when who knows but that in some soft moment some one might get hold of me, and get it all out of me. Wouldn't that be harder still for all?"

"It would."

"Ah! Mr. Todd, I always thought you were a man of judgment, that I did."

"You do me infinite honour."

"Not at all. I say what I think, you may take your oath of that. But when I saw you come about that last boy, I said to myself—'Mr. Todd is carrying on some nice game, but what it is I don't know. Howsomdever he is a

man with something more than would go into a small tea-spoon hereabouts.'"

Mr. Peter tapped his forehead with his finger as he spoke, to intimate that he alluded to the intellectual capacity of Todd.

"You are very obliging," said Todd.

"Not at all. Not at all. How much will you stand, now?"

"I suppose, if I say the same as Mr. Fogg, you will be satisfied, Mr. Peter. Times are very bad, you know."

Peter laughed again.

"No, no! Mr. Todd, times are not very bad, but I do think what you say is very fair, and that if you stand the same as Fogg, I ought not to say one word against it."

"How charming it is," said Todd, casting his eyes up to the ceiling, as though communing with himself or some higher intelligence supposed to be in that direction. "How charming it is to feel that you are at any time transacting business with one who is so very obliging and so very reasonable."

Somehow Peter winced a little before the look of Todd. The barber had come into his proposal a little too readily. It almost looked as though he saw his way too clearly out of it again. If he had declaimed loudly, and made a great fuss about the matter, Mr. Peter would have been better pleased, but as it was he felt, he scarcely knew why, wonderfully fidgetty.

"That boy," he said, "to change the conversation. That boy, used to say some odd things of you, Mr. Todd."

"Insanity," said Todd, "is a great calamity."

"Oh, very."

"And so clouds the faculties, that the poor boy no doubt said things of me, his best friend, that, if he had been restored to reason, he would have heard spoken of with a smile of incredulity."

"Ha! ha! By the bye—Ha! ha!"

"Well, sir?" said Todd, who did not in the smallest degree join in the odd laugh of Peter. "Well, sir?"

"I was merely going to say. Have you, by any chance, heard anything more of him?"

Todd walked close to Peter, and placed his two brawny hands upon his shoulders, as he slowly repeated—

"Have I by any chance heard anything more of him? What do you mean? Speak out, or by all that's powerful, this is the last moment of your existence. Speak out, I say."

"Murder!"

"Fool! Be more explicit, and you are safe. Be open and candid with me, and not a hair of your head shall suffer injury. What do you mean by asking me if I have heard anything more of him?"

"Don't throttle me."

"Speak."

"I—I can't while you hold me so tight. I—I—can—hardly—breathe."

Todd took his hands off him, and crossing his arms over his breast, he said in tones of most unnatural calmness—

"Now speak."

"Well, Mr. Todd—I—I—only—."

"You only what?"

"Asked you naturally enough, if you had heard anything of the boy Tobias Ragg, you know, since he ran away from Fogg's. That's all."

"Since he what?"

"Ran away from Fogg's one night."

"Then he—he is not dead? The villain Fogg sent word to me that he was dead."

"Did he though? Well I never. That was so like Fogg. Only to think now. Lord bless you, Mr. Todd, he made his escape and ran away, and we never heard anything more of him from that time to this. The idea now of Fogg telling you he was dead. Well, I did wonder at your taking the thing so easy, and never coming down to enquire about it."

"Not dead? Not dead?"

"Not as I know on."

"Curses!"

"Ah! that will do you good, Mr. Todd. Whenever I am put out, I set to swearing like a good one, and that's the way I come round again. Don't mind me. You swear as long as you like. It was a shame for Fogg not to tell you he had bolted, but I suppose he thought he'd take his chance."

"The villain!"

"*Worser! worser!* nor a *willain*!" said Peter. "Who knows now what mischief may be done, all through that boy. Why, he may be now being gammoned by the police and a parson to tell all he knows. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

Todd sunk upon a chair—not the shaving one—and resting his hand upon his head, he uttered a sepulchral groan.

Peter shook himself.

"You don't seem well, Mr. Todd. I didn't think you was the sort of man to be down on your blessed luck in this sort of way. Cheer up. What's the use of grieving? as the old song says."

Todd groaned again.

"And if so be as the kid," continued Peter, "did run away, my opinion is as he'd seen enough and felt enough, while he was at Fogg's, to make him as mad as a March hare."

There was hope in that suggestion, and Todd looked up.

"You really think, then, Mr. Peter, that—that his intellects—"

"His what?"

"His mind, I mean, has not withstood the shock of what he went through while he was in Fogg's establishment?"

"How could it? Once or twice things very nigh infected me, and how should he stand up agin 'em? But arter all, Mr. Fogg, what was it all about? That's what used to bother me. Was there anything in what he said, or wasn't there?"

"My good fellow," said Todd, "I have only one question to ask you—"

"Fire away."

"And that is, if you would prefer to have a sum of money down, and not trouble me any more?"

"Down!"

"Yes, down."

"On the nail? Well, its temptatious, I own. Let me see. Thus Fogg's riglar annuity, as a fellow may call it, and a good round sum down from you, Mr. T. I think you said a good round sum down on the nail, didn't you?"

"Yes—yes. Any sum in reason."

"Done, then. I'll do it. Honour bright and shining. Mr. T., when I says a thing, it's said, and no mistake, and if I takes something down, you won't hear no more of me; whatever you may think, Mr. T., I ain't one of them fellows as will spend their tin, and then come asking for more—not I. Oh, dear no! Only give me what's reasonable down, and the thing's settled."

"Very good," said Todd, in a voice which was calm and composed. "Just step this way, into the back parlour, and I'll satisfy you. As for troubling me any more, I am, I assure you, as perfectly easy upon that point as it is at all possible to be."

CHAPTER LXII.
TODD CLEARS OFF CIRCUMSTANCES.

The arrangement come to between Todd and his visitor seemed to give equal satisfaction to both, and Mr. Peter, if he had what the phrenologists call an organ of caution at all developed, must have had acquisitiveness so large as completely to overpower its action at the present time. The idea of getting from Todd's fears a sum of money at once, and from Fogg's fears a regular small annuity, was to him a most felicitous combination of circumstances, and his reflections upon the pleasant consequences resulting therefrom had such full possession of him, that his scruples vanished, and as he followed Todd into the back parlour from the shop, he muttered to himself—

"I'll try and get enough out of him to open a public-house."

Todd heard the wish, and turning quickly with what he intended should be an engaging smile, he said—

"And why not, Peter—and why not? Nothing would give me more sincere gratification than seeing you in a public-house, for although a man may be a publican, he need not be a sinner, you know."

"Eh?"

"I say he need not be a sinner; and there would be nothing in the world, Peter, to prevent you from having prayers night and morning, and I am sure I should be most happy to come now and then, if it were only to say 'Amen!'"

"Humph!" said Peter. "You are too good, you are. Much too good, really."

"Not at all, Peter. Let us be as good as we may, we cannot be too good. Human nature is a strange compound, you know, mixed up of several things opposite to each other, like a lather in a shaving dish."

With this sentiment Todd held open the door of the sanctum behind his shop, and by a cautious wave of his hand invited Mr. Peter to enter. That gentleman did so.

"Now," said Todd, in quite a confidential tone, "what is your peculiar affection in the—"

Here Mr. Todd went through the pantomimic action of draining a glass. Peter laughed, and then shaking his head waggishly, he said—

"What a rum 'un you are! Fogg had his funny ways, but I do think you beat him, that you do. Well, if I must say I have a partiality, it's to brandy. Do you know, I think, between you and me and the post, that a drop of good brandy is rather one of them things that makes human nature what it is."

"What a just remark," said Todd.

Peter looked as sage as possible. He was getting upon wonderfully good terms with his own sagacity—a certain sign that he was losing his ordinary discretion. Todd opened a small cupboard in the wall—what a number of small cupboards in the wall Todd had—and produced a long-necked bottle and a couple of glasses. He held the bottle up to the dim light, saying—

"That's the thing, rather."

"It looks like it," said Peter.

"And it is," said Todd, "what it looks. This bottle and the liquor within it have basked in the sun of a fairer clime than ours, Peter, and the laughing glades of the sweet south have capped it in beauty."

Peter looked puzzled.

"What a learned man you are, Mr. T.," he said. "You seem to know something of everything, and I dare say the brandy is to the full as good as it looks."

This was decidedly a quiet sort of hint to decant some of it without further loss of time, and Todd at once complied. He filled Peter's glass to the brim, and his own more moderately; and as the golden liquor came out with a pleasant bubble from the bottle, Peter's eyes glistened, and he sniffed up the aroma of that pure champaign brandy with the utmost complaisance.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" he exclaimed.

"Pretty well," said Todd.

"Pretty well? It's glorious!"

Mr. Peter raised the glass to his lips, and giving a nod to Todd over the rim of it, he said—

"I looks towards you."

Todd nodded, and then, in another moment Peter put down his empty glass.

"Out and out!" he gasped. "Out and out! Ah, that is the stuff."

Todd tossed off the glass, with the toast of "A long life, and a merry one!" which was duly acknowledged by Peter, who replied—

"The same to you, Mr. T., and lots of 'em."

"It's like milk," said Todd, as he filled Peter's glass again. "It's for all the world like milk, and never can do any one any harm."

"No—no. Enough. There—stop."

Todd did stop, when the glass was within a hair's breadth of running over, but not before; and then again he helped himself, and when he set the bottle upon the table, he said—

"A biscuit?"

"Not for me. No."

"Nay. You will find it pleasant with the brandy. I have one or two here. Rather hard, perhaps, but good."

"Well, I will, then. I was afraid you would have to go out for them, that was all, Mr. T., and I wouldn't give you any trouble for the world. I only hope we shall often meet in this quiet comfortable way, Mr. T. I always did respect you, for, as I often said to Fogg, of all the customers that come here, Mr. Todd for me. He takes things in an easy way, and if he is a thundering rogue, he is at all events a clever one."

"How kind!"

"No offence, I hope, Mr. Todd?"

"Offence, my dear fellow? Oh, dear me! How could you think of such a thing? Offence, indeed! You cannot possibly offend me!"

"I'm rejoiced to hear you say so, Mr. T., I am really; and this is—this is—the—very best—ah—brandy that ever I—where are you going, Mr. T.?"

"Only to get the biscuits. They are in the cupboard behind you; but don't stir, I beg. You are not at all in the way."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite."

Todd stepped easily between Peter's chair and the wall, and opening another of the mysterious small cupboards, he laid his hand upon a hammer, with a long handle, that was upon the shelf.

"If this," said Peter, "was the last word I had to say in the world, I would swear to the goodness of the brandy."

As he uttered the words he turned his head sharply, and faced Todd. The hammer was upraised, and would, if he had not so turned, have descended with fatal effect upon the top of his head. As it was, Peter had only time to utter one shriek, when down it came upon the lower part of his face. The crush was hideous. The lower jaw fell crushed and mangled, and, with a frightful oath, Todd again raised the hammer: but the victim closed with him, and face to face they grappled. The hammer was

useless, and Todd cast it from him as he felt that he required all his strength to grapple with the man who, at that moment, fastened on him with the strength of madness. Over chair—over the table, to the destruction of all that was on it, they went, coiled up in each other's embrace—dashing here and there with a vehemence that threatened destruction to them both, and yet not a word spoken. The frightful injury that Peter had received effectually prevented him from articulating, and Todd had nothing to say. Down! down they both come; but Todd is uppermost. Yes; he has got his victim upon the floor, and his knee is upon his chest! He drags him a few inches further towards the fire-place —inches were sufficient, and then grappling him by the throat, he lifts his head and dashes it against the sharp edge of an iron fender! Crash!—crash!—crash! The man is dead! Crash again! That last crash was only an injury to a corpse! Once more Todd raised the now lax and smashed skull, but he let it go again. It fell with a heavy blow upon the floor!

"That will do," said Todd.

Sweeney Todd Butchers The Turnkey.

Sweeney Todd Butchers The Turnkey.

He slowly rose, and left his cravat in the hands of the dead man. He shook himself, and again that awful oath, which cannot be transcribed, came from his lips. Rap! rap! rap! Todd listened. What's that? Somebody in the shop? Yes, it must be—or some one wanting to come in, rather, for he had taken the precaution to make the outer door fast. Rap! rap! rap!

"I must go," said Todd. "Stop.—Let me see."

He snatched a glass from the wall, and looked at himself. There was blood upon his face. With his hand, he hastily wiped it off, and then, walking as composedly as he could into the shop, he opened the door. A man stood upon the threshold with quite a smile upon his face, as he said—

"Busy, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," said Todd. "I was just finishing off a gentleman. Shaved or dressed, sir?"

"Shaved, if you please. But don't let me hurry you, by any means. I can wait a little."

"Thank you, sir, if you will oblige me for a moment or two. You will find some amusements, sir, from the *Evening Courant*, I dare say."

As he spoke, he handed the then popular newspaper to his customer, and left him. Todd took good care to close the door leading into the parlour, and then proceeding up to the body of the murdered Peter, he, with his foot, turned it over and over, until it was under the table, where it was most completely hidden by a cover that hung down to within an inch of the floor. Before Todd had got this operation well completed, he heard his shop door open. That door creaked most villanously; by so doing, while he was otherwise engaged, he could always hear if it was opened or attempted to be opened. Todd was in the shop in a moment, and saw a respectable-looking personage, dressed in rather clerical costume, who said—

"You keep powder?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Then I wish my hair powdered; but do not let me interrupt this gentleman. I can wait."

"Perhaps, sir, if you could make it convenient to look in again," said Todd, "you will probably be more amused by looking at the shops, than by waiting here while this gentleman is shaved."

"Thank you, you are very kind; but I am rather tired, and glad of the opportunity of having a rest."

"Certainly, sir. As you please. The *Courant*, sir, at your service."

"Thank you—thank you."

The clerical looking old gentleman sat down to read the *Courant*, while Todd commenced the operation of shaving his first customer. When that operation was half completed, he said—

"They report, sir, that St. Dunstan's is giving way."

"Giving way," said the clerical looking gentleman. "How do you mean about giving way?"

"Why, sir," said Todd, with an air quite of reverential respect, "they say that the old church has a leaning towards Temple Bar, and that, if you stand at the opposite side of the way, you may just see it. I can't, but they do say so."

"Bless me," said the clerical looking gentleman. "That is a very sad thing indeed, and nobody can be more sorry than I am to hear such a tale of the old church."

"Well sir, it may not be true."

"I hope not, indeed. Nothing would give me greater pain than to be assured it was true. The stench in the body of the church that so much has been said about in the parish is nothing to what you say, for who ought to put his nose into competition with his eternal welfare?"

"Who, indeed, sir! What is your opinion of that alarming stench in old St. Dunstan's?"

"I am quite at a loss to make it out."

"And so am I, sir—so am I. But begging your pardon, sir, if I am not making too free, I thought as you were probably a clergyman, sir, you might have heard something more about it than we common folks."

"No—no. Not a word. But what you say of the church having a leaning to Temple Bar is grievous."

"Well, sir, if you were to go and look, you might find out that it was no such thing, and by the time you return I shall have completely finished off this gentleman."

"No—no. I make no sort of doubt in the world but that you would by that time have finished off the gentleman, but as for my going to look at the old church with any idea that it had a leaning to anything but itself, I can only say that my feelings as a man and a member of the glorious establishment will not permit me."

"But, my dear sir, you might satisfy yourself that such was really not the case."

"No—no. Imagination would make me think that the church had a leaning in all sorts of directions, until at last fancy might cheat me into a belief that it actually tottered."

The clerical-looking gentleman pronounced these words with so much feeling, that the person who was being shaved nearly got cut by twisting his head round in order to see him.

"True, sir," said Todd. "Very true—very true indeed, and very just; imagination does indeed play strange freaks with us at times, I well know."

The horrible face that Todd made as he spoke ought to have opened the eyes of any one to the fact that he was saying anything but what he thought, but no one saw it. When he pleased, Todd generally took care to keep his faces to himself.

"I don't wonder, Rev. sir," he said, "that your feelings prompt you to say what you do. I'm afraid I have taken off a little too much whisker, sir."

"Oh, never mind. It will grow again," said the person who was being shaved.

Todd suddenly struck his own head with the flat of his hand, as a man will do to whose mind some sudden thought has made itself apparent, and in a voice of doubt and some alarm, he pronounced the one word—

"Powder!"

"What's the matter? You are a long time shaving me."

"Powder!" said Todd again.

"Gunpowder," said the three-quarter shaved man, while the clerical-looking personage entirely hid his face, with the *Courant*.

"No," said Todd. "Hair powder. I told this gentleman, whose feelings regarding the church do him so much honour, that I had hair powder in the house, and it has just come over me like a wet blanket that I have not a particle."

The clerical-looking gentleman quickly laid down the *Courant*, and said wildly—

"Are you sure you have none?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Then I won't occupy your shop and read your *Courant* for nothing, and as I am here I will have a shave."

"That's very kind of you, sir," said Todd. "Very kind."

"Not at all," said the gentleman, taking up the paper again with all the coolness in the world. "Not at all. Don't mention it, I always like to carry out the moral maxim of—Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you."

"How charming!" exclaimed Todd, lifting up his hands, in one of which was the razor. "How charming it is in this indifferent and selfish age to meet with any one who is so charitable as to do more than merely speak of such a sentiment as a curiosity in morals."

"You are above your condition as regards education," said the clerical-looking gentleman.

"Why, to tell the truth, sir—"

"Psha!" said he who was being or rather not being shaved—"psha! And all this while the very soap is drying upon my face."

"A thousand pardons," said Todd.

"Many apologies," said the clerical gentleman, hastily resuming the perusal of the *Courant*.

"Sir," added Todd, as he finished the shaving and whipped off the cloth from the patient. "Sir, I should have finished you five minutes ago, so that I am sure no one would have heard the slightest complaint from you, but for the truly engaging conversation of this gentleman here, whom I shall have great pleasure now in polishing off."

"Oh, don't name it," said the shaved customer, laying down a penny. "Don't name it, I said I was in no hurry, so I can hardly blame you for taking your time."

He went through the usual operation of a partial sloush of cold water from a pewter basin, and then dried himself upon a jack towel, and left the shop.

"Now, sir," said Todd.

The clerical-looking gentleman waved his hand as though he would have said—

"For goodness sake don't interrupt me until I have finished this paragraph."

Todd fixed his eyes upon him, and began slowly stropping the razor he had been recently using.

"Now, sir, if you please."

"One moment—one—mo—ment, I shall get through the deaths in an in—stant."

Todd continued stropping the razor, when suddenly the *Courant* dropped from the hands of the clerical-looking gentleman, and he uttered a groan that made Todd start.

"Hopkins—Hopkins—Gabriel Hopkins!"

"Sir."

"Hop—kins! my friend—my councillor—my fellow student—my companion—my Mentor—my—my Hopkins."

The clerical-looking gentleman shut up his face in his hands, and rocked to and fro in an agony of grief.

"Good God, sir," cried Todd, advancing. "What is the meaning of this?"

"In that paper you will find the death of Hopkins inserted, sir. Yes, in the obituary of that paper. Gabriel Hopkins—the true—the gentle—the affectionate—the christian—Hop—kins!"

"How sorry I am, sir," said Todd. "But, pray sit in this chair, sir, a shave will compose your feelings."

"A shave! You barbarian. Do you think I could think of being shaved within two minutes of hearing of the death of the oldest and best friend I ever had in the world. No—no. Oh, Hopkins—Hop—kins!"

The Rev. gentleman in a paroxysm of grief rushed from the house, and Todd himself sunk upon the shaving chair.

"It is, it must be so," cried Todd, as his face became livid with rage and apprehension. "There is more in these coincidences than mere chance will suffice to account for. Why is it that, if I have a customer here, some one else will be sure to come in, and then after waiting until he is gone himself, leave upon some frivolous excuse? Do I stand upon a mine? Am I suspected?—am I watched? or—or more terrible, ten times more terrible question still, am—am I at length, with all my care, discovered?"

CHAPTER LXIII.
JOHANNA STARTS FOR TODD'S.

We will leave Todd to the indulgence of some of the most uncomfortable reflections that ever passed through his mind, while we once again seek the sweet companionship of the fair Johanna, and her dear romantic friend, Arabella Wilmot. The project which these two young and inexperienced girls were bent upon, was one that might well appal the stoutest heart that ever beat in human bosom. It was one which, with a more enlarged experience of the world, they would not for one moment have entertained, but by long thought and much grief upon the subject of her hopeless love, Johanna had much observed that clearness of perception that otherwise would have saved her from what to all appearance is a piece of extravagance. As for Arabella, she had originally conceived the idea from her love for the romantic, and it was only when it came near to the execution of it that she started at the possible and indeed highly probable danger of the loss to one whom she loved so sincerely as she loved Johanna. But all that has passed away. The remonstrances have been made, and made in vain; Arabella is silenced, and nothing remains but to detail to the reader the steps by which the courageous girl sought to carry out a plan so fraught with a thousand dangers. Both Arabella and Johanna sought the abode of the latter's father, for the first step in the affair was to say something there which was to account seemingly satisfactorily for any lengthened stay of Johanna from home. This was by no manner of means a task of any difficulty, for in addition to the old spectacle maker being innocence itself as regarded the secreting anything in the shape of a plot, Arabella

Wilmot was the very last person in all the world he would have thought capable of joining in one. As for Mrs. Oakley, she was by far too intent, as she said herself frequently, upon things which are eternal, to trouble herself much about terrestrial affairs, always except they came to her in the shape of something enticing to the appetites. What a state of things, that a mother should forget the trust that is placed in her when she is given a child, and fancy she is really propitiating the Almighty by neglecting a stewardship which He has imposed upon her! But so it is. There are, we fear, in different ways, a great many Mrs. Oakleys in the world.

"Ah, my dear Miss Wilmot," said the old spectacle-maker to Arabella, when he saw her. "How glad I am to see you. How fresh you look."

Arabella's face was flushed with excitement, and some shame that the errand she came upon was to deceive. She had not heard yet of the spurious philosophy that the end sanctifies the means.

"I have come to—to—to—"

"Yes, my dear. To stay awhile, and let us look at your pretty face. Come, my dear Johanna, your mother is out. What can you get for your friend, Miss Wilmot? Here, my dear, take this half-crown and get some sweetmeats, and I will open for you a bottle of the old Malaga wine."

Johanna's Farewell Of Her Father Prior To Her Encounter With Todd.

Johanna's Farewell Of Her Father Prior To Her Encounter With Todd.

Johanna's eyes filled with tears, and she was compelled to turn aside to conceal those tell-tale traces of emotion from her father. Arabella saw that if anything was to be said or done in furtherance of the affair upon which Johanna had now set her heart, she must do it or say it. Summoning all her courage, she said—

"My dear sir—"

"Sir?—sir? Bless me, my child, when did you begin to call your old kind friend sir?"

"My dear Mr. Oakley—"

"Ah, that's nearer the old way. Well, my dear Arabella, what would you say to me?"

"Will you trust Johanna with me to-night, and perhaps to-morrow night?"

"I don't think Johanna can come to much harm with you, my dear," said Mr. Oakley. "You are older than she a little, and at your age a little goes a long way, so take her, Arabella, and bring her back to me when you like."

With what a shrill of agony did Arabella hear Johanna thus committed to her care. She was compelled to grasp the back of the old spectacle-maker's chair for support.

"Yes, yes, sir," she said. "Oh, yes, Mr. Oakley."

"Well, my dears, go, and God bless you both."

To both Arabella and Johanna's perception there was something ominous about this blessing, at such a time, and yet it had really about it nothing at all unusual, for Mr. Oakley was very much in the habit of saying to them "God bless you," when they left him; but feeling, as they did, the hazard that she (Johanna) might encounter before again she heard that voice say "God bless you," if, indeed, she ever again heard it, no wonder the words sank deep into their hearts, and called up the most painful emotions. Johanna certainly could not speak. Arabella tried to laugh, to hide an emotion that would not be hidden, and only succeeded in producing an hysterical sound, that surprised Mr. Oakley.

"What's the matter, my dear?" he said.

"Oh, nothing—nothing, dear Mr. Oakley, nothing."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it. Perhaps I only fancy it; but you both seem—seem—"

"What do we seem, father?" said Johanna, looking very pale, and speaking with a great effort.

"Not quite as usual, my darling."

"That—that," gasped Johanna, "can only be—be fancy."

"Of course not," said Oakley. "Fancy, I think I said it was, or if I did not, I meant to say so, my love."

"Come," said Arabella.

"Yes—yes. Father—father. Good day."

She kissed his cheek; and then, before the old man could say another word, she rushed to the door.

"Farewell!" said Arabella. "Good day, Mr. Oakley. I—I thank you, sir. Good day, sir."

"Dear, dear," said the old man, "what is the matter with the girls? How odd they both seem to-day. What can be the cause of it? I never before saw them so strange in their manner. Ah! I have it. My wife has met them, I dare say, and has said some unkind things to them about hats or ribbons, or some harmless little piece of girlish pride. Well—well. All that will pass away. I'm glad I hit upon it, for—"

At this moment old Oakley was astounded by the sudden entrance of Johanna, who, clasping him in her arms, cried in a voice, half choked with tears—

"Good bye, father—good bye. God help me!"

Without, then, waiting for a word from the spectacle-maker, she again rushed from the shop, and joining Arabella a few doors off, they both hurried to the house of the latter. Old Oakley tottered back until he came to a seat, upon which he sank, with an air of abstraction and confusion, that threatened to last him for some time; and in that, for the present, we must leave him, while we look narrowly at the conduct of the two young creatures, who have, in the pride of their virtue and their

nobleness of purpose, presumed to set up their innocence against the deep craft of such a man as Sweeney Todd. Well might Johanna say "God help me!"

"It is done!" said Johanna, as she clutched her friend by the arm. "It is done now. The worst is over."

"Oh, Johanna—Johanna—"

"Well, Arabella, why do you pause? What would you say?"

"I scarcely know, and yet I feel that it ought to be something that I have promised you. I would not say."

"Let your lips be sealed, then, dear friend; and be assured that now nothing but the visible interposition of God shall turn me from my purpose. I am calm and resolved."

These words, few as they were, were too significant, and spoken with too evident sincerity to permit a doubt of their deep intensity and truth, and from that moment Arabella Wilmot looked upon the scheme of Johanna going in disguise to Todd's as quite settled so far as regarded the attempt. It was the result now only that had to be looked to.

"I will say no more, Johanna, except as regards detail. In that I may offer you advice."

"Oh, yes—yes, Arabella. Thankfully received advice, as well you know. What is it you would say?"

"That you ought to wait until the morning."

"And so perhaps lose precious hours. Oh, no—no. Do not ask me now to submit to any delays, Arabella."

"But if there be reason, Johanna?"

"Well, the reason, then—the reason?"

"I think that, if possible, it would be well to avoid the necessity of remaining a night at Todd's; and so if you go in the morning, you see, Johanna, you may have an opportunity before nightfall of making all the

discoveries you wish, or of satisfying yourself that they are not to be made at all."

"It might be so, and yet—yet I almost think night will be the best time of all."

"But by waiting until to-morrow morning, Johanna, you will have both day and night."

"Yes, yes. I wish I knew what would be the best, Arabella. My feelings are wound up to this enterprise, and I am altogether in such a frightful state of excitement concerning it, that—that I know not how I should be able to support myself under the delay of the remainder of to-day and the whole of the ensuing night."

"In the night you will have repose, and to-morrow morning, with much more calmness and effect, you will be able to start upon your errand. Believe me, Johanna, I don't counsel this delay with any hope, or wish, or expectation, that it will turn you from your purpose, but simply because I think it will the better ensure its successful termination."

"Successful! What will you call successful, Arabella?"

"Your coming back to me uninjured, Johanna."

"Ah, that speaks your love for me, while I—I love him for whose sake I am about to undergo so much, sufficiently to feel that were I sure he was no more, my own death at the hands of Sweeney Todd would be success."

"Johanna—Johanna, don't speak in such a strain. Have you no thought for me? have you no thought for your poor father, to whom, as you well know, you are the dearest tie that he has in the world? Oh, Johanna, do not be so selfish."

"Selfish?"

"Yes, it is selfish, when you know what others must suffer because they love you, to speak as though it were a thing to be desired that you should die by violence."

"Arabella, can you forgive me? can you make sufficient allowances for this poor distracted heart, to forgive its ravings?"

"I can—I do, Johanna, and in the words of your father, I am ever ready to say 'God bless you!' You will not go till to-morrow?"

After the pause of a few moments, Johanna said faintly—

"I will not—I will not."

"Oh that is much. Then at least for another night we shall enjoy our old sweet companionship."

They by this time had reached the home of Arabella, and as it was an understood thing that Johanna was not expected home, the two young girls retired to converse in unrestrained freedom upon all their hopes and fears.

CHAPTER LXIV.
TODD COMMENCES PACKING UP.

"Yes," said Todd, as he suddenly with a spring rose from the shaving-chair, upon which we left him enjoying reflections of no very pleasant character. "Yes, the game is up."

He stood for a few moments now in silence, confronting a small piece of looking glass that hung upon the wall exactly opposite to him, and it would appear that he was struck very much by the appearance of his own face, for he suddenly said—

"How old and worn I look."

No one could have looked upon the countenance of Todd for one moment without fully concurring in this opinion. In truth, he did look old and worn. But a comparatively short time has elapsed since we first presented him to the readers of this most veracious narrative. Then he was a man whose hideous ugliness was combined with such a look of cool triumphant villany, that one did not know which most to ponder upon. Now his face had lost its colour; a yellowish whiteness was the predominating tint, and his cheeks had fallen. There was a wild and an earnest restlessness about his eyes that made him look very much like some famished wolf, with a touch of hydrophobia to set him off; and certainly, take him for all in all, one would not be over anxious

"To see his like again!"

"Old and worn," he repeated, "and the game is up; I am decided. Off and away! is my game—off and away!—I have enough to be a prince anywhere where money is worshipped, and that of course must be the case in all civilised and religious communities. I must keep in some such. In the more savage wilds of nature man is prized for what he is, but, thank God, in highly cultivated and educated states he is only prized for what he has been. Ha! ha! If mankind had worshipped virtue, I would have been virtuous, for I love power."

A thought seemed suddenly to strike Todd; and he went into the parlour muttering to himself—

"My friend Peter must be effectually disposed of."

He raised the cover which was upon the table, and with a grunt of satisfaction, added—

"Gone!—that will do."

There was no trace of the body that he had kicked under the table. By some strange mysterious agency it had entirely disappeared, and then Todd went somehow to the back of the house and got a wet mop, by the aid of which he got rid of some stains of blood upon the floor and the fender.

"All's right," he said, "I have done some service to Fogg, and I will, when I am far enough off for any sting not to recoil upon myself, take good care that the law pays him a visit. The villain as well as the fool, to deceive me regarding the boy Tobias. What can have become of him?"

This was a question that gave Todd some uneasiness, but at length he came to the conclusion that the dreadful treatment he, Tobias, had received at the asylum had really driven him mad, and that in all human probability he had fallen or cast himself into the river, or gone into some field to die.

"Were it otherwise," he said, "I should and must have heard something of him before now."

Todd then fairly began packing up. From beneath several tables in the room he dragged out large trunks, and opening then some of the drawers and cupboards that abounded in his parlour, he began placing their valuable contents in the boxes.

"My course is simple enough," he said—"very simple; I must and will, by violence—for she is by far too wily and artful to allow me to do so by any other means—get rid of Mrs. Lovett. Then I must and will possess myself of all that she calls her share of the proceeds of business. Then, at night—the dead hour of the night—after having previously sent all my boxes full of such valuables as from their likelihood to be identified I dare not attempt to dispose of in England, to Hamburgh, I will set the whole house in a flame."

The idea of burning down his house, and if possible involving a great portion of Fleet Street in the conflagration, always seemed to be delightful enough to Todd to raise his spirits a little.

"Yes," he added, with a demoniac grin. "There is no knowing what amount of mischief I may do to society at large upon that one night, besides destroying amid the roar of the flames a mass of accumulated evidence against myself that would brand my memory with horrors, and, for aught I know, cause a European search after me."

As he spoke, watches—rings—shoe buckles—brooches—silver heads of walking canes—snuff boxes, and various articles of bijouterie were placed row upon row in the box he was packing.

"Yes," he added, "I know—I feel that there is danger; I know now that I have spies upon me—that I am watched; but it is from that very circumstance that I ground my belief that as yet I am safe. They fancy there is something to find out, and they are trying to find it out. If they really knew anything, of course it would be—Todd, you are wanted."

Having placed in one of the boxes as many articles of gold and silver as made up a considerable weight, Todd lifted it at one end, and feeling satisfied that if he were to place any more metal in the box it would be too heavy for carriage, he opened a cupboard which was full of hats, and

filled up the box with them. By this means he filled up the box, so that the really valuable articles within it would not shake about, and then he securely locked it.

"One," he said. "Some half-dozen of such will be sufficient to carry all that I shall think worth the taking. As for my money, that will be safest about me. Ah, I will outwit them yet, I will be off and away—only just in time. Suspicion will take a long time to ripen into certainty, and before it does, the flaming embers of this house will be making the night sky as fair and magnificent as the most golden sunset of summer." Another box was now opened, and in that, as it was of considerable length, he began to pack swords of a valuable character. He went to the rooms above stairs, which, as the reader is already aware, contained much valuable property, and brought down troops of things, which with complacent looks he carefully placed in the chest. Ever and anon, as he went through this process, he kept muttering to himself his hopes and fears. "What is to hinder me, in some principality of Germany, from purchasing a title which shall smother all remembrance of what I now am, and as the Baron Something, I shall commence a new life, for I am not old; no—no, I am not old—far from old, although late anxieties have made me look so. I am not so nervous and fearful of slight things as I was, although my imagination has played me some tricks of late." Some slight noise, that sounded as if in the house, although it was in all probability in the next one, came upon his ears, and with a howl of terror he shrunk down by the side of the box he had been packing.

Todd Alarmed At Strange Sounds Whilst Packing His Plunder.

Todd Alarmed At Strange Sounds Whilst Packing His Plunder.

"Help! mercy! What is that?"

The noise was not repeated, but for the space of about ten minutes or so, Todd was perfectly incapable of moving except a violent attack of trembling, which kept every limb in motion, and terribly distorted his countenance, if it might be called so.

"What—what was it?" he at length gasped. "I thought I heard something, nay, I am sure I heard something—a slight noise, but yet slight noises are to me awfully suggestive of something that may follow. Am I really getting superstitious now?"

He slowly rose and looked fearfully round him. All was still. True, he had heard a voice, but that was all. No consequences had resulted from it, and the fit of trembling that had seized him was passing away. He went to the cupboard where he kept that strong stimulant that had so much excited the admiration of Peter. He did not go through the ceremony of procuring a glass, but placing the neck of the bottle to his throat, he took a draught of the contents which would have been amply sufficient to confound the faculties of any ordinary person. Upon Todd, however, it had only a sort of sedative effect, and he gradually recovered his former diabolical coolness.

"It was nothing," he said. "It was nothing. My fears and my imaginations are beginning now to play the fool with me. If there were none others, such would be sufficient warnings to me to be off and away."

He continued the packing of the box which had been temporarily suspended, but ever and anon he would pause, and lifting up one of his huge hands, placed it at his ear to listen more acutely, and when nothing in the shape of alarm reached him he would say with a tone of greater calmness and contentment—

"All is still—all is still. I shall be off and away soon—off and away!"

The dusky twilight had crept on while Todd was thus engaged, and he was thinking of going out, when he heard the creaking noise of his shop door opening. As he was but in the parlour, he made his way to the shop at once, and saw a young man, who spoke with an affected lisp, as he said—

"Mr. Todd, can you give my locks a little twirl? I'm going to a party to-night, and want to look fascinating."

"Allow me," said Todd, as he rapidly passed him and bolted the door. "I am annoyed by a drunken man, so, while I am dressing your hair, I wish to shut him out, or else I might scorch you with the tongs."

"Oh, certainly. If there's anything, do you know, Mr. Todd, that I really dislike more than another, it's a drunken man."

"There's only one thing in society," said Todd, "can come near it.—Sit here, sir."

"What's that?"

"Why, a drunken woman, sir."

"Werry good—Werry good."

Some one made an effort to enter the shop, but the bolt which Todd had shot into its place effectually resisted anything short of violence sufficient to break the door completely down.

"Mr. Todd—Mr. Todd," cried a voice.

"In a moment, sir," said Todd. "In a moment."

He darted into the parlour. There was a loud bang in the shop as though something had fallen, and then a half-stifled shriek. Todd reappeared. The shaving chair in which the young man had been sitting was empty. Todd took up his hat, and threw it into the parlour. He then unbolted the door, and admitted a man who glanced around him, and then, without a word, backed out again, looking rather pale. Todd did not hear him mutter to himself, as he reached the street—

"Sir Richard will be frantic at this. I must post off to him at once, and let him know that it was none of our faults. What an awkward affair to be sure."

CHAPTER LXV.
A MOONLIGHT VISIT TO ST. DUNSTAN'S VAULTS.

For the remainder of that day Todd was scarcely visible, so we will leave him to his occupation, which was that of packing up valuables, while we take a peep at a very solemn hour indeed at old St. Dunstan's Church. The two figures on the outside of the ancient edifice had struck with their clubs the sonorous metal, and the hour of two had been proclaimed to such of the inhabitants of the vicinity who had the misfortune to be awake to hear it. The watchman at the gate of the Temple woke up and said "past six," while another watchman, who was snugly ensconced in a box at the corner of Chancery Lane, answered that it was "four o'clock and a rainy morning." Now it was neither four o'clock nor a rainy morning—for the sky, although by no means entirely destitute of clouds, was of that speckled clearness which allows the little stars to pass out at all sorts of odd crevices, like young beauties through the jalousies of some Spanish Castle. The moon, too, had, considering all things, a pretty good time of it, for the clouds were not dense enough to hide her face, and when behind them, she only looked like some young bride, with the faint covering of bashful blonde before her radiant countenance. And at times, too, she would peep out at some break in that veil with such a blaze of silvery beauty as was dazzling to behold, and quite stopped the few passengers who were in the streets at that lone hour.

"Look," said one of four gentlemen, who were walking towards Temple Bar from the Strand. "Look! Is not that lovely?"

"Yes," said another. "A million fires are out in London now, and one can see the blue sky as it was seen when—"

"Wild in the woods the painted savage ran."

"But, after all," said another, "I prefer good broad cloth to red ochre. What say you, Sir Richard?"

"I am of your lordship's opinion," said Sir Richard Blunt, who was one of the party of four: "I certainly think we have gained something by not being Ancient Britons any longer than was absolutely necessary. This is, in truth, a most splendid night."

"It is—it is," they all said.

By this time, strolling along in an independent sort of fashion, they had reached Temple Bar, and then Sir Richard, bowing to the one who had not yet made any sort of remark, said—

"Mr. Villimay, you have not forgotten the keys?"

"Oh no, Sir Richard; oh no."

"Then, gentlemen, we are very near our place of destination. It will be advisable that we look about us, and use the utmost precaution, to be sure that we are not watched by any one."

"Yes—yes," said the other. "You will be the best judge of that Sir Richard; with your tact, you will be able to come to a conclusion upon that subject much better than we can."

Sir Richard Blunt made a slight kind of bow in acknowledgment of the compliment to his tact, and then, while what we may call the main body waited under the arch of Temple Bar, he advanced alone into Fleet Street. After advancing for a short distance, he took from his pocket a small silver whistle, and produced upon it a peculiar thrilling note. In a moment a tall man, with a great coat on him, merged from behind a column that lent its support to a door-way.

"Here you is," said the man.

"Is all right, Crotchet?" said Sir Richard.

"Yes; everything is quiet enough. Not a blessed mouse hasn't wagged his tail or smoothened his whiskers for the last half hour or so."

"Very good, Crotchet. I'm afraid, though, I cannot dismiss you just yet, as the business is very important."

"What's the odds," said Crotchet, "as long as you are happy?"

Sir Richard Blunt smiled, as he added—

"Well, Crotchet, you deserve, and you shall have an ample reward for the services you are doing and have done, in this affair. I and some gentlemen will go into the church, and I wish you to remain at the porch, and if you find occasion to give any warning, I think your whistle will be quite shrill enough to reach my ears."

"Not a doubt on it, Sir Richard. If what they calls the last trumpet is only half as loud as my last whistle, it will wake up the coves, and no mistake."

"Very good, Crotchet. Only don't make any profane allusions in the hearing of the gentlemen with me, for one of them is the Under Secretary of State, and the other two are men of account. We have to meet some one else in the church."

"Then he hasn't come."

"That's awkward. The Lord Mayor was to meet us. Ah! who is this?"

A private carriage stopped on the other side of the way, and some one alighted, and a voice cried—

"Go home now, Samuel, and put up the horses. I shall not want you any more to-night. Go home."

"Shan't we call anywhere for you, my lord?" said Samuel, the coachman.

"No—no, I say. Go away at once."

"That's the Lord Mayor," said Sir Richard. "He is pretty true to his time."

As he spoke, Sir Richard crossed the road, and addressed the chief magistrate of the city, saying—

"A fine night, my lord."

"Oh, Sir Richard, is that you? Well, I am very glad to meet with you so soon. If I were to tell you the difficulty I have had to get here, you would not believe me. Indeed you could not."

"Really, my lord."

"Yes. You must know, Sir Richard, between you and I, and—and"—Here the Lord Mayor, who did not like to say post, looked about him, and his eyes falling upon Temple Bar, added—"Bar, I say; between you and me and the Bar, the Lady Mayoress, although a most excellent woman—indeed I may say an admirable woman—has at times her little faults of temper. You understand?"

"Who is without?" said Sir Richard.

"Ah, who indeed—who indeed, Sir Richard. That is a very sensible remark of yours. Who is without? as you justly enough say."

"The Lord Mayor!" said Sir Richard, who had been gradually leading his lordship to Temple Bar, and now announced his arrival to the three gentlemen who were there in waiting.

The three gentlemen professed themselves to be quite delighted to see the Lord Mayor, and the Lord Mayor professed to be quite in raptures to see the three gentlemen, so that a pleasanter party than they all made, could not have been imagined.

"Now," said Sir Richard Blunt, "I think, with all deference, gentlemen, that the sooner we proceed to business the better."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Villimay, who was the senior churchwarden. "Oh, yes—certainly."

"And yet," said the Lord Mayor, "we must be very cautious."

"Oh, very—very cautious," cried Villimay.

"But a bold front is the best," remarked Sir Richard.

"Yes. As you say, sir, there's nothing like a bold front," cried Villimay.

Sir Richard, with a quiet smile, said to the under secretary—

"A very obliging person, you perceive, Mr. Villimay is."

"Oh, very," laughed the secretary.

Preceded now by the churchwarden, they all made their way towards the church, but the watchman at the corner of Chancery Lane must have had something upon his mind, he was so very wakeful, for after they had all passed but Crotchet, he looked out of his box, and said—"Thieves!"

"What's that to you?" said Crotchet, facing him with a look of defiance, "eh? Can't you be quiet when you is told?"

"Murder!" said the watchman, as he began to fumble for his rattle.

"Hark ye, old pump," said Crotchet. "I've settled eight watchmen atween this here and Charing Cross, and you'll make nine, if you opens your mouth again."

The appalled watchman shrank back into his box.

"Eight, did you say?"

"Yes."

Crotchet took the lantern off its hook in front of the box, and smashed it upon the head of the guardian of the night, whereupon the aforesaid guardian shrank completely down to the bottom of the box, with the fragments of the lantern hanging about him, and said not another word.

"I rather think," said Mr. Crotchet to himself, "as I've settled that old fellow comfortable."

With this conviction upon his mind—the amiability or the non-amiability of which we shall not stop to discuss—Mr. Crotchet ran hastily after the rest of the party, and stationed himself by the church porch, according to orders. By this time, Mr. Villimay, the churchwarden, had produced a little gothic-looking key, and proceeding to a small side door, he, after some rattling, partly consequent upon the lock being in a state of desuetude, and partly from personal nervousness, he did succeed in turning the rusty wards, and then, with an ominous groan, the door

yielded. Sir Richard Blunt had quite satisfied himself that there were no eaves-droppers at hand, so he was anxious to get the party housed—perhaps in this instance churched would be a more appropriate expression.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the night is stealing past, and we have much to do."

"That is true, Sir Richard," said the secretary. "Come on, Donkin, and let us get through it."

The Lord Mayor shook a little as he passed through the little door, last, having, although king of the city, given the *pas* to every one of his companions, upon that most mysterious mission to old St. Dunstan's church at such an hour. Perhaps he had a faint hope that they might leave him entirely behind, and shut the door precipitately, so that he could not get in. If he had any such hope, however, it was doomed, like too many human hopes, to bitter disappointment, for Sir Richard Blunt held the door open for him, saying blandly—

"Now, my lord. We could not get on without you."

"Oh, thank you—thank you. You are very good."

The Lord Mayor crossed the threshold, and then Mr. Villimay, who had occupied a remote and mysterious position at the back of the door, closed it, and locked it on the inside.

"If—if you were to lose the key, Mr. Villimay?" said the Lord Mayor.

"Why, then," interposed Sir Richard Blunt, "I'm afraid we should have to stay there until Sunday, unless some couple kindly got married in the meantime."

The Lord Mayor gave a very odd kind of cough, as he said—

"What would the Lady Mayoress say?"

The air without had been cold, but what was that compared with the coldness within? At least, the street breeze had been dry, but in the church there was such a fearful dampness pervading the narrow passage

in which the party found itself, that every one felt as though his very marrow was cold.

"This passage," said Mr. Villimay, "hasn't been opened for many a long day."

"Indeed!" said the secretary.

"No, my lord, it has not: and it's only a wonder that, after a good hunt in the vestry cupboard, I at all found the key of it."

"Fortunate that you did," said Sir Richard Blunt, who was all this time making exertions to procure a light, which were as often defeated by the dampness of the air. At length he was successful in igniting a piece of wax candle, and he said—

"Gentlemen, this will show us our way through the church to the vestry, where we can get lanthorns."

"Yes," said the Lord Mayor, who was getting so nervous that he thought himself called upon to make some reply to anything and anybody. "Yes, lanthorns in the vestry."

"Well," said the secretary, "my Lord Mayor, your mayoralty will be distinguished by this dreadful affair for all time to come."

"Many thanks to your lordship, it will."

The secretary smiled as he whispered to his friend Donkin—

"The city magistrate don't seem happy, Donkin."

"Far from it."

At the end of the little narrow, damp, gloomy, cobwebby passage in which they were, was another little door, the upper half of which was of highly ornamented iron fret work, the side of which next to the church interior being gilt. This door likewise yielded to a key which Mr. Villimay produced, and then they found themselves at once in the western aisle of the church.

"The stench don't seem so bad," said Sir Richard.

"No, sir," said Villimay. "We have got all the windows open far up above there, and there's quite a current of air, too, right up the belfry."

CHAPTER LXVI.
THE COOK'S VISITORS.

Sir Richard shaded with his hand the little light that he carried as he walked solemnly across the nave towards the chancel, where the vestry room was situated. He was followed closely by the whole party, and the audible breathing of the Lord Mayor sufficiently proclaimed the uneasy state of his lordship's nerves.

"How strange it is," said the secretary, "that men will pile up stones and timber until they make something to enter, which then terrifies their weak natures, and they become the slaves of the very materials that they have made to enclose and roof in a certain space upon which otherwise they would stand unmoved."

"It is so," said Donkin.

"Why the fact is, I suppose," said Sir Richard Blunt, "that it is what is called original sin that sticks to us, and so—

> 'Conscience doth make cowards of us all!'

whether we are personally or not obnoxious to the pangs of the still small voice."

"Upon my word, Sir Richard," said the secretary, "you are quite a free-thinker—indeed you are."

Suddenly the whole party paused, for something resembling a moan was heard from among the pews in the centre of the church, and every one was anxious to listen for a repetition of the sound.

"Did you hear it?" whispered the secretary.

"In faith, I did," said Mr. Donkin.

"And I," said Sir Richard Blunt.

"And we," said the Lord Mayor, in defiance of grammar. "I—I—feel rather unwell, gentlemen, do you know."

"Hush! let us listen," said the secretary.

They all stood profoundly still for a few minutes, and then, just as they were one and all beginning to think that after all it must be a mere thing of fancy, the same mournful moan came once more upon their ears.

"There can be no mistake," said Sir Richard. "We all hear that; is it not so, gentlemen?"

"Yes—yes!" said everybody.

"I'm getting worser," said the Lord Mayor.

"This mystery must be cleared up," said the secretary. "Is it a trick upon us, do you think, Sir Richard?"

"No, my lord, certainly not."

"Then we cannot go on until this is cleared up. You are armed, of course, Sir Richard?"

"Yes, my lord."

Sir Richard Blunt took from his pocket a double-barrelled pistol. There was now a sort of pause, as though each of those present expected the others to say or to do something which should have the effect of discovering what the singular noise portended. Of course, Sir Richard Blunt felt that in such an emergency he would be the man naturally looked to.

"It is absolutely necessary," he said, "that we should find out what this means before proceeding farther."

"Yes, yes," said the Lord Mayor, "no doubt of it; and in the meantime I'll run to the Mansion House and get some assistance, gentlemen."

"Oh, no, my lord—oh, no," said the secretary to the chief magistrate of the city. "We cannot think of sparing you."

"But—but—"

"Certainly not," said Sir Richard Blunt, who was keenly alive to the tone of irony in which the secretary spoke. "Certainly not; and as I fancy the sound which has excited our curiosity comes from about the centre of the pews, you and I, my lord, will go and find out who it is. Come, if you please, at once."

"I—I—" stammered the Lord Mayor, "I really—humph! If I felt quite well, do you know, Sir Richard, I should not hesitate a moment."

"Pho! pho!" said Sir Richard, taking his arm, and leading him unwillingly forward. "Remember that the eyes of those are upon you whose opinions are to you of importance."

With a groan the unfortunate Lord Mayor, who from the first had shrunk from the enterprise altogether, being fearful that it might possibly involve dangerous consequences, allowed himself to be dragged by Sir Richard Blunt in the direction of the pews.

"If you have a pistol," said the magistrate, "you had better keep it in your hand ready for service."

"Lord bless you," said the Lord Mayor, in a nervous whisper, "I never fired off a pistol in all my life."

"Is that possible?"

"I don't know about being possible, but it's true."

"Well, you do surprise me."

"So—so you see, Sir Richard," added his temporary lordship, suddenly popping into the churchwarden's pew, which they had just reached—"so I'll stay here and keep an eye upon you."

Sir Richard Blunt was not at all sorry to get rid of such a companion as the Lord Mayor, so with a cough, he left him in the pew, and went forward alone, determined to find out what it was that made the

extraordinary noise. As he went forward, towards the spot from whence it had come, he heard it once again, and in such close proximity to him, that albeit, unaccustomed to allow anything to affect his nerves, he started back a pace. Shading, then, the little bit of wax candle that he had in his hand, he looked steadily in the direction of the low moaning sound. In an instant he found a solution of the mystery. A couple of pigeons stood upon the hand rail of one of the pews, and it was the peculiar sound made by these birds, that, by the aid of echo in the silent empty church, had seemed to be of a very different character from its ordinary one.

"And from such simple causes," said Sir Richard, "arise all the well-authenticated stories of superstition which fancy and cowardice give credence to."

He looked up, and saw that in the wish to ventilate the church, the windows had been liberally opened, which had afforded the means of ingress to the pigeons, who, no doubt, would have slumbered soundly enough until morning, if not disturbed by the arrival of the party at the church. As Sir Richard Blunt retraced his steps, he passed the pew where the Lord Mayor was; and willing to punish that functionary for his cowardice, he said, in a well-affected voice of alarm—

"Gracious Heaven! what will become of us?"

With a groan, the Lord Mayor flopped down to the floor of the pew, and there he lay, crouching under one of the seats in such an agony of terror, that Sir Richard felt certain he and the others would be able to transact all the business they came about, before he would venture to move from that place of concealment. The magistrate speedily informed the rest of the party what was the cause of the alarm, and likewise hinted the position of the Lord Mayor, upon which the secretary said—

"Let him be. Of course, as a matter of courtesy, I was obliged to write to him upon the subject; but we are as well, and perhaps better without him."

"I am of the same opinion," said Sir Richard.

They now went at once to the vestry, and two good lanterns were then procured, and lit. The magistrate at once led the way to the stone that had been raised by the workmen, in the floor of the church, and which had never been effectually fastened down again. In a corner, where no one was likely to look, Sir Richard placed his hand for a crow-bar which he knew to be there, and, having found it, he quickly raised the stone on one side. The other gentlemen lent their assistance, and it was turned fairly over, having exposed the steps that led down to the vaults of old St. Dunstan's church.

"Let us descend at once," said the secretary, who, to tell the truth, in the whole affair, showed no lack of personal courage.

"Allow me to precede you, gentlemen," said Sir Richard Blunt; "and you, Mr. Villimay, will, perhaps, bring up the rear."

"Yes, oh, yes," said the churchwarden, with some degree of nervousness, but he was quite a hero compared to the Lord Mayor.

Sir Richard handed one of the lanterns, then, to Mr. Villimay, and took the other himself. Without another moment's delay, then, he began the descent. They could all, as they went, feel conscious that there was certainly a most unearthly smell in the vaults—a smell which, considering the number of years that had elapsed since any interments had taken place in them, was perfectly unaccountable. As they proceeded, this stench became more and more sickening, and the secretary said, as he held a handkerchief to his mouth and nose—

"The Bishop of London spoke to me of this, but I really thought he was exaggerating."

"It would be difficult to do that," said Sir Richard. "It is as bad almost as it can very well be, and the measures taken for the purpose of ventilation, have not as yet had a very great effect upon it."

"I should say not."

With tolerable speed the magistrate led the party on through a vast number of vaults, and through several narrow and rather tortuous passages, after which he came to an iron door. It was locked, but placing the lantern for a few moments upon the floor, he soon succeeded in opening it with a skeleton key. The moment he had done so, the secretary exclaimed—

"Hey day! This is something different."

"In what respect, my lord?"

"Why, if my senses don't deceive me, the horrible charnel-house smell, which we have been enduring for some time past, has given way to one much more grateful."

"What is it like, my lord?"

"Well, I should say some delicious cooking was going on."

"You are right. There is cooking going on. We are not very far from Mrs. Lovett's pie manufactory."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and the smell, or rather I ought to say the odour of which the air is full, comes from the bakehouse."

The secretary gave a perceptible shudder, and Mr. Villimay uttered a groan. The gentleman who was with the secretary was about to say something, but the magistrate, in a low voice, interrupted him, saying—

"Pardon me, but now we are in close proximity to the place of our destination, I would recommend the profoundest caution and silence."

"Certainly—certainly. We will only be silent spectators."

"It is better, I think," added Sir Richard Blunt, "to allow me to carry on the whole of the conversation that is to ensue; and at the same time, any of you gentlemen can suggest to me a question to ask, and I will at once put it to the man we come to speak to."

"That will do, Sir Richard, that will do."

The magistrate now hurried on as though those savoury steams that scented the air from the bakehouse of Mrs. Lovett's pies were to him more disagreeable than the horrible smell in the vaults that made everybody shake again. In a few minutes he arrived at a room, for it could not be called a vault. It had a floor of rough stone flags, which seemed as though they had originally belonged to some of the vaults, and had been pulled up and carried to this place to make a rude flooring. There was nothing very remarkable about the walls of this place, save at one part, and there there was evidently a door, across which was placed a heavy iron bar.

"It is through there," said Sir Richard.

"But—but you do not intend to open it?"

"Certainly not. There is a small crevice through which there will be no difficulty in maintaining a conversation with the imprisoned cook, if I can only make him hear me from this spot."

CHAPTER LXVII.
THE REVELATIONS IN THE VAULTS.

The object of Sir Richard Blunt was, of course, to make the cook hear him, but no one else. With this aim he took a crown-piece from his pocket and tapped with the edge of it upon the stone-work which at that place protruded from the wall to the extent of nearly a foot. The stone shelves upon the other side were let into the wall in that fashion. The monotonous ringing sound of the coin against the stone was likely enough to reverberate through the wall, and that the cook was rather a light sleeper, or did not sleep at all, was soon sufficiently manifest, for a voice, which the magistrate recognised as his, cried from the other side—

"Who is there? If a friend, speak quickly, for God knows I have need of such. If an enemy, your utmost malice cannot make my situation worse than it is."

Sir Richard placed his mouth close to a crevice, and said—

"A friend, and the same who has spoken to you before."

"Ah! I know that voice. Do you bring me freedom?"

"Soon. But I have much to ask of you."

"Let me look at the daylight, and then ask what you will, I shall not tire of answering."

"Nay, the principal thing I have to ask of you is yet a little more patience."

"Patience! patience! It seems that I have been years in this place, and yet you ask me to have more patience. Oh, blessed liberty, am I not to hail you yet?"

"Can you forget that you have another object—namely, to bring to the just punishment of the law those who have placed you and others in this awful position?"

"Yes—yes. But—"

"But you would forego all that to be free, a few short hours before you would be free with the accomplishment of all that justice and society required?"

"No—no. God help me! I will have patience. What is it that you demand of me now? Speak."

"Your name?"

"Alas!—alas!"

"Surely you cannot hesitate to tell one, who has run some risks to befriend you, who you are?"

"If, by my telling that, I saw that those risks were made less, I would not hesitate; but, as it is, London, and all that it contains now, is so hateful to me, that I shall leave it the instant I can. Falsehood, where I most expected truth, has sunk deeply, like a barbed arrow, into my heart."

"Well, I certainly had hoped you would have placed in me that amount of confidence."

"No. I dare not."

"Dare not?"

"Yes, that is the word. The knowledge of my name spread abroad—that is to say, my real name, would inflict much misery for all, I can just now say to the contrary, upon one whom I yet wish all the happiness that God can give his creatures in this world. Let it be thought that I and the world have parted company."

"You are a strange man."

"I am. But the story I have to tell of the doings in this den of infamy, will come as well from a Mr. Smith as from any one else."

"I wish you now, in a few words, to relate to me what you know, fully and freely."

"Anticipating that a statement would be wanted, I have, with no small amount of trouble, manufactured for myself pens and ink, and have written all that I have to say. How can I give you the document?"

"There is a chink here in the wall, through which I am addressing you. Can you pass it through?"

"I will try. I see the chink now for the first time since my long and painful residence here. Your light upon the other side has made it quite apparent to me. I think, by folding my paper close, I can pass it through to you."

"Try it."

In about half a minute Sir Richard Blunt got hold of a piece of folded paper, which was pushed partly through the chink. He pulled it quite through, and handed it to the secretary, who, with a nod, at once put it in his pocket.

"And now for how long," said the cook, "am I to pine for freedom from this dreadful place? Recollect that each hour here has upon its passing wings a load of anxieties and miseries, such as I only can appreciate."

"I have brought a letter for you," said Sir Richard, "which will contain all the intelligence you wish, and give you such instructions as shall not only ensure your safety, but enable you to aid materially in bringing your persecutors to justice. Place your hand to the crevice and take it."

"I have it."

"Well, read it at your leisure. Have you any means of knowing the time of day in your prison?"

"Oh yes. There is a clock in the bakehouse, by which I am forced to regulate the different batches of pies."

"That will do. Have you had any more threats from Mrs. Lovett?"

"None. As long as I perform my loathsome duty here, I see no one and hear of no one."

"Be of good cheer, your desolate condition will not last long. It is not easy under present circumstances to enter at large into matters which might induce you to declare who you really are, but when you and I meet in the bright sunshine from which you have been debarred for so long, you will think very differently from what you do now upon many things."

"Well, sir, perhaps I shall."

"Good night to you. Take what rest and refreshment you can, my good friend, and believe that there are better days in store for you."

"I will strive to think so.—Good night."

There was such a mournful cadence in the voice of the imprisoned young man, as he said "Good night," that the secretary remarked in a low voice to Sir Richard—

"Would it not be a mercy now to let him free, and take him away with us?"

"I don't like his concealing his name, my lord."

"Well, it is not the thing exactly."

"His imprisonment now will be of very short duration indeed, and his liberation is certain, unless by some glaring act of imprudence he mars his own fortune. But now, gentlemen, I have a sight to show you in these vaults that you have come to see, and yet, that I think it would have been wise if you had left unseen."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. You will soon agree with me in opinion."

Sir Richard, bearing the lantern in his hand, led the way for a considerable distance back again, until they were fairly under the church, and then he said—

"A large vault belonging to a family named Weston, which is extinct I fancy, for we can find no one to claim it, has been opened near this spot."

"By whom?"

"That you will have no difficulty in guessing. It is that vault that I wish to show you. There are others in the same condition, but one will be enough to satiate your appetites for such sights. This way, gentlemen, if you please."

As the light from the two lanterns fell upon the faces of Sir Richard Blunt's companions, curiosity and excitement could be seen paramount upon their features. They followed him as their guide without a word, but they could not but see that he trod slowly, and that now and then a shudder crossed his frame.

"Even you are affected," said the secretary, when the silence had lasted some minutes.

"I were something more or less than human," replied Sir Richard Blunt "if I could go unmoved into the presence of that sight, that I feel it to be my duty to show to you."

"It must be horrible indeed."

"It is more horrible than all the horrors your imagination can suggest. Let us go quicker."

Apparently with a desperate feeling of resolution, such as might actuate a man who had some great danger to encounter, and who after shrinking from it for a time, should cry "Well, the sooner it is over the better," did the magistrate now quicken his steps, nor paused he until he arrived at the door of the vault of which he had spoken.

"Now, Mr. Villimay," he said. "Be so good as to hold up your lantern as high as you can, at the same time not to get it above the doorway, and I will do the same by mine. All that we want is a brief but clear view."

"Yes, yes. Quite brief," said the secretary.

Sir Richard Blunt laid his hand upon the door of the vault, which was unfastened, and flung it open.

"Behold!" he said, "one of the vaults of old St. Dunstan's."

For the space of about a minute and a half no one uttered a word, so it behoves us to state what that vault contained, to strike such horror into the hearts of bold educated men. Piled one upon each other on the floor, and reaching half way up to the ceiling lay, a decomposing mass of human remains. Heaped up one upon another, heedlessly tossed into the disgusting heap any way, lay the gaunt skeletons with pieces of flesh here and there only adhering to the bones. A steam—a foetid steam rose up from the dead, and upon the floor was a pool of corruption, creeping along as the declivities warranted. Eyes, teeth, hands half denuded of flesh—glistening vermin, shiny and sleek with the luxurious feeding they there got, slipped glibly in and out of the heaped-up horror.

Todd's Victims In The Vaults Of Old St. Dunstan's Church.

Todd's Victims In The Vaults Of Old St. Dunstan's Church.

"No more—no more!" cried the secretary.

"I sicken," said his friend, "I am faint."

Sir Richard Blunt let go the door, and it slammed shut with a hollow sound.

"Thank God!" he said.

"For—for what?" gasped Mr. Villimay.

"That you and I, my friend, need not look upon this sight again. We are all sufficient evidence upon our oaths that it is here to see."

"Yes—yes."

"Come away," said the secretary. "You told me something of what was to see, Sir Richard Blunt, but my imagination did not picture it to be what it is."

"I told you that likewise, my lord."

"You did—you did."

With hurried steps they now followed the magistrate; and it was with a feeling of exquisite relief that they all found themselves, after a few minutes, fairly in the body of the church, and some distance from that frightful spectacle they had each thought it to be their duty to look upon.

"Let us go to the vestry," said the secretary, "and take something. I am sick at heart and stomach both."

"And I am everything, and hungry too," cried a voice, and the Lord Mayor popped his head up from the churchwardens' pew.

No one could help laughing at this, although, to tell the truth, those men, after what they had seen, were in no laughing mood, as the reader may well imagine.

"Is that our friend, the King of the City?" said the secretary.

"It is," said Sir Richard.

"Well, I must say that he has set a good example of bravery in his dominions."

"He has indeed."

"Gentlemen—gentlemen," added the Lord Mayor, as he rolled out of the churchwardens' pew, "don't think of going into the vestry without me, for it was I who gave a hint to have refreshments put there, and I have been dying for some of them for this last half-hour, I assure you."

CHAPTER LXVIII.
RETURNS TO JOHANNA.

We return to Johanna Oakley.

"What is the meaning of all this?" said Sweeney Todd, as he sat in his shop about the hour of twelve on the morning following that upon which Johanna Oakley and her friend Arabella had concerted so romantic a plan of operations regarding him. "What is the meaning of all this? Am I going mad?"

Now Todd's question was no doubt a result of some peculiar sensations that had come over him; but, propounded as it was to silence and to vacancy, it of course got no answer. A cold perspiration had suddenly broke out upon his brow, and, for the space of about ten minutes, he was subject to one of those strange foreshadowings of coming ills to him, which of late had begun to make his waking hours anything but joyous, and his dreams hideous.

"What can it mean?" he said. "What can it mean?"

He wiped his face with a miserable looking handkerchief, and then, with a deep sigh, he said—

"It is that fiend in the shape of a woman!"

No doubt he meant his dear friend, Mrs. Lovett. Alas! what a thorn she was in the side of Sweeney Todd. How poor a thing, by way of recompense for the dark and terrible suspicions he had of her, was his heaped up wealth? Todd—yes, Sweeney Todd, who had waded knee-deep—knee-deep do we say?—lip-deep in blood for gold, had begun to

find that there was something more precious still which he had bartered for it—peace! That peace of mind—that sweet serenity of soul, which, like the love of God, is beautiful, and yet passeth understanding. Yes, Todd was beginning to find out that he had bartered the jewel for the setting! What a common mistake. Does not all the world do it? They do; but the difference between Todd and common people merely was that he played the game with high stakes.

"Yes," added Todd, after a pause, "curses on her, it is that fiend in the shape of a woman, who

> 'Cows my better part of man,'

and she or I must fall. That is settled; yes—she or I. There was a time when I used to say she and I could not live in the same country; but now I feel that we cannot both live in the same world. She must go—she must lapse into the sleep of death."

Todd rose, and stalked to and fro in his shop. He felt as if something was going to happen: that undefinable fidgetty feeling which will attack all persons at times, came over him, and yet it was not a feeling of deep apprehension that was at his heart.

"Oh," he muttered, "it is the recollection of that dreadful woman—that fiend, who, with a seeming prescience, knows when there is poison in her glass, and baffles me. It is the dim and shadowy thought of what I must do with her that shatters me. If poison will not do the deed, steel or a bullet must. Ah!"

Some one was trying the handle of the shop door, and so timidly was it tried, that Todd stood still to listen, without saying "Come in," or otherwise encouraging the visitor.

"Who is it?" he gasped.

Still the handle of the door-lock only shook. To be sure, it was a difficult door to open to all who did not know it well. Todd had taken care of that, for if there was anything more than another which such a man as he

might be fairly enough presumed to dislike, it would be to be glided in upon by the sudden opening of an easy-going door.

"Come in," he now cried.

The person without was evidently anxious to obey the invitation, and a more strenuous effort was made to unfasten the door. It yielded at length. A young and pretty looking lad, apparently of about thirteen or fourteen years of age, stood upon the threshold. He and Sweeney Todd looked at each other in silence for a few moments. If a painter or a sculptor could have caught them as they stood, and transferred them to canvas or to marble, he might have called them an idea of Guilt and Innocence. There was Todd, with evil passions and wickedness written upon every feature of his face. There was the boy, with the rosy gentleness and innocence of Heaven upon his brow. God made both these creatures! It was Todd who broke the silence. A gathering flush was upon the face of the boy, and he could not speak.

"What do you want?" said Todd.

He rattled his chair as he spoke, as though he would have said, "It is not to be shaved." The boy was too much engaged with his own thoughts to pay much attention to Todd's pantomime. He evidently, though, wished to say something, which he could not command breath to give utterance to. Like the "Amen" of Macbeth, something he would fain have uttered, seemed to stick in his throat.

"What is it?" again demanded Todd, eagerly.

This roused the boy. The boy, do we say. Ah, our readers have already recognised in that boy the beautiful and enthusiastic Johanna Oakley.

"There is a bill in your window—"

Johanna Applies To Todd To Become His Errand Boy.

Johanna Applies To Todd To Become His Errand Boy.

"A what?"

Todd had forgotten the announcement regarding the youth he wanted, with a taste for piety.

"A bill. You want a boy, sir."

"Oh," said Todd, as the object of the visit at once thus became clear and apparent to him. "Oh, that's it."

"Yes, sir."

Todd held up his hand to his eyes, as though he were shading them from sunlight, as he gazed upon Johanna, and then, in an abrupt tone of voice, he said—

"You won't do."

"Thank you, sir."

She moved towards the door. Her hand touched the handle. It was not fast. The door opened. Another moment, and she would have been gone.

"Stop!" cried Todd.

She returned at once.

"You don't look like a lad in want of a situation. Your clothes are good—your whole appearance is that of a young gentleman. What do you mean by coming here to ask to be an errand boy in a barber's shop? I don't understand it. You had different expectations."

"Yes, sir. But Mrs. Green—"

"Mrs. who?"

"Green, sir, my mother-in-law, don't use me well, and I would rather go to sea, or seek my living in any way, than go back again to her; and if I were to come into your service, all I would ask would be, that you did not let her know where I was."

"Humph! Your mother-in-law, you say?"

"Yes, sir. I have been far happier since I ran away from her, than I have been for a long time past."

"Ah, you ran away? Where lives she?"

"At Oxford. I came to London in the waggon, and at every step the lazy horses took, I felt a degree of pleasure that I was placing a greater distance between me and oppression."

"Your own name?"

"Charley Green. It was all very well as long as my father lived; but when he was no more, my mother-in-law began her ill-usage of me. I bore it as long as I could, and then I ran away. If you can take me, sir, I hope you will."

"Go along with you. You won't suit me at all. I wonder at your impudence in coming."

"No harm done, sir. I will try my fortune elsewhere."

Todd began sharpening a razor, as the boy went to the door again.

"Shall I take him?" he said to himself. "I do want some one for the short time I shall be here. Humph! An orphan—strange in London. No one to care for him. The very thing for me. No prying friends—nowhere to run, the moment he is sent of an errand, with open mouth, proclaiming this and that has happened in the shop. I will have him."

He darted to the door.

"Hoi!—hoi!"

Johanna turned round, and came back in a minute. Todd had caught at the bait at last. She got close to the door.

"Upon consideration," said Todd, "I will speak to you again. But just run and see what the time is by St. Dunstan's Church."

"St.—St. who?" said Johanna, looking around her with a bewildered, confused sort of air. "St. who?"

"St. Dunstan's, in Fleet Street."

"Fleet Street? If you will direct me, sir, I dare say I shall find it—oh, yes. I am good at finding places."

"He *is* strange in London," muttered Todd. "I am satisfied of that. He is strange. Come in—come in, and shut the door after you."

With a heart beating with violence, that was positively fearful, Johanna followed Todd into the shop, carefully closing the door behind her, as she had been ordered to do.

"Now," said Todd, "nothing in the world but my consideration for your orphan and desolate condition, could possibly induce me to think of taking you in; but the fact is, being an orphan myself—(here Todd made a hideous grimace)—I say, being an orphan myself, with little to distress me amid the oceans and quicksands of this wicked world, some very strong sense of religion—(another hideous grimace)—I naturally feel for you."

"Thank you, sir."

"Are you decidedly pious?"

"I hope so, sir."

"Humph! Well, we will say more upon that all-important subject another time, and if I consent to be your master, a—a—a—"

"Charley Green, sir."

"Ay, Charley Green. If I consent to take you for a week upon trial, you must wholly attribute it to my feelings."

"Certainly, sir."

"Have you any idea yourself as to terms?"

"None in the least, sir."

"Very good. Then you will not be disappointed. I shall give you sixpence a week, and your board wages of threepence a day, besides perquisites. The threepence I advise you to spend in three penny pies, at Mrs. Lovett's, in Bell Yard. They are the most nutritious and appetizing things

you can buy; and in the Temple you will find an excellent pump, so that the half hour you will be allowed for dinner will be admirably consumed in your walk to the pie shop, and from thence to the pump, and then home here again."

"Yes, sir."

"You will sleep under the counter, here, of a night, and the perquisites I mention will consist of the use of the pewter wash-hand basin, the soap, and the end of a towel."

"Yes, sir."

"You will hear and see much in this place. Perhaps now and then you will be surprised at something; but—but, master Charley, if you go and gossip about me or my affairs, or what you see, or what you hear, or what you think you would like to see or hear, I'll cut your throat!"

"Charley" started.

"Oh! sir," he said, "you may rely upon me. I will be quite discreet. I am a fortunate lad to get so soon into the employment of such an exemplary master."

"Ha!"

Todd, for a space of two minutes made the most hideous and extraordinary grimaces.

"Fortunate lad," he said. "Exemplary master! How true. Ha!"—Poor Johanna shuddered at that dreadful charnel-house sort of laugh.

"My God," she thought, "was that the last sound that rung in the ears of my poor Mark, ere he bade adieu to this world for ever?" Then she could not but utter a sort of groan.

"What's that?" said Todd.

"What, sir?"

"I—I thought some one groaned, or—or sighed. Was it you? No.—Well, it was nothing. See if that water on the fire is hot. Do you hear me? Well—well don't be alarmed. Is it hot?"

"I think."

"Think! Put your hand in it."

"Quite hot, sir."

"Well, then, master Charley—Ah! A customer! Come in, sir; come in, if you please, sir. A remarkably fine day, sir. Cloudy, though. Pray be seated, sir. A-hem! Now, Charley, bustle—bustle. Shaved, sir, I presume? D—n the door!"

Todd was making exertions to shut the door after the entrance of a stout-built man, in an ample white coat and a broad brimmed farmer looking hat; but he could not get it close, and then the stout-built man cried out —

"Why don't you come in, Bob—leave off your tricks. Why you is old enough to know better."

"It's only me," said another stout-built man, in another white coat, as he came in with a broad grin upon his face. "It's only me, Mr. Barber—ha! ha! ha!"

Todd looked quite bland, as he said—

"Well, it was a good joke. I could not for the moment think what it was kept the door from shutting, and I always close it, because there's a mad dog in the neighbourhood, you see, gentlemen."

Crack went something to the floor.

"It's this mug, sir," said Charley. "I dropped it."

"Well—well, my dear, don't mind that. Accidents, you know, will happen; bless you."

Todd, as he said this, caught up a small piece of Charley's hair in his finger and thumb, and gave it a terrific pinch. Poor Johanna with difficulty controlled her tears.

"Now, sir, be seated if you please. From the country, I suppose, sir?"

"Yes. A clean shave, if you please. We comed up from Barkshire, both on us, with beasts."

"You and your brother, sir?"

"My cousin, t'other'un is; ain't you Bill?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"Now, Charley, the soap dish. Look alive—look alive, my little man, will you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You must excuse him being rather slow, gentlemen, but he's not used to the business yet, poor boy—no father, no mother, no friend in all the world but me, sir."

"Really!"

"Yes, poor lad, but thank God I have a heart—Leave the whiskers as they are, sir?—Yes, and I can feel for the distresses of a fellow creature. Many's the—Your brother—I beg pardon, cousin, will be shaved likewise, sir?—pound I have given away in the name of the Lord. Charley, will you look alive with that soap dish. A pretty boy, sir; is he not?"

"Very. His complexion is like—like a pearl."

Johanna dropped the soap dish, and clasped her hands over her eyes. That word "pearl" had for the moment got the better of her.

CHAPTER LXIX.
TAKES A PEEP AT ARABELLA.

We regret to leave Johanna in such a predicament, but the progress and due understanding of our tale compel us briefly to revert to some proceedings of Arabella Wilmot, a short detail of which can nowhere come in so well as at this juncture. Up to the moment of parting with Johanna, when the latter went upon her perilous interprise, Arabella had kept up pretty well, but from that moment her spirits began to fail. All the romantic feelings which had at first prompted the advice that concentrated Johanna's expedition to Todd's, evaporated before the hard truthful fact that she, Arabella, had led her young friend into a situation of the greatest peril. Each moment added to the mental agony of the young girl; and at length her sufferings became too acute for further dallying with, and wringing her hands, all she could ask herself was—

"What shall I do to save her?—What shall I do to save her?"

Arabella felt that it would kill her to endure the suspense of one hour instead of four-and-twenty; but to whom was she to turn in this sad condition of her feelings? If she went to old Mr. Oakley, what could she expect but the greatest reproaches for leading one so dear to him into such a path of danger; and those reproaches would not be the less stinging on account, probably, of their being only implied, and not spoken. If she appealed to her own friends, it would only be a kind of second-hand mode of appealing to Mr. Oakley, for they, of courses, would go to him.

"Oh, wretched girl that I am," she cried, as she wrung her hands. "What shall I do?—What ought I to do?"

It was very improbable that, in the midst of such a state of feeling as this, Arabella Wilmot should think of the wisest and best thing to do; and yet strange to say, she did. By mere accident the name of Sir Richard Blunt came to her mind. She had heard Colonel Jeffery speak of him; and from common report, too, she knew he was a man who, of all others, was likely, from inclination as well as power and duty, to aid her. The idea of going to him gained strength and consistency each moment in her mind, as good ideas will.

"Yes—yes!" she exclaimed, as with frantic eagerness she arrayed herself for the event, for she had gone home after seeing Johanna on her way; "yes—yes! I will go to him—I will tell him all. He shall know what a silly, foolish, wicked girl I have been, and how by my mad—mad council, I have perhaps destroyed Johanna. But he will save her—oh, yes, he will save her from the consequences of the visit to Todd, and save me from madness."

Now, a more decidedly prudent resolve than this could not possibly have been aimed at by Arabella, had she been as cool and collected; as, on the contrary, she was nervous and excited, and it had all the effect upon her mind; for it was astonishing how the mere feeling that she was about to take a good course calmed her down. She had the prudence to interpose no delays by speaking to any one of her intention; but hastily getting into the street, she ran on for some time without reflecting that she had but a very vague idea of where Sir Richard Blunt was to be found. It is astonishing how, under the passions of extraordinary circumstances, people will boldly do things which ordinarily they would shrink from. It was so with Arabella Wilmot. She walked into a shop, and at once asked if they could tell her the exact address of Sir Richard Blunt, the magistrate.

"Yes, it is at No. 6, Essex Street, Strand."

Off she went again. Fleet Street was passed. True, she lingered a little opposite to Todd's shop, and the idea came across her of rushing in, and saying, "Johanna, come away." But she controlled that feeling, from a conviction that she was doing better by going to the magistrate, who, if it were necessary to take that course, could take it much more effectually than she could. Essex Street was gained, and Arabella's trembling hand sounded an alarm upon the knocker.

"Is Sir Richard within?"

"No. But if you particularly want him, he is at his private office in Craven Street."

To Craven Street then she sped. The number she had been told was 10, and upon the door of that house being opened, she asked a man who was big enough to block up all the passage, and who did so, for the magistrate.

"Yes, but you can't see him. He's busy."

"I must."

"But you can't, my dear."

"I will."

The man whistled.

"Will is a short word, my dear, for you to use. How do you mean to do it, eh?"

A door opened, and with his hat on, ready to go out, Sir Richard Blunt himself appeared. Another minute and Arabella would have missed him, and then God knows where, for the next twelve hours, he would be.

"What is this, Davis?" he said.

"Here's a little 'un, says she will see you, Sir Richard."

"Ah, thank God!" cried Arabella, rushing forward and catching a tight hold of the magistrate by the arm. "Yes, I will see you, sir; I have a matter of life and death to speak to you of."

"Walk in," said Sir Richard. "Don't hurry yourself in the least, Miss. Pray be composed; I am quite at your disposal."

Arabella followed him into a small room. She still kept close to him, and in her eagerness she placed her hand upon her breast, as she said—

"Sir—sir. You—and you only. Todd, Todd—oh, God! he will kill her, and I am more her murderer than he. Johanna—Johanna, my poor Johanna!"

Sir Richard slightly changed colour at the sound of those names; and then he said, calmly and slowly—

"I don't think, unless you can assume a greater command of your feelings, that you will ever be able to tell me what you came about."

"Oh, yes—yes."

"Be seated, I pray you."

"Yes—yes. In a moment. Oh, how calm and unimpassioned you are, sir."

"It would not do for us both to lose our judgment."

Arabella began to feel a little piqued, and that feeling restored her powers to her, probably quicker than any other could have possibly done. She spoke rapidly, but distinctly.

"Sir, Miss Johanna Oakley has gone to Sweeney Todd's to find out what has become of Mr. Mark Ingestrie, and I advised her to do so; but now the knowledge that I did so advise her has driven me nearly mad. It will drive me quite mad!"

Sir Richard rose from the arm chair into which he had thrown himself, and said—

"'Miss Oakley?' said you? Why—why—what folly. But she has gone home again."

"No, she is disguised as a boy, and has taken the situation that Todd put a placard in his window about, and she will be found out of course, and murdered."

"No doubt of it."

"Oh, God! Oh, God! Is there no lightning to strike me dead?"

"I hope not," said Sir Richard Blunt; "I don't want a thunder storm in my parlour."

"But, sir—"

"But, Miss Wilmot. Is she there now?"

"She is—she is."

"When did she go?"

"About two hours since. Oh, sir—you must do something—you shall do something to save her, or I will run into the streets, and call upon any passenger I meet, that has the form of a man, to aid me; I will raise the town, sir, but I will save her."

"That course would be about as wise as the original advice to Miss Oakley to go upon the expedition at all. Now answer me calmly what I shall ask of you."

"I will—I will."

"What is the prime cause of action that Miss Oakley projects as the result of this disguised entrance into Todd's shop, provided he be deceived by it?"

"To search the place upon the first opportunity for some relic of Mark Ingestrie, and so put an end to the torturing suspense regarding his fate."

Sir Richard Blunt shook his head.

"Do you think that Sweeney Todd would leave such relics within such easy acquisition and inspection? Is he the sort of man, think you, to expose himself to such danger? Oh, Miss Wilmot, this is indeed a hair-brained scheme."

"It is—it is, and I have come to you for aid, and—"

"Hush! Is the secret of this expedition entirely confined to you and to Miss Oakley?"

"It is—it is."

"Will her friends not miss her?"

"No—no. All has been arranged with what now I cannot help calling a horrible ingenuity. She is like one led to slaughter, and she will pass away from the world, leaving the secret of her disappearance to you and to me only. Sir, I am young, and there are those in this great city who love me, but if Johanna be not saved, I will no longer live to be the most wretched of beings. If there can be found a poison that will let me leave the world, to cast myself at the feet of God, and of Johanna in another, I will take it."

Sir Richard looked at his watch.

"An hour and a half, you say?"

"More than that. Let me think. It was twelve—yes, it was twelve. More you see, sir, than that. Tell me, sir. Tell me at once what can be done. Speak—oh speak to me. What will you do?"

"I don't know, Miss Wilmot."

With a deep sigh Arabella fainted.

It was seldom indeed that, even amid his adventurous life, the magistrate found a circumstance that affected him so strongly as that which Arabella Wilmot had related to him. For a short time, even he, with all his powers of rapid thought, and with all the means and appliances which natural skill and practice had given him to meet any emergency, could not think of any mode of escape from the peculiarly awkward position into which this frightfully imprudent step of Johanna had plunged him.

"My good girl," he said. "Oh, she has fainted."

He rung a hand-bell, and, when a man appeared in answer to the summons, he said—

"Is Mrs. Long within?"

"Yes, Sir Richard."

"Then bring her here, and tell her to pay every attention to this young lady, who is a friend of mine; and when she recovers, say to her that I shall return in an hour."

"Certainly, Sir Richard."

In a few moments a matronly-looking woman, who acted in that house as a sort of general manager, made her appearance, and had Arabella removed to a chamber. Before that, the magistrate had hastily put on his hat, and at a quick pace was walking towards Fleet Street. What he intended to do in the emergency—for emergency he evidently thought it was—we shall see quickly. Certain it is that, even by that time, he had made up his mind to some plan of proceeding, and our readers have sufficient knowledge of him to feel that it is likely to be the very best that could be adopted under the circumstances. Certainly Johanna had, by the bold step she had taken, brought affairs to something like a crisis, much earlier than he, Sir Richard Blunt, expected. What the result will be remains to be seen.

CHAPTER LXX.
RETURNS TO JOHANNA.

We left Johanna in rather an awkward situation. The two graziers were in Todd's shop, and she—at the pronunciation of the word "pearl," which had too forcibly at the moment reminded her of the String of Pearls, which no doubt had been fatal to Mark Ingestrie—had dropped the soap-dish, and covered her face with her hands.

"What is this?" cried Todd.

"What, sir?"

"What is that, I say? What do you mean by that, you stupid hound? If I only—"

He advanced in a threatening attitude with a razor in his hand; but Johanna quickly saw what a fault she had committed, and felt that, if she were to hope to do any good by her visit to Todd's shop, she must leave all such manifestations of feelings outside the threshold.

"I have broken it," she said.

"To be sure you have; but—"

"And then, you see, sir, I was overcome at the moment by the thought that as this was my first day here, how stupid you would think me."

"Stupid, indeed."

"Poor little chap," said one of the graziers. "Let him off this once, Mr. Barber—he seems a delicate little lad."

Todd smiled. Yes, Todd admirably got up a smile, or a something that looked like a smile. It was a contortion of feature which did duty for a piece of amiability upon his face; and, in a voice that he no doubt fully intended should be dulcet and delightful, he spoke—

"I'm quite a fool to my feelings and to my good nature," he said. "Lord bless you, gentlemen, I could not hurt a fly—not I. I used at school to be called Affectionate Todd."

"In joke?" said one of the graziers.

"No, gentlemen, no; in earnest."

"You don't say so! Well, my boy, you see no harm will come to you, as your master forgives you about the soap-dish, and we are in no sort of hurry."

"Well," said Todd, as he bustled about for another article in which to mix the lather. "Well, do you know, sir, I'm so glad to hear that you are in no hurry."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir; because, if you are strangers in London both of you, it will give you an opportunity of seeing some of the curiosities, which will do for you to talk of when you get home, you know."

"Why, that would take too much time."

"Not at all, sir. Now, for example—Charley, my dear, whip up that lather—there's the church of St. Dunstan's, which, although I say it—Now, Charley, look sharp—is one of the greatest of London curiosities. The figures at the clock I allude to more particularly. I think you said the whiskers were to be left just as they are, sir?"

"Yes."

"Well then, gentlemen, if you have never seen the figures in the front of old St. Dunstan's strike the chimes, it's one of those things that it's quite a pity to leave London without watching narrowly. They may talk of the

Tower, sir, or of the wild beasts at Exeter Change; but give me for a sight where there is real ingenuity, the figures striking the chimes at old St. Dunstan's."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Let me see. Ah, it's just a half hour nearly now, and your friend can go, although you are being shaved, and then by the time you are comfortably finished off, the next quarter will be getting on. Charley?"

"Yes, sir."

"Put on your cap, and go with that gentleman to St. Dunstan's. You must cross over the way, and then you will soon see the old church and the two figures, as large as life, and five times as natural."

Johanna took up the cap she had worn in her disguise, and stood by the door.

"Why don't you go, Bill?" said the grazier who was being shaved.

"Why, the fact is," said the other, "I would not give a pin's head to see it without you. Do you know, Mr. Barber, he makes such comical remarks at anything, that it's worth one half the fun to hear him? Oh, no, I can't go without him."

"Very good," said Todd, "then I'll finish him off, and you shall both go together in a few moments, though I am afraid you will miss this time of the chimes striking."

There was now a silence of a few moments' duration in the shop; but nothing in the shape of rage or disappointment was visible in the manner of Todd, although both of those passions were struggling at his heart.

"Now, sir," he said at length, and with a whisk he took the cloth from under the grazier's chair. "That will do; I thank you, sir. Towel and plenty of water in that corner, sir."

"Thank you."

"No, I shall do," said the other grazier, in reply to a mute imitation from Todd to sit down in the shaving chair, "I shall do pretty well, I thank you, till to-morrow."

"Very good, sir. Hope I shall have the pleasure of your patronage another time, as well as your recommendation, gentlemen."

"You may depend," said the grazier, who had been shaved, "that we shall do all we can for you, and shall not lose sight of you."

Todd bowed like a Frenchman, and the graziers left the shop. No sooner was the door closed upon them, than his countenance altered, as if by magic, and the most wofully diabolical expression came over it, as with eyes flashing with rage, he cried—

"Curses on you both! But I will have one of you, yet. May the bitterest curse of—but, no matter, I—"

"What, sir?" said Johanna. "What do you say, sir?"

"Hell's fury! what is that to you? Do dare you, you devil's cub, to ask me what I said? By all that's furious, I'll tear out your teeth with red-hot pincers, and scoop your eyes from their gory sockets with an old oyster knife. D—n you, I'll—I'll flay you!"

Johanna shrank back aghast. The pure spirit of the young girl, that had been used to little else but words of love and kindness, started at the furious and brutal abuse that was launched at it by Todd.

"Did I not tell you," he continued, "that I would have no prying—no peeping—no remarking about this or the other? I'll crush the life out of you, as I would that from a mad dog!"

A strange howling cry at the door at this moment came upon the ears of Todd. His countenance changed, and his lips moved as though he was still saying something, but he had not power to give it audibly. At length, somewhat mastering his emotion, he said—

"What—what's that?"

"A dog, sir."

"A dog! Confound all dogs."

Another howl, and a violent scratching at the door, was farther and most conclusive evidence of the canine character of the visitor.

"Charley," said Todd, in quite a soft tone—"Charley."

"Yes, sir."

"Take the poor dog something to eat—or—or to drink, rather I should say. You will find a saucer in yon cupboard, with some milk in it. If—if he only, bless him, takes one lick at it, I shall be satisfied. You know, Charley, God made all things, and we should be good to his creatures."

"Yes, sir," said Johanna, with a shudder.

She went to the cupboard, and found the saucer, in which there seemed to be a drop of fresh milk. She walked to the door, while Todd, as though he did not feel by any means sure of the pacific intentions of the dog, at once rushed into his back parlour, and locked himself in. Todd had a peep-hole from the back parlour into the shop, but he could not see further than the shop door. Moreover, Johanna's back was towards him, so he could only guess at what was going on if the dog did not actually come across the threshold. That the milk which Todd was so solicitous should be given to the dog was poisoned, occurred to Johanna in a moment; and just before opening the door, she threw it into a corner, upon some loose shavings, and odds and ends of waste paper, that were there. Johanna then opened the door. In an instant Hector, the large dog of the unfortunate Thornhill, whose identity with Mark Ingestrie appeared to be so established in the mind of Johanna, sprang upon her with an angry growl. It was only for one brief moment, however, that Hector made any such mistake as fancying Johanna to be Sweeney Todd; and then he, with an affectionate whine, licked the hands of the young girl.

"Pison! Pison!" cried a loud voice, and in another moment, the ostler, from the coach-office opposite, rushed to the door, and caught the dog around the neck.

"Ah, there ye is agin. Why, what a goose of a feller you is, to be sure, Pison. Don't you know, now, as well as I do, that that barber will do you a mischief yet, you great blockhead you? Come home, will yer? Come home, now. Come along wi' yer!"

"Yes—yes," said Johanna. "Take him away—take him away."

"Won't I, that's all. I suppose you are a young shaver? Only let me catch you a-interfering with Pison, that's all, and won't I let you know what's what, young feller."

The ostler having uttered this most uncalled-for threat to poor Johanna, took Pison in triumph over the way. Johanna closed the door.

"Is he gone?" said Todd.

"Yes, sir."

"And the milk? Is that gone, likewise?"

"Every drop of it."

"Ha! ha! ha! Well—well. Only to think, now. Ha! ha! I hope that milk won't disagree with the noble animal. How fond I am of him! How often he has been over here, in his little pretty playful way, to try and bite pieces out of my legs. Bless him. If now that milk should give him a stomach ache, what a pity it would be. Did I hear a man's voice?"

"Yes, sir; some man came and called the dog away."

"How good of him, and what a pity it would have been if he had called the noble animal away before the milk was all consumed. Dear me, some people would grudge a creature a drop of milk. A-hem—Charley?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am going out."

Johanna's heart beat rapidly.

"If any one should come, you can say it is of no use their waiting, for I am gone to shave and dress a whole family, at some distance off, and may not be back for some hours; but, Charley, for your own private

information, let me tell you that I may look in at any moment, and that, although I shall be busy, I shall be able to come in for a minute or so, when I am least expected."

Todd gave an awful leer at Johanna as he spoke.

"Yes, sir," she said.

Todd carefully locked the parlour door.

"Charley. How do you like your place?"

"Very well, sir; and I think in a little time I shall like it better."

"Good lad! Good lad! Well, well. Perhaps I ought not to say too much so soon, but if you merit my esteem, Charley, I shall do as much for you as I did for the last lad I had. After some term of service with me, I provided him with an independant home. A large house, and a garden. Ha!"

"How very kind."

"Yes. Very."

"And is he happy?"

"Quite, in a manner of speaking, notwithstanding human nature is prone to be discontented, and there are persons, who would sigh, if in Paradise, for some change, even if it were to a region supposed to be its opposite zone. Charley, however, I think will be of a different mind; and when your time comes—which it certainly will—Ha!—to reap the fruits of your service with me, I am sure that no one will hear you complain."

"I will not be ungrateful sir."

"Well, well, we shall see; and now while I am gone let there be no peeping or prying about. No attempts to open doors or force locks. No scrambling to look upon shelves or raking in odd corners. If you do—I—Ha! ha! I will cut your throat, Charley, with the bluntest razor I have. Ha!"

Todd had got on his gloves by this time, and then he left the shop. Johanna was alone! Yes, there she was, at last, alone in that dreadful place, which now for days upon days had been food for her young imagination. There she was in that place, which her waking thoughts and her dreams had alike peopled with horrors. There she was between those walls, which had perchance echoed to the last despairing death cry of him whom she had loved better than life itself. There she was in the very atmosphere of murders. His blood might form part of the stains that were upon the dingy walls and the begrimed floor. Oh, it was horrible!

"God help me now! God help me now!" said Johanna, as she covered her face with her hands and wept convulsively.

She heard a faint sound. It was the chiming of St. Dunstan's clock, and she started. It put her in mind that time, her great ally, now was fleeting.

"Away tears!" she cried as she dashed the heavy moisture from her long eye-lashes. "Away tears! I have been strong in purpose. I have already waded through a sea of horrors, and I must be firm now. The time has come. The time that I looked forward to when I thus attired myself, and thought it possible to deceive this dreadful man. Courage! Courage! I have now much to do."

First she crept to the door and looked out into the street. A vague suspicion that Todd, after all, might only be watching near at hand, somewhere, took possession of her. She looked long and anxiously to the right and to the left, but she saw nothing of him. Then she fastened the door upon the inside.

"If he should return very suddenly," she said, "I shall have notice of it by his efforts to open the door. That will give me a moment for preparation possibly."

Then with such an anxious look as no language could do justice to in its delineation, Johanna looked round the shop. Where was she to begin her investigation? There were drawers, cupboards, chests, shelves. What was

she to look at first? or was she in dread of some contrivances of Todd's to find out that she had looked at all, yet at this the last moment, forego the risk and rush into the street and so home?

"No, no! I am in God's hands," she said, "and I will not flinch."

And yet, although she felt that she was quite alone in that place, how cautiously she trod. How gently she touched one thing and then another, and with what a shudder she laid her hand for a moment to steady herself, upon the arm of the shaving chair. By so leaning upon it she found that it was a fixture; and upon a further examination of it, she found that it was nailed or screwed to the floor firmly. It was an old fashioned massive chair, with a wide deep reclining seat. A strange feeling of horror came over her as she regarded it.

CHAPTER LXXI.
THE MYSTERIOUS LETTER.

What was there in the chair that Johanna should for some few moments, now that she had begun to look at it, not be able to take her eyes off it? She tried to shake it, but it was as fast as a rock, and for all she knew it was quite usual to have a shaving chair fixed to the floor. In all likelihood it was in the best position for light which the dingy shop afforded. She left the chair at last, and then a large cupboard in one corner of the room attracted her attention. It was locked. In vain did she try to force it open. It would not yield. She tried, too, the parlour door without effect. That was quite fast; but as she turned the handle of the lock, she fancied she heard, or she really did hear something move in the room. A faint feeling came over her for a moment, and she was glad to hold by the wall, close at hand, to support herself.

"It must have been fancy," she said faintly. "I am learning nothing, and the time is flying fast."

A kind of counter ran parallel to the window, and beneath it was a space covered in by doors. Todd surely had forgotten that, for one of the doors was open. Johanna looked in and beheld quite a collection of sticks and umbrellas. Some clothing too lay upon the lowest shelf. With trembling hands, Johanna pulled at the sleeve of some article and found it to be a jacket, such as a sailor of the better sort might wear, for it was exquisitively fine, and had no end of silver buttons upon it. Her sight was dimmed by tears, as she said to herself—

"Oh, God! was this his?"

She held the jacket up to the light, and she found the breast portion of it stained, and all the buttons there tarnished. What was it but blood? The blood of the hapless wearer of that article of dress, that produced such an effect; but yet how was she to prove to herself that it had been Mark Ingestrie? Then it was that the thought struck her of how ill conceived had been that undertaking, which might, in the midst of all its frightful dangers, only end in furnishing her with more food for the most horrible surmises, without banishing one sad image of her imagination, or confirming one dreadful dream of the fate of her lover.

"'Tis all in vain!" she gasped. "All in vain! I shall know nothing, and only feel more desolate. It would be a mercy if that were to kill me! Ah! no. Not yet—not yet!"

Some one was trying the handle of the shop door. With frightful energy Johanna hid the jacket, but not in its proper place, for she only thrust it beneath the cushion of a chair close at hand, and then shutting the door of the receptacle beneath the counter, she rose to her feet, and with a face pale as monumental marble, and her hands clasped rigidly, she said —

"Who—who is there?"

"Hilloa! Open the door!" said a voice.

Some one again tried the handle, and then kicked vigorously at the lower panel.

"Patience," said Johanna, "patience."

She opened the door.

"Is Mr. Todd at hand?" said a lad.

"No—no."

"You are his boy, are you not?"

"I am."

"Then take this."

The lad handed a sealed letter to Johanna, and in a moment left the door. She held the letter in her hand scarcely looking at it. Of course she thought it was for Todd, but after a few moments her eyes fell upon the superscription, and there, to her surprise, she read as follows—

"To Miss Oakley, who is requested to read the enclosed quickly, and secretly, and then to destroy it."

Johanna Receives A Mysterious Letter In Todd's Shop.

Johanna Receives A Mysterious Letter In Todd's Shop.

To tear open the letter was the work of a moment. The sheet of paper tumbled in Johanna's hands as she read as follows—

"From Sir Richard Blunt to Miss Oakley.

"Miss Oakley, the expedition upon which you are at present says much more for your courage and chivalrous spirit than it can ever say for your discretion or the discretion of her who permitted you so far to commit your life to such chances. You should, considering your youth and sex, have left it to others to carry out such schemes; and it is well that those others are aware of your position, and so, in a great measure, enabled to shield you from, perhaps, the worst consequences of your great indiscretion, for it cannot be called anything else.

"Your young friend, Miss Wilmot, herself awakened, when, thank God, it was not too late, to the utter romantic character of the office, and communicated all to me. I blame both you and her very much indeed, and cannot speak in too strong language of the reprehensible character of your expedition; and now, my dear girl, do not be under any kind of apprehension, for you are well looked after, and Sweeney Todd shall not hurt a hair of your head.

"If you should find yourself in any danger, seize the first small heavy article at hand and throw it, with all the strength you can, through the shop window. Assistance will immediately come to you.

"And now, as you are where you are, I pray you to have confidence in me, and to remain until some one shall come to you and say 'St. Dunstan,' upon which you will know that he is a friend, and you will follow his directions.

"God bless you.—

"Richard Blunt."

Every word of this letter fell like sunshine upon the heart of Johanna, and she could not help mentally ejaculating—

"I am saved—I am saved! Yes—yes? I am not deserted. Strong, bold, good men will look to me. Oh! what kindness breathes in every sentence of this letter! Yes—yes; I am not forsaken—not forsaken!"

Tears came into the eyes of the young girl, and she wept abundantly. Her overcharged heart was relieving itself. After a few moments she began to be more composed, and had just crumpled up the letter and cast it into the fire for fear of accidents, when a shadow darkened the door-way, she saw Todd looking in above the curtain that was over the upper half of the door, and partially concealed some panes of glass that were let into it. As soon as Todd saw Johanna's eyes upon him, he entered the shop.

"What's that?" he said, pointing to the burning letter.

"Paper, sir."

"What paper?"

"A bill that a boy left. Something about Churchwardens, sir, and the parish of St. Brides, Fleet Street, and how things mean to—"

"Bah! any one else been?"

"No, sir."

Todd stood in the middle of the shop, and cast his eyes slowly round him, to see that all was as he had left. Then in a low growling tone, he added—

"No peeping and prying, eh? No rummaging in odd corners, and looking at things that don't concern you, eh?"

"Certainly not, sir."

Johanna crept close to the counter upon which lay a tolerably large piece of stone used for grinding razors upon. She thought that would do very well to throw through the window, and she kept an eye upon it with that

intent, if such an act should by a trick of Todd's appear to be necessary. Todd took the key of the parlour-door from his pocket, and placed it in the lock. Before he opened the door, though, he turned the handle, and as he did so Johanna thought that he inclined his head and listened attentively. She threw down a chair, which made a lumbering noise.

"Confound you," roared Todd.

He passed into the parlour; but in a moment, with a glance of fury, he looked out, saying—

"You tried this door?"

"I, sir?" said Johanna, creeping closer still to the sharpening stone.

"Yes, villain, you. At least, I think so—I am pretty sure; but mark me, if I were quite sure, you should suffer for it."

He closed the door again; and then when he was alone, he placed his two hands upon his head for a few moments, and said—

"What does it mean? A boy brought him a letter; I saw him come and go. At least it looked like a letter. Could it be the bill he spoke of, and then the sudden upset of that chair, which prevented me from hearing if the piece of cat-gut I had fastened to the handle of the door had been moved, before I touched it or not. I will kill him. That is safe. It is the only plan; I will kill all who is now in my way. All—all. Yes, I will, if needs be, wade up to my neck in blood to the accomplishment of my wishes."

Todd went to a cupboard and got out a large knife, such as is used by slaughtermen in the shambles, and hid it under the table cover, but in such a place that he could lay hold of it and draw it out in a moment.

"Charley," he cried, "Charley."

"Yes, sir."

"Step in here a moment; I want you, my boy."

"Shall I or shall I not," thought Johanna. "Is this danger, or only the appearance of it? Heaven direct me now! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Charley? Are you coming, my boy?"

"Yes, sir, I—I am coming. God protect me!"

"The barber at home?" cried a voice at the door; and in another moment a man with a ruddy, jolly-looking countenance, made his appearance in the shop. "Barber at home, eh? my little lad?"

"Yes—yes."

Johanna heard a bitter execration come from the lips of Todd; and then with quite a serene smile upon his face, as though he were in the most unruffled mood possible, he made his appearance.

"Could you make me a wig?" said the man, taking off his hat, and showing that his hair was closely cropped.

"Certainly, sir. If you will sit down and allow me to measure your head, I shall have great pleasure—Charley!"

"Yes, Sir."

"You can go to Lovett's, in Bell-yard, and get your dinner now. There's two-pence for you, my lad, and if you have not yet tasted Mrs. Lovett's pies, you will say when you do, that they are the most delicious things in the whole world of cookery."

"Shaved, if you please," said another man, walking into the shop, and pouncing down upon a chair as though it were his own property. "Ah dear me, I'm tired rather. Don't hurry yourself, Mr. Todd, I can wait while you are doing what you have to do for that gentleman."

"Charley," said Todd, with quite a sweet expression of face. "You need not go just yet; I want the hot water. See to it."

"Yes, sir."

Todd then, in the most careful and business-like manner, proceeded to take the measure of the gentleman's head for a "real head of hair," and when he had finished, he said—

"Now, sir, if you will leave it all to me, I will match your hair to a shade."

"Match it?"

"Yes, sir."

"But that's just what I don't want. I have had my hair all cut off, and am going to wear a wig, for the sole reason that I have got tired of the old colour."

"Well then, sir, what colour do you propose now?"

"A few shades lighter than my own. But pray shave this gentleman, and I will tell you how I wish it to look at my leisure."

The man took a seat and crossed one leg over the other with the most home sort of look in the world; and the one who had come in to be shaved plumped into the shaving chair, and gave his chin a rub as though he would say "I don't care how soon you begin."

Todd smiled.

"Charley, the lather."

"Yes, sir. Here it is."

"Here, my little man," said the gentleman in want of a wig. "If you can tie a bow, just make one in front of my cravat.—A small one."

The gentleman slipped a small piece of paper into Johanna's jacket pocket.

CHAPTER LXXII.
ANOTHER VICTIM.

Johanna started.

"St. Dunstan's," said the stranger.

"What?" said Todd.

"St. Dunstan's last Sunday, I don't think was so highly-scented with the flavour of the grave as usual."

"Oh," said Todd.

Johanna trembled, for certainly Todd looked suspicious, and yet what could he have seen? Literally nothing, for he was so situated that the slight action of the stranger, in putting the slip of paper into her jacket-pocket, must have escaped him with all his watchfulness. She gathered courage. Todd glanced at her, saying—

"What is the matter, Charley? you don't look well at all, my lad."

"I am not very well, sir."

"How sorry I am; I think, do you know, Charley,"—Todd was lathering the man's face as he spoke—"that one of Mrs. Lovett's hot pies would be the thing for you."

"Very likely, sir."

"Then, I think I can manage now to spare you."

As he said this, Todd bent an eagle glance upon the gentleman who had ordered the wig, and it seemed as if he doled out his words to Johanna with a kind of reference to the movements of that personage. The gentleman had found a hat-brush, and was carefully rubbing up his hat.

"I do hope," he said, "that the wig will be as natural as possible."

"Depend upon it, sir," said Todd. "I'll warrant if you look in here, and try it on some day when there's no one here but you and I to set you against it, you will never complain of it."

"No doubt. Good morning."

Todd made his best bow, accompanied by the flourish of his razor, that made the man who was being shaved shrink again, as the reflected light from its highly-polished blade flashed again in his eyes.

"Now, Charley, I think you may go for your pie," added Todd, "and don't hurry, for if anything is wrong with your stomach, that will only make it worse, you know."

"You are a good master to the lad," said the man who was lathered ready for shaving.

"I hope so, sir," said Todd. "With the help of Providence we all ought to do our best in this world, and yet what a deal of wickedness and suffering there is in it too."

"Ah, there is."

"I am sure, sir, it makes my heart bleed sometimes to think of the amount of suffering that only twenty-four hours of this sad work-a-day world sees. But I was always of a tender and sympathetic turn from my cradle—yes from my cradle."

Todd made here one of his specially horrible grimaces, which the man happened to see in a glass opposite to him, the reflective focus of which Todd had not calculated upon; and then as the sympathetic barber stropped his razor, the man looked at him as though he would have speculated upon how could such an article looked in a cradle.

"Now, sir, a little to this side. Are you going, Charley?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do, sir. I'll polish you off very shortly, indeed, sir. Are you going, Charley?"

Johanna darted from the shop, and the moment she got clear of it, she by natural impulse drew the little slip of paper from her pocket, and read upon it—

"Miss O. do not if you can help it leave any one alone in Todd's shop, as circumstances may prevent us from always following his customers in; but if you should be forced to leave while any one is there, knock at No. 133 Fleet Street. This is from your friend R. B."

"133?" said Johanna, as she glanced around her, "133? Ah, it is close at hand. Here—here."

The number was only a short distance from Todd's, and Johanna was making her way to it, when some one stopped her.

"From Todd's," said a voice.

"Yes—yes. A man is there."

"Alone?"

"Yes, and—"

Before she could say another word the stranger darted from her, and made his way into Todd's shop. Johanna paused, and shrinking into a doorway, stood trembling like an aspen leaf.

"Oh, Heaven!" she ejaculated, "into what a sea of troubles have I plunged. Murder and I will become familiar, and I shall learn to breathe an atmosphere of blood. Oh, horror! horror! horror!"

The crowd in that dense thoroughfare passed on, and no one took heed of the seeming boy, as he wept and sobbed in that doorway. Some had no time to waste upon the sorrows of other people;—some buttoned up their pockets as though they feared that the tears that stood upon that

pale face were but the preludes to some pecuniary demand;—others again passed on rapidly, for they were so comfortable and cosy that they really could not have their feelings lacerated by any tale of misery, not they. And so Johanna wept alone.

Ding dong! ding dong!

What is that? Oh, St. Dunstan's chimes. How long has she been from the shop? Shall she return to it, or fly at once and seek for refuge from all the sorrows and from all the horrors that surround her, in the arms of her father?

"Direct me, oh God!" she cried.

Some one suddenly clasps her arm.

"Johanna! Johanna!"

It was Arabella Wilmot.

Johanna Disguised As A Boy, Is Found Weeping By Arabella, Near St. Dunstan's.

Johanna Disguised As A Boy, Is Found Weeping By Arabella, Near St. Dunstan's.

"Johanna—dear, dear Johanna, you are safe—quite safe. Come home now—oh, come—oh, come—come."

"You here, Arabella?"

"Yes, I am mad—mad!—at least, I was going mad, Johanna; in my agony to know what had become of you, and notwithstanding I have told Sir Richard Blunt, I had no faith in the love and the courage of any one but myself. I was coming to Todd's."

"To Todd's?"

"Yes, dear, to Todd's. I could no longer exist unless I saw with my own eyes that you were safe."

"What a fatal step that might have been."

"It might. Perhaps it would; but God, in his goodness, has again, my dear Johanna, averted it by enabling me to meet you here. Come home now—come at once."

"Yes, I—I think—"

"Come—come;—you have done already much. Let, for the future, your feelings be, that for Mark Ingestrie you have adventured what not one girl in a million would adventure."

At this mention of the name of Mark Ingestrie, a sharp cry of mental agony burst from the lips of Johanna.

"Oh, I thank you, Arabella."

"Thank me?"

"Yes, you have recalled me to myself. You have, by the mention of that name, recalled me to my duty, from which I was shrinking and falling away. You have told me in the most eloquent language that could be used that as yet I have done nothing for him who is, dead or alive, my heart's best treasure."

"Oh, Johanna, you will kill me."

"No, Arabella—no. Good bye. Go home, love—go home, and—and pray for me—pray for me!"

"Johanna, for mercy's sake! what are you about to do? Speak to me. Do not look upon me in that way. What are you about to to do, Johanna?"

"Go to the shop."

"To Todds?"

"Yes. It is my place—I am in search of Mark Ingestrie. If he be living, it is I who must clear that man who is suspected of his murder. If he be no more, it is I, who weak and fragile as I am, must drag him to justice."

"No—no—no."

"I say yes. Do not stay me if you love me."

Arabella clasped the arm of Johanna, but with a strength that only the immense amount of mental excitement she was suffering from could have given her. Johanna freed herself from the hold of her friend, and dashing from the doorway, was in another moment lost to the sight of Arabella in the barber's shop.

"What now?" cried Todd, fiercely, as Johanna bounded into the shop so hurriedly.

"Nothing, sir—only the dog."

"Bolt the door—bolt the door."

"Yes, sir."

Todd wiped his brow.

"That infernal dog," he muttered, "will be the death of me yet; and so, Charley, the malignant beast flew at you, did he? the savage will attack you, will he?"

"Yes, sir, so it seems."

"We will kill it. I should like to cut its throat. It would be a pleasure, Charley. How strange that strong poisons have no effect upon that dog. Curses on it!"

"Indeed, sir."

"None whatever. It is very odd."

Todd remained in a musing attitude for some time, and then suddenly starting, he said—

"Charley, if that man come again after his wig, get him into talk, will you, and learn all you can about him. I have to go a little way into the city just now, and shall speedily return. I hoped you liked the pie?"

"Pie, sir?"

"Yes, Lovett's pie."

"Oh, yes—delicious."

"Ha! ha! he! he! ho!"

Drawing on a pair of huge worsted gloves, Todd walked out of the shop without saying another word. The moment he was gone, Johanna passed both her hands upon her breast, as if to stay the wild beating of her heart, as she whispered to herself—

"Alone—alone once more."

It was well that she had only whispered that much, for in the next moment Todd gently put his head into the shop. She started.

"Oh, sir—oh, sir, you frightened me."

"Beware!" was all he said. "Beware!"

The frightful head, more terrifying to Johanna than would have been the fabled Medusa's, was withdrawn again, and this time Johanna resolved to be certain that he was gone before she gave the smallest outbreak to her feelings, or permitted herself to glance around her in any way that could be construed into prying curiosity. She made a feint of clearing up the place a little, and, with a broom that had about six hairs only left in it, she swept the hobs of the little miserable grate in which a fire was kept for the shaving-water. This occupied some little time; but still not feeling sure that Todd was really gone, she then went to the door, and looked right and left. He was not to be seen; and so, when she went back, she bolted the shop-door upon the inside again, and really felt that she was alone once more in that dreadful place. That poor Johanna was now in a great state of mental excitement is not a matter of surprise, for the events that had recently taken place were decidedly of a character to produce such a mental condition. The interview with Arabella had, no doubt, materially aided in such an effect. With trembling eagerness she now began again to look about her, and her great aim was by some means to get into the parlour, for if anywhere, she thought that surely there she should find some traces of that lost one who occupied, since the suspicions of the foul usage he had met with, a larger place in her affections than before. Feeling how surrounded she was by friends, probably Johanna was a little more reckless as regarded the means she

adopted of carrying out her intention. The parlour-door was quite fast; but surely in the shop she thought she might find some weapon, by the aid of which it could be burst open; and even if Todd should suddenly return, it was but a rush, and she would reach the street; and if he intercepted her in that, as God knew he might, she could take the means of summoning assistance pointed out to her by Sir Richard Blunt, and cast something through the window into the street. Full of these thoughts and feelings, then, and only alive to the mad wish she had of discovering some traces of her lover, Johanna hunted the shop over for some weapon with which to attack the parlour-door. She opened a cupboard. A hat fell from within at her feet! One glance at that hat was sufficient; it was of a peculiar colour—she remembered it. It was the hat of the man whom she had left being shaved when she was sent ostensibly to purchase a pie at Mrs. Lovett's, in Bell-yard. Johanna's hurry was over. A sickening feeling came over her as she asked herself what was the probable fate of the owner of the hat.

"Another victim!—another victim!" she gasped.

She tottered back overpowered by the thought that there had been a time when, opening that cupboard door, the carelessly cast-in hat of Mark Ingestrie would have fallen to her feet, even as did that of the stranger, who, no doubt, now was numbered with the dead. She sank almost in a state of fainting into the shaving-chair.

"Oh, yes, yes," she said. "This is horribly, frightfully condusive. My poor Mark. You have gone before me to that home where alone we may hope to meet again. Alas! alas! that I should live to feel such a truth."

She burst into tears, and sobbed so bitterly, that any one who had seen her would have truly thought her heart was breaking in that wild paroxysm of grief. What a mercy it was that Todd did not come in at such a moment as that, was it not? The sobs subsided into sighs. The tears no longer flowed in abundance; and after about five minutes Johanna arose, tottering and pale. She drenched her eyes and face with

cold water, until the traces of the storm of emotion were no longer visible upon her face; and then she knelt by the shaving chair, and clasping her hands, she said—

"Great God, I ask for justice upon the murderer!"

She rose, and felt calmer than before; and then, sitting down by the little miserable fire, she buried her face in her hands, and tried to think—to think how she should bring to justice the man who had been the blight of her young existence—the canker in the rose-bud of her youth. You would have been shocked if you could just for a moment have looked into Sweeney Todd's shop, and seen that girl in such an attitude, without a sigh and without a tear, while all her dearest hopes lay about her heart in the very chaos of a frightful wreck.

CHAPTER LXXIII.
STARTLING EVENTS.

Business at Mrs. Lovett's was brisk. During the whole of that day—that most eventful day upon which the fair Johanna Oakley had gone upon her desperate errand to Sweeney Todd's—the shop in Bell Yard had been besieged by customers. Truly it was a pity to give up such an excellent business. The tills groaned with money, and Mrs. Lovett's smiles and pies never appeared so perfect as upon that day. At about half-past twelve o'clock, when the Lord Chancellor suddenly got up from his chair, in the great hall of Lincoln's Inn, and put on his furry-looking hat, and when the curtain which shuts in his lordship from invidious blasts was withdrawn with a screaming jerk, and a gentleman was stopped in the middle of an argument, what a rush of lawyer's clerks there was to the pie-shop in Bell Yard. Then was it that the anxious solicitor's fag, who must know something, and have some brains, smiled at the prospect of the luxurious repast he was about to have, and jingled the twopence he had kept in a side pocket for only one pie, and grudged it not out of his hard-earned pittance. Then was it that the bloated barrister's clerk, who had grown shining and obese upon fares, and who is not required to know anything but the complete art of insolence to his brothers, nor to have any more brains than will suffice him to make up his book in the long vacation, smacks his lips at the thought of Lovett's pies, and sends the expectant boy of the chamber—the snob of a snob—for three twopennies. Lean and hungry-looking young men start into Bell Yard from the Strand, producing crumbled pieces of paper, bag their twopenny, and retire to eat it in some corner of the old Temple. All is

bustle—all is animation, and the side counter—that one, you know, which ran parallel to the window—was lined by clerks, who sat eating and driving their heels against the boarding, and joking, and laughing "Ha! ha!" how they did laugh! And then what stories they told of their "Governors;" and how such an one was going out of practice; and how such another one was a screw, and so on, to the great delight of the mere boys, who hoped one day to wear their hair long and grey, and to dress in an outrageous caricature of the mode! As the machine that let down at the back of the counter, to bring up the pies, went down for the one o'clock batch, it was noticed that Mrs. Lovett looked a little anxious. The fact was, that the cook had been so prompt upon that day in his movements, that she began to think there must be, as folks say, "Something in it," and she was beginning to terrify herself with the idea that he had some scheme of redemption for himself in view, that might most unseasonably develope itself before the customers.

"Ah, Mrs. Lovett," said one young gent, while the gravy ran down the sides of his mouth from the pie he was consuming. "You don't seem at all yourself to-day. Indeed you don't."

"Who do I seem, then?"

"Ha! ha! Upon my life that's good!" roared another.

A small amount of wit did for Lovett's pie shop. It was like the House of Commons in that particular, and "loud laughter" was sure to welcome the smallest joke. Mrs. Lovett's eyes were bent upon the abyss, down which the trap had descended but a moment before.

"Ain't they a-coming, mum?" said one.

"Oh, don't I sniff 'em," said another, working his nose like an ex-chancellor. "Don't I sniff 'em."

"De—licious!" cried another.

A feeling of relief was visible upon the face of Mrs. Lovett as the trap slowly ascended, bringing with it the one o'clock batch, in all their steaming glory. The whole shop was in a moment filled with the fresh

appetite-giving aroma of those bubbling hot pies; and as the French newspapers say, when a member of the extreme right, or half way to the left, or two degrees from the centre, swerves, there was "a sensation." Five minutes—only five minutes—and the whole batch was cleared off, not one was left!

"Another batch of one hundred, gentlemen, at two," said Mrs. Lovett, with a bland look.

"At two, mum?" cried a customer. "Why, what's to become of the half-past one batch?"

"We are rather short of—of meat," said Mrs. Lovett, with one of her strange metallic smiles.

"The devil you are! Ain't there butchers enough?"

"Oh, dear, yes; but we could not get such meat as we put in our pies, at the butcher's."

"You kill your own, mum, then, I suppose?"

"We do," replied Mrs. Lovett, with another smile, more metallic than the former.

"And where is your farm, mum?"

"Really, sir, you want to know too much. I appeal to those gentlemen if any of them know where my farm is."

"No—no. D—n it, no, nor don't care," said all the lawyer's clerks. "Don't know anything about it."

"And don't care," said another. "Sufficient for the day is the pie thereof."

"Very good—Ha! ha!—Very good."

The crowd gradually dispersed. Mrs. Lovett put a placard in the window, announcing—

"A hot batch at two o'clock."

She then closed the shop door, and retired to the parlour. She cast herself upon a sofa, and hiding the light from her eyes with one of her arms, she gave herself up to thought. Yes, that bold bad woman was beginning to have her moments of thought, during which it appeared to be as though a thousand mocking fiends were thronging around her. No holy thoughts or impulses crossed her mind. Solitude, that best of company to the good and just, was to her peopled with countless horrors; and yet there must have been a time when that woman was pure, and her soul spotless—a time when it was free from

> "The black engraved spots"

which now deformed it. And yet who, to look upon her now, could fancy that she was ever other than what she seemed? Who could bring themselves to think that she had not been placed at once by the arch-fiend as she was upon the beautiful world, to make in the small circle around her a pestilence, a blight, and a desolation? There are persons in the world that it would be the greatest violence to our feelings ever to attempt to picture to our imaginations as children; and as such, surely were Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett. Was she ever some gentle little girl, fondly clinging to a mother's arms? Was he ever a smiling infant, with pretty dimples? Was there at his or her birth much joy? Did a mother's tears ever fall upon his or her cheek, in sweet gratitude to God for such a glorious gift? No—no. We cannot—we will not believe that such persons as Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett ever came into this world otherwise than ready-made man and woman! Any other belief, concerning such fiends in human shape is too repugnant. But we are forgetting that Mrs. Lovett is upon the sofa all this while, and that her metallic smile has quite vanished, giving way to such a look of utter abandonment of spirit, that you would have shuddered to have cast but one glance upon her. She could bear the quietude of the attitude she had assumed but for a very short time, and then she sprang to her feet.

"Yes," she said, "it must, and it shall come to an end!"

She stood for some few moments trembling, as though the dim echo of that word end, as she had jerked it forth, had awakened in her mind a world of horrifying thoughts. Again she sank upon the couch, and speaking in a low, plaintive voice, she said—

"Yes. I have need of the waters of oblivion, one draught of which shuts out for ever all memory of the past. Oh, that I had but a cup of such nectar at my lips!"

Not a doubt of it, Mrs. Lovett. It is the memory of the wicked that constitutes that retribution, which is assuredly to be found in this world as day follows night.

"I—I must have this," she muttered. "Let Todd be dead or alive, I must have it. I am going mad—I feel certain. That I am going mad, and the only way to save myself, is to flee. I must collect as much money as I can and then flee far away. If I cannot quite obliterate the past from my memory, I can at least leave it as it is, and add nothing to it. Yes, that man may live. He seems to bear a charmed life. But I must flee."

She rested her head upon her hands, and in a softer voice, said—

"Let me think—let me think of the means, now that I have yet a little time. What do I dread most? The man below? Yes. He is at work for his deliverance. I feel that he is, and if he succeed before I flee from here, all is lost—all is lost! I must speak to him."

Filled with this idea, and with an unknown dread of what the discontented cook might do, Mrs. Lovett stepped into the shop first, and made the door fast by slipping a bolt at the back of it. It was not very often that immediately after the disposal of a batch of pies any customers came in, and if they should attempt to do so for the purpose of purchasing any stale pies, she was by far too intent upon what she was come about, and considered it by far too important to heed what they might think or say upon finding the door fast. She then opened the seeming cupboard in the parlour, which conducted to the strong iron door, with the small grating at the top of it. She reached that point of observation with great rapidity, and peered into the cavernous dungeon-

like bakehouse. At first she could see nothing by the uncertain light that was there, but as her eyes got accustomed to the absence of daylight, she could just see the figure of the cook sitting upon a stool, and apparently watching one of the fires.

"It is a long—long time."

"What is a long time?" cried Mrs. Lovett.

The captive cook sprang to his feet in a moment, and in a voice of alarm, he said—

"Who spoke? Who is that?"

"I," replied Mrs. Lovett. "Do you not know me?"

"Ah," said the cook, directing his eyes to the grating above the door, "I know you too well. What do you want with me? Have I failed in doing your bidding here? Have I disappointed you of a single batch of those execrable pies?"

"Certainly not, but I have come to see—if—if you are quite comfortable."

"Comfortable! What an insult!"

"Nay, you wrong me."

"That is impossible. This is the commencement only of some new misery. Speak on, madam. Speak on. I am helpless here, and condemned to suffer."

Notwithstanding these words of the cook there was a certain tone of hilarity about him, that Mrs. Lovett might well be surprised at, and she asked herself what does he hope. The fact is that much as he wished still to enact the character of a man full of despair, the cook could not get out of his head and heart the promises of Sir Richard Blunt—promises which still rung in his ears, like a peal of joy bells.

"Come, come," said Mrs. Lovett, "you are getting reconciled to your fate. Confess as much."

"I reconciled? Never."

"But you are not so unhappy?"

"Worse—worse. This apathetic condition that I am now in, and which to you may look like the composure of resignation, will end, in all likelihood, in raging madness."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, madam, I feel already the fire in my brain."

"Be calm."

"Calm—calm! Ha!—ha! Calm. It is all very well for you upon that side of the iron door to talk of calmness, madam, but upon this side the words sound strange."

"It will not sound so strange when I tell you that I have absolute compassion upon you, and that the cause of my present visit was to talk to you of some means by which the worst portion of your fate here might be in some measure ameliorated, and your existence rendered tolerable."

CHAPTER LXXIV.
BIG BEN CREATES A SENSATION.

The cook was so surprised at these words from Mrs. Lovett that for some moments he made no answer to them.

"Pray, speak again," he said at length, when he could find words in which to express himself.

"I repeat," she said, "that I am desirous, as far as lies in my power, to ameliorate your condition, of which you so much complain."

"Indeed!"

"Ah, you are too suspicious."

"Humph! I think, madam, when you come to consider all things, you will hardly think it possible for me to be too suspicious."

"You are wrong again. I dare say now, in your mind, you attribute most of your evils to me."

"Well, madam, candidly speaking, should I be far wrong by so doing?"

"You would be quite wrong. Alas! alas! I—"

"You what, madam? Pray, speak up."

"I am the victim of another. You cannot suppose that, of my own free will, I should shut up in these gloomy places a person of your age, and by no means ill-looking." "I have him there," thought Mrs. Lovett; "what human heart is proof against the seductions of flattery? Oh, I have him there."

The cook was silent for some few moments, and then he said, quite calmly, as though the tribute to his personal appearance had not had the smallest effect—

"Pray go on, madam, I am quite anxious to hear all that you may have to say to me."

This composed manner of meeting her compliments rather discomposed Mrs. Lovett; but after all, she thought—"He is only acting an indifference he is far from feeling." With this impression she resolved to persevere, and she added, in a kind and conciliating tone of voice—

"I grant that circumstances are such that you may well be excused for any amount of doubt that you may feel regarding the honesty of my words and intentions towards you."

"I quite agree with you there, madam," said the cook.

"Then all I have to do is, by deeds, to convince you that I am sincere in my feelings towards you. As I have before said, I am in the power of another, and therefore is it that, contrary to my nature, I may seem to do cruel things at which my heart revolts."

"I cannot conceive anything so distressing," said the cook, "except being the unfortunate victim as I am of such a train of circumstances."

"That is what I am coming to."

"Are you? I wish you were."

There was a tone of irony about the enforced cook which Mrs. Lovett did not at all like; but she had an object to gain, and that was to fully persuade him that the shortest way to his freedom would be to remain profoundly quiet for a day or two, and then she would be able to make her own arrangements and be off without troubling either him or Todd with any news of her departure or her whereabouts.

"You still doubt me," she said. "But listen, and I think you will soon be of opinion that although I have wronged you as yet, I can do something to repair that wrong."

"I am all attention, madam."

"Then, in the first place, you are quite tired of eating pies, and must have some other kind of food."

"You never said a truer thing in all your life, madam."

"That other food, then, I will provide for you. You shall, within an hour from now, have anything to eat or to drink that you may please to name. Speak, what is it to be?"

"Well," he said, "that is kind indeed. But I can do without food further than I have here, for I have hit upon a mode of making cakes that please me. Nevertheless, if you can bring me a bottle of brandy, in order that I may slightly qualify the water that I drink, I shall be obliged to you."

"You shall have it; and now I hope you will be convinced of the sincerity of my desire to be of service to you."

"But my liberty, madam, my liberty. That is the grand thing after all that I must ever pant for."

"True, and that is what you shall have at my hands. In the course of two, or it may be three days, I shall have perfected some arrangements which will enable me to throw open your prison for you, and then—"

"Then what?"

"May I hope that you will not think so harshly of me as you have done?"

"Certainly not."

"Then I shall be repaid for all I do. You must believe me to be the victim of the most cruel circumstances, of which some day you may be informed. At present, to do so, would only be to involve both you and myself in one common destruction."

"Then don't mention it."

"I will not. But beware of one thing."

"What is that?"

"Simply this, that any attempts upon your own part to escape from here previous to the time when I shall have completed my arrangements to set you free, will not only derange all that I am planning for you, but end in your utter destruction; for he who has forced me into my present cruel situation will not for one moment hesitate at the murder of us both; so if you wish to be free in a few days you will try nothing, but if on the contrary you wish to destroy both yourself and me, you will make some attempts to rescue yourself from here."

Mrs. Lovett waited rather anxiously for his answer to this speech.

"I dare say you are right," he said at length.

"You may be assured I am."

"Then I consent."

Mrs. Lovett drew a long breath of relief, as she muttered to herself—

"It will do—I have him in the toils; and come what may, I am free from the torturing thought that he may achieve something that may have the effect of delivering me up to the hands of justice. When I am gone, he may remain where he is, and rot for all I care."—"You have done wisely," she said aloud, "and if anything could more powerfully than another incite me to the greatest exertions to liberate you, it would be the handsome manner in which you have placed confidence in me."

"Oh, don't mention it."

Again there was that tone of sarcasm about the cook's voice, which created a doubt in the mind of Mrs. Lovett if, after all, he was not merely playing with her, and in his heart utterly disregarding all that she said to him. It is quite questionable if this doubt was not in its bitterness worse than the former anxieties that had preyed upon the mind of the lady; but she found she could do nothing to put an end to it, so she merely said—

"Well, I feel much happier now; so I will go at once and get you the brandy that you ask for." "I hope he will drink it freely—it will aid him in drowning reflection."

"Thank you," said the cook, "I shall expect it with impatience." "Confound her, she can't very well put anything queer in the brandy. I will take care to taste a very small portion of it first; for Sir Richard Blunt has cautioned me particularly to be careful of poison."

"I am going," said Mrs. Lovett.

"Good-bye, madam; I only hope you will be able to carry your benevolent intentions into effect—and," added the cook to himself, "that I may some fine morning have the pleasure of seeing you hanged."

"Farewell," said Mrs. Lovett; and she, too, had her *aside* as she ascended the stairs, for she muttered—"If I were only a little better assured than I am that you meditated something dangerous, I would steal upon you while you slept, and with a knife soon put an end to all trouble regarding you."

Mrs. Lovett Alarmed At The Strange Faces At Her Window In The Pie-Shop.

Mrs. Lovett Alarmed At The Strange Faces At Her Window In The Pie-Shop.

Now, it happened that when Mrs. Lovett reached her shop, she saw three people outside the window. The actions of these people attracted her observation. One was a big stout man, of such a size as was rarely seen in the streets of London. The other was a young girl, nicely attired, but with a look of great grief and agitation upon her countenance. The third person of the group was a gentlemanly-looking man, attired in a great coat which was buttoned up to his chin. The big stout man was making a kind of movement towards the door of the pie-shop, and the gentleman with the great-coat was holding up his hand and shaking his head, as though forbidding him. The big stout man then looked angry; and then Mrs. Lovett saw the young girl cling to him, and heard her say—

"Oh, no—no; I said I wanted nothing.—Come away."

Then the gentleman with the great-coat pulled his collar down a little; upon which the young girl sprang towards him, and, clasping his arm, cried in tones of intense interest—

"Ah, sir, is it indeed you? Tell me is she saved—oh, is she saved?"

"She will be," was the reply of the gentleman in the great-coat. "Come away."

The big stout man appeared to be getting rather furious at the idea of the gentleman with the great-coat dictating what he and the young girl should do; but she by a few words pacified him; and then, as if they were the best friends in the world, they all walked away towards the Strand, conversing very seriously and rapidly.

"What does this mean?" said Mrs. Lovett.

Terror overspread her countenance. Oh, conscience! conscience! how truly dost thou make

> "Cowards of us all!"

What could compensate Mrs. Lovett for the abject terrors that came over her now? What could recompense her for the pang that shot across her heart, at the thought that something was amiss in the fine-drawn web of subtlety that she and Sweeney Todd had drawn? Alas! was the money in the Bank of England, upon which she expected to enjoy herself in a foreign land, now any set-off against that shuddering agony of soul with which she said to herself—

"Is all discovered?"

Her strength forsook her. She quite forgot all about the cook, and the brandy she had promised him—she forgot even how necessary it was, in case any one should come, for her to keep up the appearance of composure; and tottering into the back-parlour, she sunk upon her knees on the floor, and shook as though the spirit of twenty agues possessed her. So it will be seen that Todd was not quite alone in his sufferings from those compunctious visitations, which we have seen at

times come over him in his shop. But we will leave Mrs. Lovett to her reflections, hoping that even she may be made a little wiser and a little better by those soft

> "Whisperings of awakened sense;"

and that she may find some one among the invisible hosts of spirits of another world who may whisper to her—

"Repent! repent!—it is not yet too late."

Let us look at those three persons whose mysterious conduct at the shop windows had, like a match applied to gunpowder, at once awakened a fever in the breast of Mrs. Lovett, which she was scarcely aware slumbered there. These folks made their way, then, into Fleet Street; and as the reader has probably guessed already who they are, we may as well make a merit of saying that the big one was our old friend Ben, the beef-eater—the gentlemanly-looking man was Sir Richard Blunt, and the young lady was no other than Arabella Wilmot. Poor Arabella! Of all the personages concerned in our *dramatis personæ*, we have no hesitation in saying that your sufferings are the greatest. From the moment that Johanna had started upon that desperate expedition to Sweeney Todd's, peace left the bosom of her young friend. We have already traced the progress of Arabella to Sir Richard Blunt's office, and we have seen what was the result of that decidedly judicious movement; but notwithstanding she was assured over and over again subsequently by Sir Richard that Johanna was now well protected, she could not bring herself to think so, or to leave the street. It was by her lingering about in this way that she became in the company of our friend Ben. The fact was, that the kind of statement or confession that Johanna had made to Ben on that occasion of his visit to her father's house, when she found herself alone with him in the parlour, had made such an impression upon the poor fellow, that he described it himself in the most forcible possible language, by saying—

"It interferes with my meals."

Now, everything that had such an effect as that, must to Ben be a matter for the most serious consideration indeed. He accordingly, finding that

> "The peace of the Tower was fled,"

so far as he was concerned, had come into the City upon a sort of voyage of discovery, to see how matters were going on. As he was proceeding along Fleet Street, he chanced to cast his eyes into the entrance of a court, nearly opposite Sweeney Todd's, and there he saw a female form crouching. There was something about this female form which Ben thought was familiar to him, and upon a close look, he felt certain it was Johanna's friend, Arabella Wilmot. Full of surprise at finding her there, Ben paused, and stared at her so long, that she at last looked at him, and recognising him, immediately flew to his side, and grasping his arm, cried—

"Oh, pity me, Mr. Ben. Pity me!"

"Hold!" said Ben, who was not, as the reader is aware, the fastest thinker in the world. "Hold. Easy does it."

Ben tried to look very wise then.

"Oh, you will hate me, Ben."

"Eh?"

"I say you will hate me, Ben, when you know all."

Ben shook his head.

"Shan't do any such thing," he said. "Lord bless your pretty eyes, I hate you? I couldn't."

"But—but—"

"Come, come," added Ben, "just take your little bit of an arm under mine. Easy does it, you know. Always think of that, if anything goes amiss. Easy does it; and then you will find things come right in the long run. You may take my word for it."

CHAPTER LXXV.
COLONEL JEFFERY OPENS HIS EYES.

Arabella was weeping, so that for some little time she could say nothing more to Ben; and he did not, in the profundity of his imagination, very well know what to say to her, except now and then muttering the maxim of "Easy does it," which Ben thought singularly applicable to all human affairs. But this was a state of things which could not last; and Arabella Wilmot, nerving herself sufficiently to speak in a few minutes, said to Ben in a low self-deprecatory tone—

"Oh, sir, I—I—have done something very wrong."

"Eh?" said Ben, opening his eyes to their utmost.

"Yes," added Arabella, "very wrong, indeed."

"Humph!"

"You would not probably have expected it of me, Mr. Ben, would you now?"

"Well, a-hem!" said Ben. "Easy does it."

"I am a wicked—wicked girl."

"Oh, dear—oh, dear!" said Ben.

"You cannot guess, Mr. Ben, what I have done; but I feel I ought to tell you, and it will be quite a relief to me to do so."

Ben shook his head.

"I tell you what it is, my dear," he said. "Your best plan is to go and tell your mother, my dear. That's the proper person to tell. She is sure to find it out somehow or another; and you had better tell her at once, and then —Easy does it."

"My mother? Tell my mother? Oh, no—no—no!"

"Well, if you have got any respectable old aunt now, who is a good, kind old soul, and would not make too much fuss, you had better tell her; but goodness gracious, my dear, what puts it into your head to tell me?"

"Because I think you are kind-hearted."

"Well, but—well, but—"

"And, then, of course, as you are mixed up, you know, Mr. Ben, in the whole transaction, it is only proper that you should know what has happened at last."

Ben turned fairly round, and looked down into the face of Arabella Wilmot with such a coarse expression of alarm upon his face, that at any other than so serious a time she must have laughed.

"Me?" he cried. "Me?"

"Yes, Mr. Ben."

"Me mixed up in the—the—Oh dear!"

"Ah, Mr. Ben, you know you are by far too kind not to be; and so I feel as though it would be quite a relief to me to tell you everything."

"Everything?"

"Yes, all—all."

"Not all the particulars, surely. Come—come. I ain't an old woman, you know, my dear."

"An old woman, Ben?"

"No, my dear, I say I ain't an elderly female, so I don't think I ought to listen to all the particulars, do you know. Come—come, you go home now, and say no more about it to me. Easy does it, you know; and keep

your own counsel. I won't say a word; but don't you, because you are in such a state of mind as you hardly know what you are about, go on blubbering to me about all the particulars, when perhaps to-morrow you'll give one of your pretty little ears that you had not said a word to me about it."

"Alas!—Alas!"

"Pho! Pho! Easy does it."

"Who am I to cling to but you?"

"Cling to me? Perhaps you'll say it's me?"

"What's you, Mr. Ben? Explain yourself. How strange you talk. What do you mean, Mr. Ben?"

"Well, that's cool," said Ben.

"What's cool?"

"I tell you what it is, Miss Arabella W., I'm disappointed in you; ain't you ashamed to look me in the face?"

"Ashamed?"

"Yes, positively ashamed?"

"No, Mr. Ben. I may regret the indiscretion that is past; but I cannot see in it anything to be ashamed of."

"You don't?"

"Indeed, Mr. Ben, I do not."

"Then, Miss A. W., you are about the coolest little piece of goods I have met with for some time. Come—come, easy does it; but haven't you been telling me all this time about something you have been about, that—that—was rather improper, in a manner of speaking?"

It might have been the tone in which Ben pronounced the word improper, or it might have been the sagacious shake of the head which Ben accompanied his words with, or it might have been that Arabella

was drawing a conclusion from the whole transaction; but certain it is, that she began to have a glimmering perception that Mr. Ben was making a great mistake.

"Oh, heaven!" she said. "What are you saying Mr. Ben? I am speaking of the advice I was foolish enough to give Johanna."

"Advice?"

"Yes, that is all. Into what mischief could you have tortured my meaning? I am much mistaken in you, sir."

"What? Then, it isn't—a-hem! That is to say, you haven't—dear me, I shall put my foot in it directly. What a fool I am."

"You are, indeed," said the now indignant Arabella, and a slight flush upon her cheeks showed how deeply wronged she was by the unworthy construction Ben had put upon her innocent words.

"Good-bye, Miss A. W.," added Ben. "Good-bye; I see I am out of your books; but if you fancy I meant any harm, you don't know me. God bless you. Take care of yourself my dear, and go home. I won't stay to plague you any longer. Good-bye."

"Stop! Stop!"

Ben paused.

"I am sure, Mr. Ben, you did not mean to say a single word that could be offensive to a friendless girl in the street."

"Then, then?—Easy does it."

"Let us be friends again then, Mr. Ben, and I will tell you all, and you will then blame me for being so romantic as to give Johanna advice which has induced her to take a step which, although my reason tells me she is now well protected in, my imagination still peoples with horror."

Ben's eyes opened to an alarming width.

"You recollect meeting us in this street, Ben?"

"Oh, yes."

"When Johanna was disguised?"

"Yes, Miss A. When she had on them, a-hem! You may depend upon it, my dear, there's no good comes of young girls putting on pairs of thingamys. Don't you ever do it."

"But, Mr. Ben, hear me."

"Well—well. I was only saying. You stick to the petticoats, my dear. They become you, and you become them, and don't you be trusting your nice little legs into what-do-you-call-'ems."

"Mr. Ben?"

"I've done. Easy does it. Now go on and tell us what happened, my dear. Don't mind me. Go on."

"Then Johanna, in boy's cloathes, is now—"

"Now? Oh, the little vixen. Didn't I tell her not."

"Is now filling the situation of errand boy at Sweeney Todd's, opposite. Can I be otherwise than wretched, most wretched!"

"Arrant boy?"

"No, not arrant boy. Errand boy."

"At Todd's—opposite—in—boys—clothes? Oh—oh—just you wait here, and I'll soon put that to rights. I'll—I'll. Only you wait in this door-way, Miss A. W., just a moment or two, and I'll teach her to go and do such things. I'll—I'll—"

"No—no Ben. You will ruin all, you will, indeed. I implore you to stay with me. Let me tell you all that has happened, and how Johanna is protected. In the first place, Ben, you must know that Sir Richard Blunt the Magistrate has her under his special protection now, and he says that he has made such arrangements that it is quite impossible she can come to any harm."

"But—"

"Nay, listen me out. He says that nothing can now expose her to any danger, but some injudicious interference. I ought not, you see, to have told you, Mr. Ben; but since I have, I only ask of you, for Johanna's sake, for her life's sake, to do nothing."

Ben looked aghast.

"And—and how long is the little lamb to be left there?" he asked.

"Only a few hours I think now, Ben—only a few hours. Where are we now, Mr. Ben?"

"Why, this, my dear, is Bell-yard we have strolled into; and that is the famous pie-shop of which they talk so much. They say the woman has made an immense fortune by selling them."

As Ben made a kind of movement towards Mrs. Lovett's window, it was then that Sir Richard Blunt, who had followed him and Arabella Wilmot from Fleet-street, and who had, in fact, overheard some portion of their conversation, stepped up in the manner that Mrs. Lovett had remarked from within the shop.

We have before stated that the three personages, consisting of the magistrate, big Ben the beef-eater, and Arabella Wilmot, walked to Fleet-street together from Bell-yard. Sir Richard Blunt shook his head at Arabella Wilmot, as he said—

"Miss Wilmot, I cannot help saying that it would have been better in every respect, and possibly much more conducive to the safety of Miss Oakley, if you had gone home quietly, and not lingered about Fleet-street."

"I could not go, sir."

"But yet a consideration for Miss Oakley's safety should have induced you to put that violence upon your own feelings."

"I felt that when once you, sir, had pledged yourself for her safety, that safe she was; and that my weeping perchance in a doorway in Fleet-street could not be so important as to compromise her."

"I am fairly enough answered," said Sir Richard Blunt, with a slight smile. "But what say you to coming with me to the Temple?"

"The Temple?"

Arabella cast a lingering look towards Todd's shop, which Sir Richard at once translated, and replied to it by saying—

"Fear nothing for your young friend. She knows she is protected; but even she does not know the extent to which she is so protected. I tell you, Miss Wilmot, that I pledge my own life for her safety—and that, although to all seeming she is in the power of Todd, such is not the case."

"Indeed?"

"I have a force of no less than twenty-five men in Fleet-street now—one half of whom have their eyes upon Todd's shop. By Heaven! I would not have a hair of that young and noble girl's head injured for the worth of this great kingdom!"

"Bravo!" cried Ben, as he seized Sir Richard by the hand, and gave it a squeeze that nearly brought the tears into the eyes of the magistrate; "bravo! that's what I like to hear. All's right. Bless you, sir, easy does it. You are the man for my money!"

"Will you both come with me, then?"

"To be sure," said Ben; "to be sure; and as we go along, I'll tell you what a sad mistake I made about Miss Arabella here. You must know that I met her crying in Fleet-street, and she—"

Arabella shook her head, and frowned.

"And—and—and—she—nothing."

"Well," said Sir Richard, "I must confess I have heard anecdotes with a little more point to them."

"You don't say so!" said Ben.

"I think I will go home," said Arabella, gently.

"If you will," replied the magistrate, "of course, I cannot say anything to stay you; but I think it will be a great disappointment to Colonel Jeffery not to meet with you to-day."

"Colonel Jeffery!" exclaimed Arabella, while her face became of the colour of a rose-bud; "Colonel Jeffery?"

There was just the ghost of a smile upon the face of Sir Richard Blunt, as he calmly replied—

"Yes; I am on my way to meet that gentleman in the garden of the Temple; and I am sure he would be glad to see you."

"Glad to see me?"

"Yes, as so true a friend of Johanna's, he will be more than glad; he will be delighted."

"Delighted?"

"Do you doubt the Colonel's friendly feeling towards you?"

"Oh no—no. I—no—certainly not."

"Then let me beg of you to come."

"No. Not now; I will go home. It will look particular for me to go to the garden to meet him."

"It will look much more particular to refuse, I think, Miss Wilmot. You are with me, and with your old friend, and Johanna's relative, Mr. a—a—"

"They calls me Ben."

"Mr. Ben; and so you cannot refuse," he said, "to go to meet Colonel Jeffery, you know. Come, come, I pray you come. Indeed, I know the Colonel wishes to speak to you; and as it would be obviously out of order for him to call upon you, I think you ought, seeing that you're not alone, to give him, as a gentleman of wealth and honour, this opportunity of doing so."

"You say, he wishes to speak to me?"

"He does, indeed. What do you say, Mr. Ben? Don't you think Miss Wilmot might as well come with us?"

"Easy does it," said Ben, "and that's my opinion all the world over."

"Then allow me to look upon it that we have prevailed with you, Miss Wilmot. Pray do me the favour to take my arm."

Arabella trembled, but she did take the arm of Sir Richard Blunt, and made no further opposition to proceeding to that Temple Gardens, where already such affecting interviews had taken place between the Colonel and poor Johanna. The gardens appeared to be empty when they reached it, but from behind some shrubs Colonel Jeffery in a moment made his appearance, for Sir Richard, in consequence of his meeting with Ben and Arabella, was considerably behind his time.

CHAPTER LXXVI.
ARABELLA AND THE COLONEL.

If any one had been looking at the face of Arabella Wilmot at this particular juncture, and if the party so looking had chanced to be learned in reading the various emotions of the heart from the expression of the features, they might have chanced upon some curious revelations. It was only one glance that Arabella gave to the Colonel, but that was sufficient. A word slightly spoken, and in due season, may say more than a volume of preaching; and so one transient glance, fleeting as a sun-beam in an English April, may, with most eloquent meaning, preach a sermon that would puzzle many a divine. But we have become so familiar with the reader, and put ourselves upon such a cordial shake-hands sort of feeling, in particular with you, Miss, who are now reading this passage, that we will whisper a secret in your ear, and the more readily, too, as to whisper we must come particularly close to that soft downy cheek, and almost be able to look askance into those eyes in which the light of Heaven seems dancing,—Arabella Wilmot is in love!

Yes, Arabella Wilmot is in love with Colonel Jeffery; and small blame to her, as they say in Ireland, for is he not a gentleman in the true acceptation of the term? Not a manufactured gentleman, but one of nature's gentlemen.

You will have promised, my dear what's-your-name, that Arabella, to herself even, has hardly confessed her feelings; but still they are creeping upon her most insidiously as such feelings somehow or other will and do creep.

To be sure, if any one were to stop her in the street or any where else to say, "Arabella, you are in love with Colonel Jeffery," she would say—"No, no, no!" many times over.

But yet it is true.

> "You read it in her glistening eyes,
> And thus alone should love be read:
> She says it in her gentle sighs,
> And thus alone should love be said."

After this, who will be hardy enough, my dear, to dispute the fact with you and I?

And now we will watch her, ay, that we will, and see how she will behave herself under such trying circumstances.

Colonel Jeffery advanced, and as in duty and gallantry called upon, he, after slightly bowing to the gentlemen, spoke to Arabella.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Wilmot," he said. "I hope I see you well. Here is a seat close at hand. May I have the pleasure of conducting you to it?"

"Johanna is—is—is—" stammered Arabella.

"Well, I hope," interposed the colonel.

"Oh, no—no—that is, yes."

The colonel looked puzzled. He was not a conjurer, and so might look puzzled, if he looked like any ordinary man, who hears any one say no, and yes in the same breath, without any injury to his reputation.

"Mr. Ben," said Sir Richard Blunt, "I have something for your private ear, if you will just step on with me."

"My private ear?" said Ben with a confused look, as if he would have liked to add, "which is that?"

"Yes. This way if you please."

Ben walked on with the magistrate, and Colonel Jeffery was alone with Arabella Wilmot. Yes, alone with the one person who insensibly had crept into her affections. Alas! Is the pure love of that young creature scattered to the winds? Is she one of those who drag about them in this world the heavy chain of unrequited affection? We shall see. Arabella had permitted the colonel to hand her to one of the garden-seats near at hand. How could she prevent him? If he had chosen instead to hand her into the river it would have been just the same, and she would have gone. He led her by that wreath of flowers which in old Arcadia was first linked by Cupid, and which, in all time since, has wound itself around the hearts of all the boy-god's victims.

"Miss Wilmot," said the colonel, and now his voice faltered a little, "I have much wished to see you."

"Very fine, indeed," said Arabella. "You said something about the weather, did you not?"

"Not exactly," he said; "I had much wished to see you."

"Me?"

"Yes, and to begin at the beginning, you know I—I—loved Johanna Oakley. Yes, I loved her."

"Yes—yes."

"I loved her for her beauty, and for the gentle and the chivalrous devotion of her character, you understand. I loved her for the very tears she shed for another, and for the very constancy with which she clung to the memory of his affection for her. I saw in her such child-like purity of mind, such generosity of disposition, such enchanting humanity of soul, that I could not but love her."

"Yes, yes," gasped Arabella. "Yes."

"Will you pardon me for saying all this to you?"

"Oh yes. Go on—go on, unless you have said all?"

"I have not."

"Then, then you have only to add that you love her still?"

"Yes, but—"

Arabella's heart beat painfully.

"Ah," she said, "has true love any reservations? You love her, and yet you have something else to say."

"I have. I love her still. But it is not as I loved her. She has convinced me of her constancy to her first affection, that—that—"

"Yes, yes."

"That being so convinced, I now love her, but with that love a brother might feel for a dear sister, and I almost think it was a kind of preparation to try to awaken in the smouldering fires of her lost love a new passion. She has made me feel that the love of woman once truly awakened is an undying passion and can know no change—no extinction."

"True. Oh, how true!"

"I have learnt from her that when once the heart of a young and gentle girl—one in whom there are no evil passions, no world-wise failings nor earthly varieties—is touched by the holy flame of affection, it may consume her being, but it never can be extinguished."

Arabella burst into tears.

"Love," added the colonel, "may be trodden down, but like truth it can never be trodden out!"

"Never! never!" sobbed Arabella. "Let me go now! Oh, sir, let me go home now?"

"One moment!"

She trembled, but she sat still.

"Only a moment, Arabella, while I tell you that man's love is different from this. That man can reason upon his affections, and that when the first beauty and excellence upon which he may cast his eyes is denied to

his arms, he can look for equal beauty—equal excellence—equal charms of mind and person in another, and—"

Arabella tried to go, but somehow she felt spell-bound and could not rise from that garden seat.

"And," added the colonel, "with as pure a passion, man can make an idol of her who can be his, as he approached her who could not.—Miss Wilmot, I love you!"

"Oh, no, no—Johanna."

Colonel Jeffery Declares His Love For Arabella.

Colonel Jeffery Declares His Love For Arabella.

"I do not shrink from the pronunciation of that name; I have said that I loved Johanna. If she had been fancy-free and would have looked upon me with eyes of favour, I would have made her my wife; but such was not to be, and for the same qualities that I loved her I love you. I am afraid I have not explained my feelings well."

"Oh, yes. That is, I don't know."

"And now, Miss Wilmot, will you allow me to hope that what I have said to you may not be all in vain? That—"

"No, no."

"No?"

"Allow me to go, now. My mind is too full of the fate of Johanna even to permit me to reject in the language taught—"

"Reject?"

"Yes," she said, "reject. I wish you all the happiness this world can afford to you, Colonel Jeffery."

"Then you will be mine?"

"No, no, no. Farewell."

She rose, and this time the colonel did not attempt to detain her. He stepped back a pace or two, and bowed, and then rose and walked a pace or two away. Then she turned, and holding out her hand, she cried—

"We may—may be friends."

The colonel took the little hand in silence, but the expression of his face was one of deep chagrin.

"Good-bye," said Arabella.

How courageous she had become all of a sudden, as it were.

"And is this all?" said Jeffery.

"Yes, all. When I see Johanna I will remember you to her."

The colonel bowed again, as he replied—

"I shall be much beholden to you, Miss Wilmot, for that kindness."

"And—and I hope you will find—find—that is, meet with some one, who—who don't chance to know that your love is a kind of second-hand—that is, I don't mean that, but a—a—Yes, that is all."

Arabella was saying too much. The colonel replied gently—

"I am truly obliged for the highly explanatory speech just uttered by Arabella Wilmot, whom I have the honour to wish a very good-day."

Arabella trembled.

"No, no. Not thus, Colonel Jeffery. We are friends, indeed."

"Remarkable good acquaintances," said the colonel, as he walked away towards Sir Richard Blunt and Ben. Arabella walked hastily on, having but one idea at the moment, and that was to leave the garden, but she could not find the gate, and Ben ran after her as well as he could, calling—

"Miss A. W.—Miss A. W., where are you a-going? Don't you go yet. I'll take care of you and see you all right, you know, or perhaps you'd like to take a wherry here at the Temple stairs, and go to the Tower, and see the animals fed?"

"Yes, no—that is, anything," replied Arabella. "I will go home now, I am so very—very wretched!"

"What, wretched? Here, Colonel thingumy, she says she—"

"If you dare!" said Arabella, as she placed her hand upon the arm of Ben. "If you dare!"

"Lor!" said Ben, as he looked down from his altitude upon the frail and beautiful young creature. "Lor! easy does it!"

The voice of Ben, however, had brought both the colonel and Sir Richard Blunt to the spot. During that brief time that had elapsed since the colonel had last spoken to Arabella, Sir Richard had told him of the perilous position of Johanna, and the look of anxiety upon his face was most marked. Arabella heard him say—

"Make use of me in any way you please, Sir Richard. Regard my safety or even my life as nothing compared to her preservation."

Arabella knew what he meant.

"Ben," she said, "will you come with me, and see me a part of my way home?"

"Yes, my dear, to be sure. Then you won't come and see the criturs fed to-day, I supposes?"

"No, no."

"Very well. Easy does it. Come along, my dear—come along. Lord love you! I'll take care of you. I should only like to see anybody look at you while you are with me, my duck. Bless your little bits of twinkling eyes!"

"Thank you—thank you."

"Lor! it's enough to make a fellow go mad in love, to see such criturs as you, my dear; but whenever I thinks of such things, I says to myself—'I'll just pop in and see Mother Oakley,' and that soon puts it all out of my head, I can tell you."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. You should go in at feeding time some day, and see her a-coming it strong with fried ingins."

"Fried what?"

"Ingins—ingins; round things. Ingions—ah! that's it."

"Onions?"

"Very like—very like. But come on, my dear—come on. Easy does it! Always remember that whenever you gets into any fix. Easy does it!"

Did Arabella think the colonel would run after her and say something? Yes she did; but he came not. Did she think he would be loath to part with her upon such terms as they had seemed to part? Yes, yes. Surely he could not let her go without some kinder, softer, word that he had last spoken to her? But he did. He only watched her with his eyes; and when Sir Richard Blunt, who, it would appear, knew something of the colonel's feelings, said to him—

"All right, I suppose, Colonel Jeffery?"

He only shook his head.

"What, anything amiss?"

"She has rejected me!"

"Oh, is that all?"

"All? And enough too."

"Phoo! She was sure to do that. Don't you know the old adage, that—

> "Woman's nay still stands for nought."

"Why, man, No comes as naturally to the tip of a young girl's tongue when she means Yes, as Don't when she expects to be kissed. I tell you, she loves you. She adores the very ground you walk on."

"And yet she taunted me with my passion for Johanna, and called me a second-hand lover."

"Did she, though? Ha! ha! ha! ha! Upon my life that was good—was it not?"

CHAPTER LXXVII.
MRS. LOVETT VISITS THE BANK.

Mrs. Lovett, Mrs. Lovett, we are neglecting you! Excuse us, fascinating piece of wickedness. We are now in Bell-yard again. It will be recollected what a mental ferment the appearance of Ben, and Arabella, and Sir Richard Blunt, at the window of her shop had put her in. Not that she knew any of those parties—nor that she connected any of them in any way with her feelings, except so far as their attitudes might at that moment lead her to suppose. The attitudes certainly were such as to create suspicion. All this, joined to the previous state of mind of Mrs. Lovett, did not tend to produce that heavenly calm, which philosophers tell us is such a remarkably nice thing. On the contrary, the mind of Mrs. Lovett rather resembled a raging torrent, boiling and bubbling to some destruction which was afar off, and which could only be reached through the perils and dangers of some stormy passage. She was sighing for peace. She had begun to sicken for the results of her life of iniquity—not those results which an indignant and outraged public would have visited her with, but those results which she and all persons, who deliberately and systematically commence a career of guilt, picture to themselves. Criminality is never engaged in for its own sake. There is always some ultimate object in view, which makes the retrospect less horrible, and the prospect dim and dubious, though it may be yet a thing of pleasurable anticipation. Of course, we are only reasoning upon those minds that reflect. There are many who lead a life of criminality, who do so as the manifestation of an intellect that can picture nothing else. But the reader knows that Mrs. Lovett was not of such an order. She was to some extent

an educated, and to a considerable extent a clever woman. Hence, then, she had always pictured to herself wealth and retirement, respect and power, as the ends for which she was striving with such unscrupulous means. But of late, with a shuddering horror, she had begun to dread that all she had hoped for was getting only more distant. She had contracted a strong notion of the bad faith of Todd, and if such were really the case, all was indeed lost. If he allowed his cupidity just to induce him to commit the crime that would be one too many, destruction must fall upon them both. If likewise he instantly made an effort to take to himself all the profits of the unholy traffic that they were mutually engaged in, all would be lost to both; for was she a likely woman to crouch down in silence under such a blow? No! the scaffold prepared by her instrumentality for Todd, would be scarcely less a triumph to her that she herself would share it with him. He ought to have known better than he did. How clear and long-sighted we find people upon subjects that from this distance may be supposed to present difficulties, and yet how shallow they are upon what is close to them. One would have thought that such a man as Todd could easily have said to himself, with regard to Mrs. Lovett, "I dare not tamper with the objects of that woman," and he would have said it with truth; but on the contrary, he only looked upon her as a convenient tool, which was to be thrown aside when it had served all the purposes for which he intended it. There could not have been a more fatal mistake upon the part of Todd as concerned his safety. But to return to Mrs. Lovett. The brandy she had promised to the prisoner was quite forgotten. She sat revolving in her mind, how she could put an end to the state of horrible doubt and perplexity in which she was. There were some little difficulties in the way of Mrs. Lovett emerging from her present condition. It has been before hinted at, that Todd and the fair lady of the pie-shop had between them accumulated a large sum of money, and that the money was duly deposited in the hands of a stock-broker, who was by no means to part with it to either of them, except upon an order signed by both. So far all looked fair enough; and as they were likewise bound together by such a bond of mutual guilt, it did not look likely that either would make an

endeavour to get the better of the other. Suppose there was £40,000 in the hands of the stock-broker, it did not seem, we say, under all the circumstances likely that Todd—being fairly entitled as between them, to £20,000—would peril the safety of both their necks, by getting up a quarrel about the division equitably of the spoil. The same reasoning will apply to Mrs. Lovett. But these unlikely things are the very things that do come to pass to upset the finest plans. Todd never from the first—whenever that was—meant that Mrs. Lovett should share with him; no, he thought that he, as the superior genius, the greater villain, would manage to cheat her, and that she would, for her own safety's sake, be obliged to put up with what he chose to give her. That would have been only such a pittance, as to keep her constantly in a state of dependance upon him. Now, to do Mrs. Lovett justice upon the old equitable principle of giving the devil his due, she never had any intention, until she saw symptoms of bad faith in Todd, of attempting to act otherwise than fairly by him. She loathed him; and all she meant to do, was when the division of the spoil should take place, to ascertain where he was going, and then to get as far off him as possible. Of late, however, finding that Todd was getting lucky, and feeling quite convinced that he aimed at her life, other views had dawned upon her, as we are already well aware. She did not so much care for all the money as she would have liked in her retirement, wherever it was, to have felt sure that Todd was not

> "An inhabitant of the earth;"

and hence she had taken the pains, all of which had been frustrated, to put him into another world. But a feeling, superstitiously consequent upon her failure, had started up in her mind that he bore a charmed life; and hence she bethought herself of flying from England; but the money—how was she to get the money to do so? How was she, without his cognisance, to get her share of the funds which had been placed in the hands of a stock-broker? Now, since she had begun to feel uncomfortable regarding the faith of Todd, Mrs. Lovett had kept what cash she saved at home; therefore some weeks had elapsed since she had

paid a monetary visit to the city. If she had gone as usual, she might have got some news. To a woman of lively and discursive imagination like Mrs. Lovett, a plan of operation was not long in suggesting itself. Why, she asked herself, should she hesitate to put Todd's name to the document necessary to get her half of the money from the stock-broker? What a natural consequence from this question it was to ask herself another, which was—If I am forging Todd's signature at all, might I not do it for the whole amount as for half, and so take the only revenge upon him which he would feel, or which I dare offer myself the gratification of exacting from him? When such a question as this is asked, it is practically answered in the affirmative. Mrs. Lovett felt quite decided upon it. She was a woman of courage. No faint-hearted scruple interposed between the thought and the execution of a project with her. The recent scene that had taken place in front of her window decided her. Now or never! she told herself. Now or never is the time to escape. I have nothing to encumber myself with. Let Todd keep his jewels and trinkets. All I want is the money which is in the hands of Mr. Anthony Brown, the stock-broker, and that I will have forthwith. Mrs. Lovett did not know the exact amount; but as it was a joint account, such an amount of ignorance need not appear at all surprising to the stock-broker; so she drew up an order for the money, and signed it with both Todd's name and her own, leaving a blank for the amount. She then carefully locked up all doors but that of the outer shop, and having procured the services of a young girl from a greengrocer's shop in the vicinity, to mind the place for an hour, as she said, she considered she was all right. The girl had attended to the shop before for Mrs. Lovett at times when no batches of pies were expected from the regions below, so she did not feel at all surprised at the call upon her services.

"I shall be an hour," said Mrs. Lovett. "You can take a pie or two for yourself if you feel at all hungry; and if Mr. Todd should come in, say I'm gone to call upon a dress-maker in Bond-street."

"Yes, mum!"

Mrs. Lovett left the shop. At the corner of Bell-yard she turned and cast a glance at it. She hoped it was a farewell one—She shuddered and passed on; and then she muttered to herself—

"If I am—which assuredly I shall be—successful in the city, I will take post-horses there at once for some sea-port, and from thence reach the Continent, before Todd can dream of pursuit, or find out what I have done, or where bestowed myself."

She was not so impudent as to pass Todd's shop, but she went down one of the streets upon the opposite side of Fleet-street, and came up another, which was considerably past the house which was so full of horrors. A lumbering old hackney coach met her gaze. It was disengaged, and Mrs. Lovett got into it.

"To Lothbury," she said; and after swaying to and fro for a few moments, the machine was set in action, and duly steering up Ludgate Hill.

The impatience of Mrs. Lovett was so great, that she would gladly have done anything to induce the horses to go at a faster rate than the safe two miles and a half an hour to which they were accustomed, but she dreaded that if she exhibited any signs of extreme impatience she might excite suspicion. To the guilty, any observation of a more than ordinary character is a thing to dread. They would fain glide through life gently, and not at all do they sigh to be—

> "The observed of all observers."

But the longest journey even in the slowest hackney coach must come to an end. As Ben the beef-eater would have said—"Easy does it;" and as Mrs. Lovett's journey was anything but a long one, the gloomy precincts of Lothbury soon loomed upon her gaze. After the customary oscillations, and wheezing and creaking of all its joints and springs, the coach stopped.

"Wait," said Mrs. Lovett with commendable brevity; and alighting, she entered a dark door-way upon the side of which was painted, in letters that had contracted so much the colour of the wood-work that they were

nearly illegible, "Mr. Anthony Brown."

This was the stock-broker, who held charge of the ill-gotten gains of that pair of un-worthies, Mrs. Lovett and Sweeney Todd. A small door, covered with what had been green baize, but which was now of some perfectly original brown, opened into the outer office of the man of business, and there a spruce clerk held dominion. At the sound of the rustling silks of Mrs. Lovett, he raised his head from poring over the cumbrous ledger; and then seeing, to use his own vernacular, it was "a monstrous fine woman," he condescended to alight from his high stool, and he demanded the lady's pleasure.

"Mr. Brown."

"Yes, madam. Certainly. Mr. B. is in his private room. What name shall I have the pleasure of saying?"

"Lovett."

"Lovett? Yes, madam. Certainly—a-hem! Pray be seated, madam, if you please."

Mrs. Lovett made a gesture of dissent, and the clerk went upon his errand. He was scarcely absent a moment, and then holding open a door, he said, with quite a chivalric air—

"This way, if you please, madam.—A monstrous fine woman," he added to himself.

The door closed after Mrs. Lovett, and she was in the private room of Mr. Anthony Brown.

"Ah, Mrs. Lovett. Pray be seated, madam. I am truly glad to see you well. Well, to be sure, you do look younger, and younger, and younger, every time I have the pleasure of a visit from you."

"Thank you, Mr. Brown, for the compliment. My visits have not been so numerous as usual of late."

"Why, no ma'am, they have not; but I hope we are going to resume business again in the old way?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, my dear madam, whatever it is that has procured me the honour and the pleasure of this visit, I am sure I am very glad of it, and shall not quarrel with it. He! he! Nice weather, Mrs. Lovett."

"Very."

"Ah, madam—ah, it was a world of pities to disturb the investments. It was indeed. But ladies will be ladies."

"Sir?"

"I—I merely said ladies will be ladies you know. And indeed—he! he!—I fully expected the interesting ceremony had come off before now, I did indeed; and I should have wagered a new hat."

"Mr. Brown, what are you talking about?"

"About?"

"Yes, what do you mean?"

"Why, a—a—that is—the—a—a—about—concerning—the—my dear madam, if I have inadvertently trodden upon your sensibilities, I—I really—"

"You really what?"

Mr. Brown looked perplexed. Mrs. Lovett looked a little furious.

"Sir," she said. "Before I explain the cause of my visit to you, I insist upon knowing to what all your mysterious hints and remarks allude. Speak freely and plainly, sir."

"Well then, madam, when Mr. Todd was last here, he said that you had at last consented to reward years of devotion to you by becoming his, and that the ceremony which was to make him a happy man by uniting him to so much excellence and beauty, was to come off almost immediately, and that that was the reason you had both agreed to withdraw all the money I had in such snug and comfortable safe investments for you both. He! he! he!"

CHAPTER LXXVIII.
MUTUAL DEFIANCE.

Be so good, reader, as to picture to yourself the look of Mrs. Lovett. We feel that one brief moment of imagination will do more to enable you to feel and to see with

> "Your mind's eye"

her aspect, than as if we were to try a paragraph upon the subject. How that he! he! he! of Mr. Brown's rung in her ears. It was at any time almost enough to provoke a saint, and we need not say that this time of all others was not one at which Mrs. Lovett's feelings were attuned to gentleness and patience. Besides, she certainly was no saint. A rather heavy inkstand stood upon the table between Mrs. Lovett and the stock-broker. The next moment it narrowly escaped his head, leaving in its progress over his frontispiece a long streak of ink down his visage.

"Wretch!" said Mrs. Lovett. "It is not true."

"Murder!" cried Mr. Brown.

Mrs. Lovett covered her face with both her hands for a moment, as though, to enable her to think clearly, it were necessary to shut out the external world; and then starting up, she advanced to the door of the room.

"Murder!" said the stock-broker again.

"Silence!"

"A constable."

"If you dare to say one word of this interview, I will return, and tear you limb from limb."

Mrs. Lovett opened the door of the private room with such a vengeance that the nose of the clerk, who had been listening upon the other side, was seriously damaged thereby. He started back with a howl of pain.

"Fool!" said Mrs. Lovett, as she passed him, and that was all she condescended to say to him;—not by any means an agreeable reminiscence of his last words with a lady to a gentleman who prided himself upon his looks—rather!

Mrs. Lovett reached the street, and walked for some distance as though street it was not. She was only roused to a sense of the world in which she was, by hearing the sound of a voice calling—

"Mum—mum! Here yer is—mum—mum! woo!"

She turned and saw the coach in which she had come to the stock-broker.

"Going back, mum?" said the man.

"Yes, yes."

She stepped into the vehicle, looking more like an animated statue than aught human. The man stood touching what was once the brim of a hat, as he said—

"Where to, mum?"

Mrs. Lovett looked at him with an air of such abstraction that it was quite clear she did not see him, but she heard the question, that came to her like an echo in the air.

"Where to, mum?"

"To Fleet-street!"

Wheeze—creak—wheeze—creak—sway—sway, and the coach moved on again. Mrs. Lovett sunk down among the straw with which the lower part of the vehicle was plentifully strewed; and then, with her head

resting upon the seat, her throbbing temples clasped in her hands, she tried to think. Yes—she called upon all that calmness—that decision—that talent or tact, call it which you will that had saved her for so long, not to desert her now in this hour of her dire extremity. She called upon everything for aid but upon Heaven! and then, to ease her mind, she cursed a little. Somebody says—

> "Swearing when the passions are at war,
> And light the chambers of the brain with angers flash.
> Has an effect quite moral—a kind of safety valve,
> Sparing what might be a tremendous crash!"

and so Mrs. Lovett got cooler, but not a whit the less determined, as the crazy vehicle conveyed her to Fleet-street. She fully intended now to measure conclusions with Todd. The distance was so short that even a hackney-coach performed it with tolerable promptitude. Mrs. Lovett did not wish to alight exactly at the door of Todd's shop; so she was rather glad upon finding the coach stop at the corner of Fleet-street by the old Market, and the driver demanded what number?

"This will do."

She was in the street in another minute. It took a minute to get out of a hackney-coach. It was like watching the moment to spring from a boat to the shore in a heavy surf. And yet, oh much vilified old hackney-coach! how much superior wert thou to thy bastard son, the present odious rattling, bumping, angular, bone-dislocating, horrid cab! The driver received about double his fare, and a cab-man of the present day would have gathered a mob by his vociferations, and blackguarded you into a shop, if you had treated him in such a way. Nothing less than three times what he's entitled to ever lights up the smallest spark of civility in the soul of a modern cab-driver, but the old hackney-coach-man was always content with double; so upon this occasion Mrs. Lovett got a "thank ye, mum;" and a long straw that had taken an affection for the skirt of her dress was arrested by jarvey and restored to the coach again.

Mrs. Lovett walked to all appearance composedly up Fleet-street. Alas! in this world who can trust to appearances? She had time, before reaching the shop of Sweeney Todd, to arrange slightly what she should say to that worthy. Of course, he could know nothing of her visit to the City—of her interview with Mr. Brown, and she need not blurt that out too soon. She would argue with him a little, and then she would be down upon him with the knowledge of his knavery and treachery. She reached the shop. No wonder she paused there a moment or two to draw breath. You would have done the same; and after all, Mrs. Lovett was mortal. But she did not hesitate for long. The threshold was crossed—the handle of the door was in her hand—it was turned, and she stood in Todd's shop. Todd was looking at something in a bottle, which he was holding up to the light; and Mrs. Lovett saw, too, that a pretty genteel-looking lad was poking about the fire, as if to rouse it.

"Ah, Mrs. Lovett!" said Todd, "how do you do? Some more of that fine grease for the hair, I suppose, madam?" Todd winked towards the lad (our dear friend Johanna), as though he would have said—"Don't appear to know me too well before this boy. Be careful, if you please."

"I have something to say to you, Mr. Todd."

"Oh, certainly, madam. Pray walk in—this way, if you please, madam—to my humble bachelor-parlour, madam. It is not fit exactly to ask a lady into; but we poor miserable single men, you know, madam, can only do the best we can. Ha! ha! This way."

"No."

"Eh? Not come in?"

"No. I have something to say to you, Mr. Todd; but I will say it here."

And now Mrs. Lovett gave a sidelong glance at the seeming boy, as much as to say—

"You can easily send him away if you don't want him to listen to our discourse."

Todd saw the glance; and the diabolical look that he sent to Mrs. Lovett in return would indeed have appalled any one of less nerve than she was possessed of. But she had come to that place wound up firmly to a resolution, and she would not shrink. Todd had no resource.

"Charley," he said, "you can go and take a little turn—here is a penny to spend; get yourself something in the market. But be sure you are back within half an hour, for we shall have some customers, no doubt."

"Yes, sir."

Johanna did not exactly know whether to think that Mrs. Lovett came in anger or friendship; but, at all events, she felt that it would be hazardous to remain after so marked a dismissal from Todd, although she would gladly have heard what the subject of the conversation between those two was to be. Neither Mrs. Lovett nor Todd now spoke until Johanna had fairly gone and closed the door after her. Then Todd, as he folded his arms, and looked Mrs. Lovett fully in the face, said—

"Well?"

"The time has come."

"What time?"

"For the end of our partnership—the dissolution of our agreement. I will go on no further. You can do as you please; but I am content."

"Humph!" said Todd.

"After much thought, I have come to this conclusion, Todd. Of course, let me be where I may, the secret of our road to fortune remains hidden here (she struck her breast as she spoke). All I want is my half of the proceeds, and then we part, I hope, for ever."

"Humph!" said Todd.

"And—and the sooner we can forget, if that be possible, the past, the better it will be for us both—only tell me where you purpose going, and I will take care to avoid you."

"Humph!"

Passion was boiling in the heart of Mrs. Lovett; and that was just what Todd wanted; for well he knew that something had gone amiss, and that as long as Mrs. Lovett could keep herself calm and reasonable, he should stand but a poor chance of finding out what it was, unless she chose, as part of her arrangement, to tell it; but if he could but rouse her passion, he should know all. Therefore was it that he kept on replying to what she said with that cold insulting sort of "humph!"

"Man, do you hear me?"

"Humph!"

"You villain!"

"Humph!"

Mrs. Lovett took from a side-table an iron, which, in the mystery of hair-dressing, was used for some purpose, and in a cool, calm voice, she said —

"If you do not answer me as you ought, I will throw this through your window, into the street; and the first person who comes in, in consequence, I will ask to seize Todd, the murderer! and offer myself as evidence of his numerous atrocities—contrite evidence—myself repenting of my share in them, and relying upon the mercy of the crown, which, in recompense for my denouncing you may graciously pardon me."

"And so it has come to this?" said Todd.

"You see and hear that it has."

It was rather a curious coincidence, that Mrs. Lovett had threatened Todd that she would awaken public attention to his shop by the same means that Sir Richard Blunt had recommended to Johanna to use in case of any emergency—namely, throwing something through the window into the street. If Mrs. Lovett had been goaded by Todd to throw the iron through a pane of his glass, the officers of Sir Richard would quickly have made their appearance to hear her denunciation of the barber. Unhappy woman! If she had but known what the future had in

store for her, that act which she threatened Todd with, and which to her imagination seemed such a piece of pure desperation, would have been the most prudent thing she could have done. But it was not to be! There was a few moments silence now between them. It was broken by Todd.

"Are you mad?" he said.

"No."

"Then, what, in the name of all that is devilish, has got possession of you?"

"I have told you my determination. Give me twenty thousand pounds—you may profit by the odd sum—give me that amount, and I will go in peace. You know I am entitled to more; but there is no occasion for us to reckon closely. Give me the sum I seek, and you will see me no more.

"You take me by surprise. Just step into the parlour, and—"

"No—no."

"Why not? Do you suspect—"

"I suspect nothing; but I am sure of much. Now, for me to set foot within your parlour would be tantamount to the commission of suicide, and I am not yet come to that—you understand me?"

Todd understood her. His hand strayed to a razor that lay partially open close to him. Mrs. Lovett raised the iron.

Mrs. Lovett And Todd Quarrel.

Mrs. Lovett And Todd Quarrel.

"Beware!" she said.

Todd shrunk back.

"Pho! pho! this is child's play," he said. "You and I, Mrs. Lovett, ought to be above all this—far above it. You want your half of the proceeds of our joint business, and I must confess, at the moment, that the demand

rather staggered and distressed me; but the more I think of it, the more reasonable it appears."

"Very well. Give it to me, then."

"Why, really now, my dear Mrs. Lovett, you quite forget that all our joint savings are in the hands of Mr. Brown."

Todd glared at her as though he would read her very soul. She felt that he more than suspected she knew all, and she adopted at once the bold policy of avowing it.

"I do not forget anything that it is essential should be remembered," she said; "and among other things, I know that, by forging my name, you have withdrawn the whole of the money from the hands of Brown. It is not worth our while to dispute concerning your motives for such an act. Let it suffice that I know it, and that I am here to demand my due."

"Ha! ha!"

"You laugh?"

"I do, indeed. Why, really now—ha! ha!—this is good; and so it is this withdrawal of the money from Brown that has made all this riot in your brain? Why, I withdrew it from him simply because I had certain secret information that his affairs were not in the best order; and from a fear, grounded upon that information, that he might be tempted to put his hand into our purse, if he found nothing in his own."

"Well, well; it matters not what were your reasons. Give me my half. It will be then out of your custody, and you will have no anxiety concerning it, while I can have no suspicions."

"In a moment—"

"You will?"

"If I had it here; but I have re-invested the whole, you see, and cannot get it at a moment's notice. I have moved it from the hands of Brown to those of Black."

CHAPTER LXXIX.
MRS. LOVETT FINDS THAT IN THIS WORLD THERE IS RETRIBUTION.

"Black?" said Mrs. Lovett.

"Yes, Black."

"Do you think me so—" green, she was going to say, but the accidental conjunction of the colours—brown, black, and green—suddenly struck her as ludicrous, and she altered it to foolish. "Do you think me so foolish as for one moment to credit you?"

"Hark you, Mrs. Lovett," pursued Todd, suddenly assuming quite a different tone. "You have come here full of passion, because you thought I was deceiving you."

"You are."

"Allow me to proceed. It is, I believe, one of the penalties of all associations for—for—why do I hesitate about a word?—guilty purposes that there should be mutual distrust. I tell you again, that if I had not moved the money from Brown, we should have lost it all."

"But why not come to me and get my signature?"

"There—really—was—not—time," said Todd, dropping his words out one by one, with a *staccato* expression.

"That is too absurd."

Todd shrugged his shoulders, as though he would have said—"Well, if you will have it so, I cannot help it;" and then he said—

"I was in the City. I heard the rumour of the instability of Brown. I flew into a shop. I wrote the order like a flash of lightning. I went to Brown's like an avalanche, and I brought away the money, as if Heaven and earth were coming together."

There was not the ghost of a smile upon Todd's face as he made use of these superlatives. Mrs. Lovett began to be staggered.

"Then you have it here?"

"No, no!"

"You have. Tell me that you have, and that this Mr. Black you mentioned is a mere delusion."

"Black may be no colour, but it is not a delusion."

"You trifle with me. Beware!"

"In a word then, my charming Mrs. Lovett, I dreaded to bring the money here. I thought my house the most unsafe place in the world for it. I and you stand upon the brink of a precipice—a slumbering volcano is beneath our feet. Pshaw! Where is your old acuteness, that you do not see at once how truly foolish it would have been to bring the money here?"

"Juggler! Fiend!"

"Hard words, Mrs. Lovett."

She dashed her hand across her brow, as though by that physical effort she could brush from her intellect the sophistical cobwebs that Todd had endeavoured to move before it, and then she said—

"I know not. I care not. All I ask—all I demand—is my share of the money. Give it to me, and let me go."

"I will."

"When?"

"This day. Stay, the day is fast going, but I will say this night, if you really, in your cool judgment, insist upon it."

"I do. I do!"

"Well, you shall have. This night after business was over and the shop was closed, I intended to have come to you, and fully planned all this that you have unfortunately tortured yourself by finding out. I regret that you think of so quickly leaving the profits of a partnership which, in a short time longer, would have made us rich as monarchs. Of course, if you leave, I am compelled."

"You compelled?"

"Yes. How can I carry on business without you? How could I, without your aid, dispose of the—"

"Hush, hush!"

Mrs. Lovett shuddered.

"As you please," said Todd. "I only say, I regret that a co-partnership that promised such happy results should now be broken up. However, that is a matter for your personal consideration merely. If I had thought of leaving, and being content with what I had already got, of course it would have compelled you to do so. Therefore I cannot complain, although I may regret your excuse of a right of action that equally belonged to me."

"If I only thought you sincere—"

"And why not?"

"If I could only bring myself to believe that the money was once more rightly invested—"

"You shall come with me yourself, if you like, in the morning to Mr. Black the broker in Abchurch Lane, No. 3, and ascertain that all is right. You shall there sign your name in his book, so that he may know it, and then you will be satisfied, I presume?"

"Yes, I should then."

"And this dream of leaving off business would vanish?"

"Perhaps it would. But—but—"

"But what?"

"Why did you say to Brown that our union was to take place?"

"Because it was necessary to say something, to account for the sudden withdrawal of the money; and surely I may be pardoned, charming Mrs. Lovett, for even in imagination dreaming, that so much beauty was mine."

The horrible leer with which Todd looked upon her at this moment made her shudder again; and the expression of palpable hatred and disgust that her countenance wore, added yet another, and not the least considerable, link to the chain of revenge which Todd cherished against her in his cruel and most secret heart. While he was philosophising about guilty associations producing a feeling of mutual distrust, he should have likewise added that they soon produce mutual hatred. For a few moments they looked at each other—that guilty pair—with expressions that sought to read each other's souls; but they were both tolerable adepts in the art of dissimulation. The silence was the most awkward for Todd, so he broke it first by saying—

"You are satisfied, let me hope?"

"I will be."

"You shall be."

"Yes, when I have my money. Henceforward, Todd, we will have much shorter reckonings, so shall we keep much longer friends. If you keep, in some secret place, your half of the proceeds of our—our—"

"Business," said Todd.

Mrs. Lovett made a sort of gulph of the word, but she adopted it.

"If you, I say, keep your half of the proceeds of our business, and I keep mine, I don't see how it is possible for us to quarrel."

"Quite impossible."

He began to strop a razor diligently, and to try its edge across his thumb nail. Mrs. Lovett's passion—that overwhelming passion which had induced her to enter Todd's shop, and defy him to a species of single combat of wits—had in a great measure subsided, giving place to a calmer and more reflective feeling. One of the results of that feeling was a self-question to the effect of, "What will be the result of an open quarrel with Todd?" Mrs. Lovett shook a little at the answer she felt forced to give herself to this question. That answer was continued in two words—mutual destruction! Yes, that would be the consequence.

"Todd," she said in a softened tone, "if I had forged your name, and gone to the city and possessed myself of all the money, what would you have thought? Tell me that."

"Just what you thought—that it was the most scandalous breach of faith that could possibly be; but an explanation ought to put that right."

"It has."

"Then you are satisfied?"

"I am. At what time shall we go together, to-morrow morning, to Mr. Black's in Abchurch Lane?"

"Name your own time," said Todd with the most assumed air in the world. "Black lives at Ballam Hill, and don't get to business until ten; but any time after that will do."

"I will come here at ten, then."

"So be it. Ah, Mrs. Lovett, how charming it is to be able to explain away these little difficulties of sentiment. Never trust to appearances. How very deceitful they are apt to be."

There was an air of candour about Todd, that might have deceived the devil himself. Notwithstanding all his hideous ugliness—notwithstanding his voice was of the lowest order, and notwithstanding that frightful laugh, and that obliquity of vision that seemed peculiar to himself in its terrible malignancy, there was a plausibility about his manner, when he pleased, that was truly astonishing. Even Mrs. Lovett,

with all her knowledge of the man, felt that it was a hard struggle to disbelieve his representations. What must it have been to those who knew him not?

"No," said Mrs. Lovett, "it don't do to trust to appearances."

She still held the iron in her hand.

"Nor," added Todd, giving the razor he had been putting an edge to, a flourish, "nor will it do to listen always to the dictates of compassion; for if we did, what miseries might we inflict upon ourselves. Now, here is a cure in point."

"Where?"

"I allude to this little affair between us. If you had flown to Bow-street, and there, to spite me, made a full disclosure of certain little facts, why, the result would have been that we might both have slept in Newgate to-night."

"Yes, yes."

"And then there would have been no recal. You could not have freed us by telling the police that you had made a mistake. Then the gallows would have risen up in our dreams."

"Horrible!"

"And it being easily discovered that it was no love of public justice or feeling of remorse, that induced you to the betrayal, they would have shown you no mercy, but you would have swung from the halter amid the shouts and execrations of—"

"No, no!"

"I say yes."

"No more of this—no more of this. Can you bear to paint such a picture—does it not seem to you as though you stood upon that scaffold, and heard those shouts? Oh, horror, horror!"

"You don't like the picture?"

"No, no!"

"Ha! ha! Well, Mrs. Lovett, you and I had far better be friends than foes; and above all, you ought by this time to feel that you could trust me. The very fact that to all the world else I am false, ought to prove to you that to you I am true. No human being can exist purely isolated, and I am not an exception."

"Say no more—say no more. We will meet to-morrow."

"To-morrow be it, then."

"At ten."

"At ten be it, and then we will go to Black. Come now, since all this is settled, take a glass of wine to our—"

"No, no. Not that. I—I am not very well, A throbbing head-ache—a—a. That is, no!"

"As you please—as you please. By-the-by, did Black give me a receipt, or did he say it was not usual? Stay a moment, I will look in my secretaire. Sit down a moment in the shaving chair; I will be with you again directly."

"We will settle that to-morrow," said Mrs. Lovett; "I feel convinced that Black did not give you a receipt. Good-day."

She left the shop, unceremoniously carrying the iron with her. Todd breathed more freely when Mrs. Lovett was gone. He gave one of his horrible laughs as he watched her through the opening in his window.

"Ha! ha! Curses on her; but I will have her life first, ere she sees one guinea of my hoard!"

He saw Charley Green crossing the road.

"Ah, the boy comes back. 'Tis well. I don't know how or why it is, but the sight of that boy makes me uneasy. I think it will be better to cut his throat and have done with him. I—"

Todd was suddenly silent. He saw two women pass, and as they did so, one pointed to his shop and said something to the other, who lifted up her hands as though in pious horror. One of these women was Mrs. Ragg, poor Tobias's mother. The other was a stranger to Todd, but she looked like what Mrs. Ragg had been, namely, a laundress in the temple.

"Curses," he muttered.

Johanna entered the shop. Todd caught up his hat.

"Charley?"

"Yes, sir."

"I shall be gone five minutes. Be vigilant. If any one should come, you can say I have stepped a few doors off to trim Mr. Pentwheezle's whiskers."

"Yes, sir."

Todd darted from the shop. Mrs. Ragg and her friend were in that deep and earnest course that is a foe to rapid locomotion, so they had not got many yards from Todd's door. He was rarely seen, however, for either to —

> "Paint a moral or adorn a tale"

Mrs. Ragg turned suddenly and pointed to the shop, and then both the ladies lifted up their hands as though in horror, after which they resumed their deep and all-absorbing discourse as before. Todd followed them closely, and yet with abundance of caution.

CHAPTER LXXX.
TODD TAKES A JOURNEY TO THE TEMPLE.

The two females took their way to the Temple. Todd had been quite right in his conjectures. The friend of Mrs. Ragg was one of the old compatriots of the laundress tribe; and that good lady herself, although, while there was no temptation to do otherwise, she had kept well the secret of her son's residence at Colonel Jeffery's, broke down like a frail and weak vessel as she was with the weight of the secret the moment she got into a gossip with an old friend. Now Mrs. Ragg had only come into that neighbourhood upon some little errand of her own, and with a positive promise of returning to the colonel's house as soon as possible. She would have kept this promise, but that amid the purlieus of Fetter-lane she encountered Martha Jones her old acquaintance. One word begot another, and at last as they walked up Fleet-street, Mrs. Ragg could not help, with many head-shakings and muttered interjectional phrases, letting Martha Jones know that she had a secret. Nay, as she passed Todd's shop, she could not help intimating that she fully believed certain persons, not a hundred miles off, who might be barbers or who might not, would some day come to a bad end in front of Newgate, in the Old Bailey. It was at this insinuation that Martha Jones lifted up her hands, and Mrs. Ragg lifted up hers in sympathy. Todd had seen this action upon the part of the ladies. To overhear what they were saying was to Todd a great object. That it in some measure concerned him he could not for a moment doubt, since the head-shaking and hand-uplifting reference that had been made to his shop by them both as they

passed, could not mean anything else. And so, as we have said, he followed them cautiously, dodging behind bulky passengers, so that they should not see him by any sudden glance backwards. One corpulent old lady served him for a shield half up Fleet Street, until, indeed, she turned into a religious bookseller's shop, and left him nothing but thin passengers to interfere between him and the possibility of observation. But Mrs. Ragg and her friend Martha Jones were much too fully engaged to look behind them. In due course, they arrived opposite to the Temple; and then, after much flurrying, in consequence of real and supposed danger from the passing vehicles, they got across the way. They at once dived into the recesses of the legally-learned Temple. Todd dashed after them.

"Now, my dear Mrs. Ragg," said Martha Jones, "you must not say No. It's got a beautiful head upon it, and will do you good."

"No—no. Really."

"Like cream."

"But, really, I—I—"

"Come, come, it ain't often you is in the Temple, and I knew very well he don't miss a bottle now and then; and 'twix you and me and the pump, I think we has as much a right to that beautiful bottled ale as Mr. Juggas has, for I'd take my bible oath, he don't mean to pay for it, Mrs. Ragg."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, I does, Mrs. Ragg. Oh, he's a bad 'un, he is. Ah, Mrs. Ragg, you don't know, nor nobody else, what takes place in his chambers of a night."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes. I often say to myself what universal profundity he must be possessed with, for he was once intended, he says, for the church, and I heard him say he'd have stuck to it like bricks, if he could have heard of any church that was intended for him."

"Shocking!"

"Yes, Mrs. Ragg. There's profundity for you."

Did Martha Jones mean profanity?

"Ah," interposed Mrs. Ragg, "we live in a world."

"Yes, Mrs. Ragg, we does; but as you was a saying?"

"Eh?"

"As you was a saying about somebody being hung, if rights was rights, you know."

"Oh, dear, really you must not ask me. Indeed you must not."

"Well, I won't; but here we are, in Pump Court."

Todd darted into a door-way, and watched them up the staircase of No. 6, in that highly classic locality. He slunk into the door-way, and by taking a perspective glance up the staircase, he saw them stop upon the first floor. He saw that they turned to the right. He darted up a few stairs, and just caught sight of a black door. Then there was a sharp sound, as of some small latch closing suddenly, after which all was still. Todd ascended the stairs.

"Curses on them!" he muttered. "What can they mean by looking in such a manner at my shop? I thought the last time I saw that woman, Ragg, that she was cognizant of something. If now she, in her babbling, would give me any news of Tobias—Pho! he is—he must be dead."

By this time Todd had got to the top of the first flight of stairs, and stood upon the landing, close to several open doors—that is to say, outer black heavy-looking doors—and within them were smaller ones, armed with knockers.

"To the right," he muttered. "They went to the right—this must be the door."

He paused at one and listened. Not a sound met his ears, and his impatience began to get extreme. That these two women were going to have a conference about him he fully believed; and that he should be so near at hand, and yet not near enough to listen to it, was indeed galling. In a few moments it became insupportable.

"I must and will know what they mean," he said. "My threats may wring the truth from them; and if necessary, I should not scruple to silence them both. Dead men tell no tales, so goes the proverb, and it applies equally well to dead women."

Todd smiled. He was always fond of a conceit.

"Yes," he muttered, "every circumstance says to me now in audible language, 'Go—go—go!' and go I will, far away from England. I feel that I have not now many hours to spare. This *fracas* with Mrs. Lovett expedites my departure wonderfully, and to-morrow's dawn shall not see me in London. But I will—I must ascertain what these women are about. Yes, and I will do so at all risks."

A glance showed him that the act of temerity was a safe one. The door opened upon a dingy sort of passage, in which were some mops, pails, and brooms. At its further extremity there was another door, but it was not quite shut, and from the room into which it opened, came the murmer of voices. There were other doors right and left, but Todd heeded only that one which conducted to the room inhabited. He crept along the passage at a snail's pace; and then having achieved a station exactly outside the door, he placed one of his hands behind one of his elephantine-looking ears, and while his countenance looked like that of some malignant demon, he listened to what was going on within that apartment. Martha Jones was speaking.

Todd Listens And Learns A Dangerous Secret.

Todd Listens And Learns A Dangerous Secret.

"It is good, indeed, Mrs. Ragg, as you may well say, and the glasses sticks to the table, when they is left over-night, showing, as Mr. Juggus says, as it's a gluetenious quality this ale is."

"Sticks to the table?" said Mrs. Ragg.

"Yes, mum, sticks. But as you was a saying?"

"Well, Martha, in course I know that what goes to you goes no farther."

"Not a step."

"And you won't mention it to no one?"

"Not a soul. Another glass?"

"No, no."

"Only one. Nonsense! it don't get into your head. It's as harmless as milk, Mr. Juggus says."

"But ain't you afeard, Martha, he may come in?"

"Not he, Mrs. Ragg. Chambers won't see him agin till night. Oh, he's a shocking young man. Well, Mrs. Ragg, as you was a saying?"

"Well, it is good. As I was a saying, Martha, I don't feel uneasy now about Tobias, poor boy; for if ever a poor lad, as was a orphan in a half-and-half kind of way, seeing that I am his natural mother, and living, and thanking God for the same, and health, leastways, as far as it goes at this present moment of speakin, I—I—Bless me, where was I?"

"At Tobias."

"Oh, yes, I was at Tobias. As I was saying, if ever a poor body was well provided for, Tobias is. The colonel—"

"The who?"

"The colonel, Martha—the colonel as has took the care of him, and who, sooner or later, will have all the truth out of him about the *Toddey Sween*."

"Who? Who?"

"Bless my poor head, I mean Sweeney Todd. Dear me, what am I thinking of?"

"The barber?"

"Yes, Martha; that horrid barber in Fleet-street; and between you and me, there isn't in all the mortal world a more horrid wretch living than he is."

"I'm all of a shake."

"He—he—"

"Yes, yes. What—"

"He takes folks in and does for 'em."

"Kills 'em?"

"Kills 'em."

"What—why—what—? You don't mean to say—why—? Take another glass Mrs. Ragg. You don't mean to say that Tobias says, that Todd the barber is a murderer?—My dear Mrs. Ragg, take another glass, and tell us all about it; only look at the cream on the top of it."

"You'll excuse me, Mrs. Jones, but the truth is, I aught not to say more than I have said; and if the colonel only knew I'd said as much, I can tell you, I think he'd be like a roaring lion. But Tobias is quite a gentleman now, you see, and sleeps in as fine a bed as a nobleman could have for love or money. The colonel is very good to him; and there never was such a kind good—good—."

Mrs. Ragg began to run over with tears of ale.

"Bless me, and where does he live?"

"Who?"

"The colonel. The good, kind, colonel—colonel—a—a dear me, I forget what you said his name was."

"Jeffery, and may his end be peace. He will get the reward of all his good actions in another world than this, Martha. Ah, Martha, such men as he can afford to smile at their latter ends.—No—no, I couldn't."

"Only half a glass; look at the—"

"No—no—"

"Cream on it."

"I must go, indeed. In course the colonel, since I have been his cook, knows what cooking is, for though I say it, perhaps as should not, I am a cook, and not a spiler of folks' victuals. Of course what's said, goes no further. I know I can trust you, Martha."

"Oh dear, yes, in course. I'll just put on my shawl and walk a little way with you, Mrs. Ragg. Dear me—dear me!"

"What is it, Martha?"

"Its a raining like cats and dogs, it is. Well, I never; what shall you do, Mrs. Ragg? What shall you do?"

"Call a coach, I shall, Martha. The last words the colonel said to me was, 'Mrs. Ragg, rather than there should be any delay in your return,' says he, 'as Tobias may want you, call a coach, and I will pay for it.'"

Todd had only just time to dart down the staircase before the two ladies made their appearance; and then hiding sometimes in doorways, and sometimes behind columns and corners, he dodged them into Fleet-street. A coach was duly called, and Mrs. Ragg by the assistance of Martha Jones, was safely bestowed inside it. Todd heard distinctly the colonel's address given to the coachman, who would have it twice over, so that he should be sure he had it all right.

"That will do," said Todd.

He darted across the street, and made the best of his way to his shop again. He listened at the door for a few moments before he entered, and he thought he heard the sound of weeping. He listened more attentively, and then he was sure. Some one was sobbing bitterly within the shop.

"It must be Charley," thought Todd.

He placed his ear quite close to the panel of the door, in the hope that the boy would speak. Todd was quite an adept at listening, but this time he was disappointed, for the sham Charley Green spoke not one word. Yet the deep sobs continued. Todd was not in the best of tempers. He could stand the delay no longer, and bouncing into the shop, he cried—

"What the devil is the meaning of all this? What is the meaning of it, you young rascal? I suspect—"

"Yes, sir," said Johanna, looking Todd full in the face, "and so do I."

"You—you? suspect what?"

"That I shall have to have it out, for its aching distracts me. Did you ever have the tooth-ache, sir?"

"The tooth-ache?"

"Yes, sir. It's—it's worse than the heart-ache, and that I have had."

"Ah!—humph! Any one been?"

"One gentleman, sir, to be shaved; he says he will call again."

"Very good—very good."

Todd took from his pocket the key of the back-parlour—that key without which in his own possession he never left the shop; and then, after casting upon Johanna a somewhat sinister and threatening look, he muttered to himself—

"I suspect that boy. If he refuse to come into the parlour, I will cut his throat in the shop; but if he come in I shall be better satisfied. Charley? Come here."

"Yes, sir," said Johanna, and she walked boldly into the parlour.

"Shut the door."

She closed it.

"Humph," said Todd. "It is no matter. I will call you again when I want you."

CHAPTER LXXXI.
JOHANNA IS ENCOURAGED.

Was Todd satisfied with Johanna's excuse about the toothache? Was he satisfied of the good foible of the supposed Charley Green, by the readiness with which she had come into the parlour? We shall see. If he were not satisfied, he was staggered in his suspicions sufficiently to delay—and delay just then was to Sweeney Todd—one of the most fatal things that could be imagined. There are crumbs of consolation under all circumstances. When Johanna was best sent out of the shop, upon the occasion of the visit of Mrs. Lovett to Todd, she had scarcely got a half dozen steps from the door of the barber's, when a man in passing her, and without pausing a moment, said—

"Miss Oakley, be so good as to follow me."

Johanna at once obeyed the mandate. The man walked rapidly on until a fruiterer's shop was gained, into which he at once walked.

"Mr. Oston," he said to a man behind the counter, "is your parlour vacant?"

"Yes, Sir Richard, and quite at your service," said the fruiterer.

By this Johanna found that she had made no mistake, and that the person she had followed was no other than Sir Richard Blunt, the magistrate, who was interesting himself so much for her safety, as well as for the discovery of what had befallen Mark Ingestrie. The fruiterer's parlour was a prettily fitted up place, where a couple of lovers might in a very romantic manner, if they chose, eat strawberries and cream, and

quite enjoy each other's blissful society, in whispered nothing the while. Sir Richard handed Johanna a seat as he said—"Miss Oakley, I am very much pleased, indeed, to have this opportunity of seeing you, and of saying a few words to you."

"Ah, Sir, how much do I owe you."

"Nay, Miss Oakley, you owe me nothing. When once I happily become aware of your situation, it becomes my duty as well as my inclination to protect you in every way against what, I am sure you will forgive me, for calling your rashness."

"Call it what you will, sir."

"Well, Miss Oakley, we will dismiss that part of the subject. Are you going upon any errand, or have you a little time to spare."

"I have some time."

"Then it is a very proper thing that you should enjoy it in taking some proper refreshment."

"I want nothing."

"Nay, but you shall have something whether you want it or not, before I say any more to you about Todd and his affairs."

Johanna, whose mental excitement had prevented her completely from feeling the amount of exhaustion, which otherwise must by that time have come over her, would still have protested that she wanted nothing, but Sir Richard Blunt opened the door of the parlour, and called out—

"Mr. Orton, is your daughter at home?"

"Yes, Sir Richard, Ann is up stairs."

"Very good. My young friend here can find the way, I dare say. Is it the first floor?"

"Yes, don't you hear her practising upon her spinet."

The tinkling sounds of a spinet, then all the fashion; came upon their ears, and Sir Richard, said to Johanna—

"Go up stairs, now, to that young lady. She is about your own age, and her father's housekeeper. She will find you something to eat and drink, and then come down to me, as soon as you can."

Sir Richard nodded to Mr. Orton, who nodded in return, and then Johanna seeing that it was all right, ascended the staircase, and guided by the sound of the spinet, soon found herself in a tolerably handsome room, upon the first floor.

A young girl with a profusion of chesnut curls hanging down her back, was seated at the spinet. Johanna made up to her at once, and throwing her arms round her neck, said—

"And will you say a kind word to me?"

The girl gave a slight scream, and rose.

"Well, I'm sure, you impertinant—handsome—"

"Girl," said Johanna.

"Boy," faltered Miss Orton.

"No, girl," added Johanna. "Your father sent me to you, and Sir Richard Blunt suggested it. Shall I leave you again."

"Oh, no—no," said Ann Orton, as she sprang towards Johanna, and kissed her on both cheeks, "you are Miss Johanna Oakley."

"How is it that you know me?"

"My father is an old friend of Sir Richard's, and he has told us all your story. How truly delighted I am to see you. And so you have escaped from that odious Todd, and—"

"Immediate refreshment, my dear, and all the attention you can cram into a very short space of time to Miss Oakley, my dear," said Mr. Orton, just putting his head so far into the room as to make himself plainly and distinctly heard.

"Yes, father, yes."

"How kind you all are," said Johanna.

"No—no—at least we wish to be, but what I mean is that we are no kinder than we ought to be. My father is so good, I have no mother."

"And I, too, am motherless."

"Yes, I—I heard that Mrs. Oakley—"

"Lived, you would say; and yet am I motherless."

Johanna burst into tears. The sense of desolation that came over the young girl's heart whenever she thought how little of a mother the fanatical personage who owned that title was to her, generally overcame all her firmness, as upon the present occasion. Ann flung her arms around Johanna, and the two young creatures wept in unison. We will leave them to their sacred intercourse.

Sir Richard Blunt remained in conversation with Mr. Orton for about a quarter of an hour, and then both Johanna and Ann came down stairs. Johanna looked calmer and happier. Ann had said some kind things to her—such as none but a young girl can say to a young girl.

"I am ready," said Johanna.

"Ready for what?" enquired Sir Richard Blunt, with a look of earnest affection in the face of the beautiful heroine—for if ever there were a heroine, we really think Johanna Oakley was one, and we are quite sure that you agree with us.

"For my mission," said Johanna, "I am ready."

"And can you really find courage to go again to that—that—"

Sir Richard could not find a fitting name for Todd's home, but Johanna understood him, and she replied gently—

"I may not pause now. It is my duty."

"Your duty?"

"Yes. Oh, Mark—Mark, I cannot restore you from the dead, but in the sacred cause of justice I may bring your murderer to the light of day. It is my duty to do so much for your memory."

Ann turned aside to hide her tears. Mr. Orton, too, was much affected, and there was an unwonted jar, as though some false note had had been struck in voice of Sir Richard Blunt as he spoke, saying—

"Miss Oakley, I will not—I cannot deny that by your going back to Todd's house, you may materially assist in the cause of justice. But yet I advise you not to do so."

"I know you are all careful of my safety, while I—"

"Ah, Johanna," said Ann, "you do not know yet that you are so desolate as to wish to die."

"Yes, yes—I am desolate."

"And so," added Sir Richard, "because you loved one who has been, according to your judgment upon the circumstances that have come to your knowledge, torn from you by death, you will admit no other ties which could bind you to the world. Is that right? Is it like you?"

The tones of voice in which these words were uttered, as well as the sentiment embodied in them, sunk deeply into Johanna's heart. Clasping her hands together, she cried—

"Oh, no, no! Do no think me so inhuman. Do not think me so very ungrateful."

"Had you forgotten, Arabella Wilmot? Had you forgotten your father? Nay, had you forgotten the brave Colonel Jeffery?"

"No, no! I ought not to forget any, when so many have so kindly remembered me, and you too, sir, I ought not, and will not forget you, for you have been a kind friend to me."

"Nay, I am nothing."

"Seek not, sir, to disparage what you have done, you have been all kindness to me."

Before he was aware of what she was about, Johanna had seized the hand of Sir Richard Blunt, and for one brief moment touched it with her lips. The good magistrate was sensibly affected.

"God bless me!" said Mr. Orton, "something very big keeps blocking up the whole of my window."

They all looked, and as they were silent at that moment, they heard a voice from the street, say—

"Come! Come, my dear! Don't set the water-works a-going. Always remember, that easy does it. You come in here, and have something to eat, if you won't go home. Lor bless me! what will they think has become of me at the tower?"

"Why, it is Ben!" cried Johanna.

"Ben?" said Ann. "Who is Ben?"

"Hush! Stop," said Sir Richard, "I pray you, stop."

Johanna would have rushed out to speak to Ben, who certainly was at the window of the fruiterer's shop, with Arabella Wilmot upon his arm, endeavouring to persuade her to enter, and partake of some refreshment.

"I will bring him in," said Sir Richard. "Retire into the parlour, I beg of you, Miss Oakley, for he will make quite a scene in the shop if you do not."

Johanna knew well Ben's affection for her, and doubted not, but that as Sir Richard said, he would not scruple to show it, even in the open shop, probably to the great edification of the passers by. She accordingly retired to the parlour with Ann. In a few moments, Sir Richard Blunt ushered in both Ben and Arabella Wilmot. Arabella with a shriek of joy, rushed into Johanna's arms, and then with excess of emotion she fainted. Ben caught up Johanna fairly off her feet, as though he had been dancing some little child, and holding her in a sitting posture upon one arm, he said—

"Bless you! Easy does it. Easy I say—does—it. Don't you think I'm a crying. It's a tea-chest has flew in my eye from that grocer's shop opposite. Oh, you little rogue, you. Easy does it. What you have got them what do you call 'ems on, have you?"

The kiss that Ben gave her might have been heard at Sweeney Todd's, and then when prevailed upon to sit down, he would insist upon holding her fast upon his knee.

"I must go," said Johanna, and then looking at Arabella, she added—"Let me go, before she awakens from her transient forgetfulness to beg me to stay."

Ben was furious at the idea of Johanna going back to Todd's, but Sir Richard, overruled him, and after some trouble, got him to consent. Then turning to Johanna, he said—

"The moment night comes on, you will have some visitors, and remember, Miss Oakley, that St. Dunstan's is the watch-word. Whoever comes to you with that in his mouth, is a friend."

"I will remember, and now farewell and God bless and reward you for all your goodness to me. I will live for the many who love me yet, and whom I love in this world."

Was it not a world of wonders that amid all this, Johanna did not go mad? Surely something more than mortal strength must have sustained that young and innocent girl in the midst of all these strange events. No human power that she possessed, could have possibly prevented her mind from sinking, and the hideous fascinations of an overcharged fancy from breeding

> "Rude riot in her brain."

But there was a power who supported her—a power which from the commencement of the world has supported many—a power which while the world continues, will support many more, strengthening the weak and trampling on the strong. The power of love in all the magic of its deep and full intensity. Yes, this was the power which armed that frail and delicate-looking girl with strength to cope with such a man—man shall we call him? no, we may say such a fiend as Sweeney Todd. If it required no small amount of moral courage to go in the first instance

upon that expedition—so fraught with danger, to Todd's shop—what did it require now to enable her to return after having passed through much peril, and tasting the sweets of friendship and sympathy? Surely any heart but Johanna's must have shrunk aghast from ever again even in thought, approaching that dreadful place. And yet she went. Yes upon her mission of justice she went. To be sure, she was told that as far as human means went, she would be upheld and supported from those without; but what could that assure to her further than that if she fell she should not fall unavenged? Truly, if some higher, some far nobler impulse than that derived from any consciousness that she was looked after, had not strengthened her, the girl's spirit, must have sunk beneath the weight of many terrors. With a sad smile she once again crossed the threshold of that house, which she now no longer suspected to be the murderer's haunt. She knew it.

CHAPTER LXXXII.
TODD PLANS.

How she sped with Todd we are already aware. Let us take a peep at the arch-demon in that parlour, which he considered his sanctuary, his city of refuge as it were. At least Todd considered it to be such, whether it was or not. He sits at a table, the table beneath which there was no floor, and covering up his face with his huge hands, he sets about thinking. Yes, that man now abandons himself to thought, as to how he is, with a blaze of wickedness, to disappear from the scene of his iniquities. It was not remorse that now filled his brain. It was not any feeling of bitter heart-felt regret for what he had done that oppressed him now. No such feeling might possibly find a home in his heart at the hour of success, but now when he saw and felt that he was surrounded by many difficulties, it had no home in his brain. But yet he thought that they were only difficulties that now surrounded; he did not as yet dream of positive danger. He still reasoned, as you have heard him reason before, namely, that if anything beyond mere suspicion were entertained regarding his mode of life, he would be at once apprehended. He thought that somebody—most likely Colonel Jeffery—was trying to find out something, and the fact that he, Todd, was there in his own parlour, a free man, appeared to him proof-sufficient that nothing was found out.

"How fallacious!"

If he had but known that he was virtually in custody even then, as he, indeed, really was, for Fleet-street was alive with officers and the emissaries of the police. If he had but guessed so much for a moment

what a wild tumult would have been raised in his brain. But he knew nothing and suspected little. After a time from generalizing upon his condition, Todd began to be particular, and then he laid down, as it were, one proposition or fact which he intended should be the groundwork of all in other proceedings. That proposition was contained in the words—

"Before the dawn of to-morrow I must be off!" "That's settled," said Todd, and he gave the table a blow with his hand. "Yes, that's settled."

The table creaked ominously, and Todd rose to peep into the shop to see what his boy was doing. Charley Green, alias, Johanna Oakley, was sitting upon a low stool reading a bill that some one had thrown into the shop, and which detailed the merits of some merchandize. How far away from the contents of that bill which she held before her face, were her thoughts?

"Good," said Todd. "That boy, at all events, suspects nothing, and yet his death is one of the things which had better not be left to chance. He shall fall in the general way of this place. What proper feeling errand-boy would wish to survive his master's absence. Ha!"

Of late Todd had not been very profuse in his laughs, but now he came out with one quite of the old sort.

The sound startled himself, and he retired to the table again.

By the dim light he opened a desk and supplied himself with writing materials; the twilight was creeping on, and he could only just see. Spreading a piece of paper before him, he proceeded to make a memoranda of what he had to do.

It was no bad plan this of Todd's, and the paper, when it was finished was quite a curiosity in its way.

It ran thus—

Mem.—To go to Colonel Jeffery's, and by some means get into the house and murder Tobias.

Mem.—To pack off goods to the wharf where the Hamburg vessel, called the Dianna, sails from.

Mem.—To arrange combustibles for setting fire to the house.

Mem.—To cut Charley Green's throat, if any suspicion arise—if not to let him be smothered in the fire.

Mem.—To have a letter ready to post to Sir Richard Blunt, the magistrate, accusing Mrs. Lovett of her own crimes, and mine likewise.

"I think that is all," said Todd.

He folded the paper and placed it in his bosom, after which he came out of the parlour into the shop, and called to Johanna.

"Charles?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go to the market, and get me a couple of stout porter—I want something carried a short distance."

"Yes, sir."

Away went Johanna, but before she got half way down to Fleet Market she met Sir Richard, who said—

"What is it?"

"He wants a couple of porters to carry something."

"Very well, get them. Depend upon me."

"I do, sir. I feel now in good heart to go through with anything, for you are near to me, and I know that I am safe."

"You are safe. It will need to be some very extraordinary circumstances, indeed, that could compromise you. But go at once for these porters; I, and my men will take good care to find where they go to."

There was no difficulty in finding parties in abundance at the end of Fleet Market, and Johanna speedily returned, followed by two sturdy fellows. Todd had quite a smile upon his face, as he received them.

"This way," he said—"This way. I hope you have been lucky to day, and have had plenty of work."

"No, master," said one, "we haven't, I'm sorry to say."

"Indeed," added Todd. "Well, I am very glad I have a little job for you. You see these two little boxes. You can carry one each of you, and I will go with you and show you where to."

One of the porters raised one of the boxes, and then he gave a long whistle, as he said—

"I say, master is there penny pieces or paving stones in this here, its deuced heavy, that it is."

"And so is this, Bill," said the other. "Oh, my eyes ain't it. There must be a quarter of a pound of goose feathers in here."

"Ha! ha!" said Todd, "How funny you both are."

"Funny?"

"Yes, to be sure, but come. This will put strength into you if you had none before."

He took a bottle and glass from a cupboard, and gave each of the men a full measure of such frightfully strong spirits, that they winked again, and the tears came into their eyes, as they drank it.

"Now shoulder the little boxes, and come along," he said, "and I tell you what I'll do. If you step in here in the evening, and I should happen to be at home, I'll give each of you a shave for nothing, and polish you off in such a manner, that you will recollect it as long you live."

"Thank you, master—thank you. We'll come."

One of the porters helped his companion with the chest on to his back and head, and Todd then lent a helping hand with the other.

"Charley," he said. "I shall be back in a quarter of an hour."

Away he went, preceding the porter by some half dozen steps only, but yet ever and anon keeping a wary eye upon the two chests, which contained cash, and jewels, sufficient to found a little kingdom. If he got clear off with those two chests only, he felt that he would not give himself much uneasiness about what was left behind. But was Todd going to trust these two porters from out his own immediate neighbourhood, with the secret of the destination of the boxes? No. He was by far too crafty for that. After proceeding some distance, he took them round the unfrequented side of St. Paul's Church yard, and stopping suddenly at the door of a house that was to let, he said—

"This will do."

"In here, master."

"This will do. Put them down."

The porters complied, and Todd set down upon one of the boxes, as he said—

"How much?"

"A shilling each of us, master."

"There's double the money, and now be off, both of you, about your business."

The porters were rather surprised, but as they considered themselves sufficiently paid, they made no objection, and walked off with considerable alacrity, leaving Todd, and his treasure in the street.

"Now for a coach," he muttered. "Now for a coach. Here boy"—to a ragged boy who was creeping on at some short distance. "Earn a penny by fetching me a coach directly."

The boy darted off, and in a very few minutes brought Todd a hackney coach. The boxes, too, were got upon it by the united efforts of Todd, the coachman, and the boy, and then, and not till then did Todd give the correct address of the wharf in Thames Street from which the Hamburg ship was going, and in which he fully intended to embark that night. The

ship was advertised to sail at the turn of the tide, which would be about four o'clock in the morning. All this did not take long to do. The coach rumbled along Thames Street, but Todd was not aware that Mr. Crotchet had got up behind the vehicle, but such was the fact, and when the lumbering old machine stopped at the wharf, that gentleman got down, and felt quite satisfied with the discovery he had made. "He's a trying of it on," soliloquised Mr. Crotchet in the bolting line, "but it ain't no manner of a go. He'll swing, and he can't help it, if he were to book himself to the moon, and there was a coach or a ship as went all the way, and no stoppages."

"*Mem*," said Todd to himself. "To go to Colonel Jeffery's and murder Tobias—Ha!"

"Lor!" said the coachman, "was that you, sir?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why as made that horrid sort of noise."

"Mind your business, my friend, and tell me if you can take me quickly to Islington, for I have no time to lose."

"Like the wind, sir, you can go with these here *osses*," replied the coachman, "did you ever see sich bits o' blood, sir, one on 'ems blind, and' t'other on 'em is deaf, which is advantages as you don't get in one pair."

"Advantages?"

"Lor bless you, yes, sir. The blind 'un goes unknown quick, cos you sees, sir, he thinks he's only in some dark place, and in course he wants to get out on it as soon as he can."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir, and the deaf 'un, he goes quick too, cos as he hears nothink, he thinks as there never was sich a quiet place as he's go's, and he does it out o' feeling and gratitude, sir, yer sees."

"Be quick then, and charge your own price."

Todd sprang into the vehicle, and stimulated by the idea of charging his own price, the coachman certainly did make the bits of blood do wonders, and in quite an incredibly short space of time, Todd found himself in the immediate neighbourhood of the Colonel's house. It was now getting dark, but that was what he wished. He dismissed the coach, and took from the angle of a wall, near at hand, a long and earnest look at the Colonel's house, and as he did so dark and hideous thoughts concerning Tobias passed through his mind.

CHAPTER LXXXII.
TODD VISITS THE COLONEL

"Well, Tobias," said Colonel Jeffery, as he entered the pretty, cheerful room into which the now convalescent boy had been removed. "Well, Tobias, how are you now?"

"Much better, sir. Oh, sir,—I—I—"

"What would you say?"

"I feel that when I see you, sir, I ought to say so much to convince you of how truly, and deeply grateful I am to you, and yet I can scarcely ever say a word about it. I pray for your happiness, sir, indeed I do. Your name and my mother's, and—and Minna Gray's, are always uttered to God by me."

"Now, Tobias," said Colonel Jeffery gravely. "I am quite satisfied that as regards all that has passed, you feel as you ought to feel, and for my own part, I beg you to feel and to know that your saying anything about it only distresses me."

"Distresses you, sir?"

"Yes, it does, indeed. I see your eyes are upon the door. You expect Minna, to day, I am sure."

"Yes, sir,—she—she—my mother was to bring her, sir."

A ringing at a bell now came upon Tobias's ear, and his colour went and came fitfully.

"You are still very weak, my poor boy," said the colonel, "but you are certainly much improved. Do you feel any confusion in your head now?"

"None at all, only when I think of Todd suddenly, ever it makes me feel cold and sick, and something seems to rush through my heart."

"Oh, that will go away. That is nothing. There, I will draw up the blind for you. The evening is coming, and the sky is overclouded. You can see better now, and there is one coming whom I know you wish to lose no sight of."

"I hear her foot upon the stairs," said Tobias.

"Do you?—It is more than I do."

"Ah, sir, the senses are sharpened, I think, by illness."

"Not so much as by love. Tobias! do you hear her footstep now?"

"Yes, and it is like music."

He had his head on one side in an attitude of listening; and then with joy sparkling from every feature of his face, he spoke again—

"She comes—she comes. Ah, she comes fast. My own—my beautiful. She come—she comes."

"This is real love," said the colonel, and he stepped from the room. Nearly on the landing at the head of the stairs, he met Minna Gray.

"Welcome," he said as he held out his hand to her. "You will find your young friend up and much better."

Minna could only look her thanks. Mrs. Ragg was following her, and as the ascent of stairs was always rather a task to that good Lady, she was making a noise like a stranded grampus in breathing.

"Ah, colonel," she said, "young legs get up stairs faster than old ones, sir, as you see. Well—well, there was a time when first I knew poor dear Ragg, who is of course dead and gone, quite premature."

"Exactly, Mrs. Ragg," said the colonel, as he rapidly descended the stairs.

"Did you ever, my dear, know such a strange man?" said Mrs. Ragg to Minna.

"Who?"

"The colonel, to be sure. So soon as I begin to tell him any little what do you call it. No it ain't *nannygoat*—that's ridiculous. It's—it's—what is it?"

"Anecdote do you mean, Mrs. Ragg?"

"Yes, to be sure. Well, as I was a saying, no sooner do I begin telling him a little nannygoat—no, I mean anecdote, than off he is like a shot."

Minna smiled to herself, and she was far from wondering that the colonel was off like a shot, for well she knew, that when Mrs. Ragg did begin anything concerning the late Mr. Ragg, it usually lasted three quarters of an hour at the very least.

"Minna, Minna!" called Tobias.

"I am here, Tobias."

In another moment she was in the room. Truly it was a pleasant thing to see the face of Tobias, when, his sunshine, as he called Minna, came close to him, and in her soft voice asked him if he was better.

"Don't mind me," said Mrs. Ragg, "I am going to darn a stocking or two. that's all. Just say what you both like. Young folks will be young folks. Bless me, I recollect just as if it were only yesterday, when I used to speak to poor departed Mr. Ragg, who is, premature, dead and gone, in a manner of speaking. Ah, dear me! How the world goes round and round —round and round, continually."

Tobias and Minna were so well accustomed to the garrulity of Mrs. Ragg, and so well aware that she required no answer, that they let her talk on, and did not mind her, as she requested they would not; and so the evening grew apace, and the light gradually began to wane, as those two young loving hearts spoke together of the future, and indulged in that day dream of happiness which can only belong to youth and love.

Todd is skulking round the angle of the garden wall, from which he can get a view of the colonel's house, and yet not be seen himself.

The more he looked the more the desire grew upon him, notwithstanding the immense risk he ran of personal detection, by so doing, to get into the house, and finish the career of poor Tobias. He would have had no particular objection rather to have taken the life of Mrs. Ragg, if it could be easily and comfortably done.

It has been said that there are folks in the world who never forgive any one for doing them a kindness; and such paradoxical views of human nature have been attempted to be laid down as truths; but whether this be so or not, is still to be proved, although it is certain that nothing stirs the evil passions of men who will inflict injury upon the innocent, as to find themselves baffled in their villany. From that moment the matter becomes a personal affair of vengeance.

Hence, since Todd had become thoroughly aware that Tobias had escaped from the death he had intended for him at the mad-house, his rage against the boy knew no bounds.

Indeed, the reader will conclude that it must have been a feeling of no ordinary strength, that, at such a busy and ticklish time, would take Todd to the colonel's house at all.

It was revenge—bitter, uncompromising revenge!

Now, you must know the colonel's house was one of those half-villa, half-mansion-like residences, that are so common in the neighbourhood of London. There was a kind of terrace in the front, and a garden with flowering shrubs, that had a pretty enough appearance, and which at night afforded abundance of shelter.

It was by this front garden that Todd hoped to reach the house.

When it was nearly dark, he slunk in, crouching down among the trees and shrubs, and crawling along like a serpent as he was. He soon came to a flight of stone steps that led to the kitchens.

By the time Todd had got thus far, some of her domestic duties had called Mrs. Ragg to the lower part of the house. He saw by the fire-light that some one was going about the kitchen, close to the foot of the stone steps; but he could not exactly, by that dim and uncertain radiance, take upon himself to say that it was Mrs. Ragg.

She soon lit a candle, though, and then all was clear. He saw the good lady preparing divers lights for the upper rooms.

While Todd was half-way down the stone steps, peeping into the kitchen, one of the other servants of the house came into that receptacle for culinary articles, and commenced putting on a bonnet and shawl. Todd could not hear one word of what was said by Mrs. Ragg and this young woman who was getting ready to go out; but he saw them talk, and by their manner he felt convinced that it was only upon ordinary topics.

If the young woman left the house by the steps upon which Todd was, and which it was more than likely she would do, his situation would be anything but a pleasant one, and discovery would be certain.

To obviate the chance of this, he stepped back, and crouched down in among the shrubs in the garden.

He was not wrong in his conjectures, for in a few moments the servant, who was going out, ascended the steps, and passed him so closely, that by stretching out his hand, he could, if he had been so minded, have touched her dress. In a short time she was out of ear-shot.

Todd emerged from his concealment again, and crept down the steps, and once more peeped into the kitchen.

Mrs. Ragg was still busy with the candles.

He was just considering what he should do, when he heard the tramp of horses' feet in the road above. He ascended sufficient of the steps to enable himself to get a peep at what was going on. He saw a groom well mounted, and leading another horse. Then no other than Colonel Jeffrey himself, although he did not of his own knowledge, feel assured that it was him, come out at the front door of the house and mounted.

"Now, William," said the colonel, "we must ride sharply."

"Yes, sir," said the groom.

Another moment and they were gone.

"This is lucky," said Todd. "It is not likely that there is any other room in the house; and if not, I have the game in my own hands."

He crept down the remainder of the stone steps, and placed his ear quite close to the kitchen window.

Mrs. Ragg was enjoying a little conversation to herself.

"Ah!" she said, "it's always the way—girls will be girls; but what I blame her for is, that she don't ask the colonel's leave at once, and say—'Sir, your *disorderly* has won my *infections*, and may he come here and take a cup of tea?'"

This was Greek to Todd.

"What is the old fool talking about," he muttered. "But I will soon give her a subject that will last for her life."

He now arrived at the door of the kitchen. It was very unlikely to be locked or otherwise fastened, so immediately after the young woman, who had left the house, and passed so close to him, Todd. Yet he listened for a few moments more, as Mrs. Ragg kept making observations to herself.

"Listeners hear no good of themselves, says the proverb, and at all events it was verified in this instance."

"*Lor' a mussy*," ejaculated Mrs. Ragg, "how my mind do run upon that horrid old ugly monster of a Todd to day. Well, I do hope I shall never look upon his frightful face again, and how awful he did squint, too. Dear me, what did the colonel say he had with his vision—could it be—a something *afixity*? No that isn't it."

"Obliquity!" said Todd, popping his head in at the kitchen door. "It was obliquity, and if you scream or make the least alarm, I'll skin you, and strew this kitchen with your mangled remains!"

Mrs. Ragg sank into a chair with a melo-dramatic groan, that would have made her fortune over the water in domestic tragedy if she could have done it so naturally. Todd kept his eye upon her. That basilisk-like eye, which had fascinated the good woman often, and this time it acted as a kind of spell, for truly might he have said, or rather might some one have said for him,

> "He held her with his glittering eye."

Todd's first care now was to get between Mrs. Ragg and the kitchen door, lest upon some sudden impulse she should rise and flee. Then he folded his arms, and looked at her calmly, and with such a devilish smile as might have become Mephistopheles himself, while contemplating the ruin of a soul. He took from his pocket a razor.

"Mercy," gasped Mrs. Ragg.

"Where is Tobias?"

Todd Horrifies Mrs. Ragg.

Todd Horrifies Mrs. Ragg.

"Up stairs. Back room, second floor, looking into the garden."

"Alone?"

"No, Minna Grey is with him."

"Listen to me. If you stir from here until I come to you again, I will not only murder you, but Tobias likewise, and every one whom I meet with in this house. You know me, and can come to some opinion as to whether or not I am a man likely to keep my word. Remain where you are; move not, speak not, and all will be well."

Mrs. Ragg slowly slid off her chair, and fell to the floor of the kitchen, where she lay, in what seemed a swoon.

"That will do as well," said Todd as he glanced at her, "and yet as I return." He made a movement with his hand across his throat to indicate what he would do, and then feeling assured that he had little or, indeed, no opposition to expect in the house, he left the kitchen, and walked up stairs.

When he reached the top of the kitchen stairs he paused to listen. All was very still in the house.

"'Tis well," he said "tis well. This deed of blood shall be done, and long before it can be thought that it was I who struck the blow, I shall be gone."

Alas! After passing through so much! After being persued in so almost a miraculous manner from the murderous intentions of Todd, backed by the cupidity of Fogg, and his subordinate Watson, was poor Tobias yet to die a terrible death as a victim to the cruel passions of his relentless persecutor? No, we will not yet believe that such is to be the fate of poor honest Tobias, although at the present time, his prospects look gloomy. Todd may, and no doubt has taken as worthy lives, but we will hope that the hand of Providence will prevent him from taking this one. He reached the landing of the first floor, and he paused to listen again. He thought this time, that he heard the faint sound of voices above, but he was not quite sure. Otherwise all was quiet. This was a critical situation for Todd. If any one, who was a painter of pictures or of morals had but seen him, Sweeney Todd, as he there stood, they would no longer have doubted either that there was a devil, or that some persons in this world, were actuated by a devilish fiend. He looked the incarnate fiend!—the Mephistopheles of the imagination, such as he is painted by the German enthusiast. His laugh too? Was not that satanic? He set himself to listen to the voices that he heard in that quiet rooms and the sounds, holy and full of affection as they were, awakened no chord of answering feeling, in that bold, bad man's breast. He stood apart from human nature, a solitary being. A wreck upon the ocean of society

> "None loving, and by none beloved."

Who would be Sweeney Todd, for all the wealth, real or fabled, of a million Californias?

"He is here," he said, "I know his voice. Tobias is here. Ah! he mentions the name of God. Ha! He is more fitting to go to that heaven he can talk of so glibly, but there is none. There is none! No, no! all that is a fable."

Of course Todd could not believe in a divinity of goodness and mercy. If he had, what on earth could have saved him from absolute madness?

CHAPTER LXXXIII.
TOBIAS IN JEOPARDY.

"And so you do love me, Minna?" said Tobias.

How his voice shook like a reed swayed by the wind, and yet what a world of melody was in it.

"Can you ask me to say yes?" was the reply of the fair young creature by his side. "Can you ask me to say yes, Tobias?"

"It seems to me," said Tobias, "as though it would be such a joy to hear you say so, Minna, and yet I will not ask you."

"How well you have got, Tobias. Your cheek has got its old colour back again. The colour it had long before you knew there was such a man as Sweeney Todd in the world. Your eyes are bright too, and your voice has its old pleasant sound."

"Used it to be pleasant to you, Minna?"

She held up her hand, and shook her head laughingly.

"No questions, Tobias! No questions. I will confess nothing."

"Stop!" said Tobias, as he put himself into an attitude of listening, "what was that, I thought I heard something? It was like a suppressed growl. I wish the colonel would come home. Did you not hear it, Minna?"

Minna had heard it, but she did not say she had.

"Where did it come from, Tobias?"

"From the stair-head, Minna."

"Oh, it is some accidental noise, such as is common to all houses, and such as always defy conjecture and explanation, and being nothing and meaning nothing, always comes to nothing. Yet I will go and see. Perhaps a door has been left open, and is banging to and fro by the wind, and if so it will only vex you to hear it again, Tobias."

It was Todd, who upon hearing the soft and tender speeches from the young lovers, had not been able to suppress a growl, and now that he had heard Minna Grey talk of coming to look what it was, he felt the necessity of instantly concealing himself somewhere.

It was not likely she would come down the stairs, so Todd adopted an original mode of keeping himself out of sight.

He descended steps sufficient, that by laying at full length along them, his head did not reach the top, and in the darkness he then considered that he should be quite safe from the casual glance, that in all likelihood, merely to satisfy Tobias, Minna would give outside the room door.

Todd thought by her manner she had heard nothing.

"No, no, Minna," said Tobias, "there is no occasion. It is nothing, I dare say, and I don't like you to be out of my sight a moment."

"It is only a moment."

She rose, and proceeded to the door.

An unknown feeling of dread, she knew not why, was at the heart of Minna. Certainly the slight sound she had heard, and that too in the house of Colonel Jeffery, was not sufficient to warrant such a feeling, and yet there, at her heart, it sat brooding.

She stood for a moment at the door.

It was only for a moment.

"How foolish I am," she thought, and then she passed out on to the landing, where she stood for a moment glancing round her.

"It is nothing, Minna," called out Tobias, "or shall I try and come. I feel quite strong enough to do so."

"Oh, no—no! It is nothing."

Minna stepped lightly back and sat down. She clasped her hands very tight indeed together, and then placed both upon her breast.

She had seen Todd.

Yes, Minna Grey had seen the man that had been, and who was for all she knew to the contrary still to be, the bane of Tobias's existence. The clear eyes of youth had noticed the lumbering figure as it lay upon the stairs before them.

And she did not scream—she did not cry for help—she did not faint, she only crept back as we have seen, and held her hands upon her heart, and looked at Tobias.

There was no mistaking Todd. Once seen he was known for ever. Like some hideous picture, there dwelt the memory of Sweeney Todd upon the young imagination of the fair Minna Grey.

Once before, a long time ago, so it seemed to her, she had seen him in the Temple skulking up an old staircase. From that moment the face was Daguerreotyped upon her brain.

It was never to be forgotten, and with the face comes the figure too. That she saw upon the stairs.

Alas! Poor Minn!

"And so it was nothing but one of those odd accidents that will occur in defiance of all experience, and calculation," said Tobias.

"Just that," replied Minna.

"Ah, my dear Minna. We are so safe here. It always seems to me as though the very air of this house, belonging as it does to such a man, so full of goodness as the colonel is, such that nothing very bad could live in it for long."

"I—I hope so—I think so.—What a calm and pleasant evening it is, Tobias, did you see the new book of the seasons, so full of pretty engravings in the shape of birds and trees, and flowers, that the colonel

has purchased."

"New book?"

"Yes, it lies in his small study, upon this floor. I will fetch it for you, if you wish it, Tobias?"

"Nay, I will go."

"You are still weak. Remain in peace upon the couch, dear Tobias, and I will go for you."

Before she left the room, she kissed the forehead of the boy. A tear, too, fell upon his hand.

"Who knows," she thought, "that I shall ever see him in life again?"

"Minna, you weep."

"Weep? No—no—I am so—so happy."

She hastily left the room. Todd had heard what had passed, and had turned to hide himself again. The young girl knew that she passed the murderer within a hair's breadth. She knew that he had but to stretch out his right hand and say—"Minna Gray, you are my victim!" and his victim she would have become. Was not that dreadful? And she so young and so fair—so upon the threshold, as it were, of the garden of her existence—so loving, and so well-beloved. She felt for a moment, as she crossed the landing—just for a moment as though she were going mad. But the eye of the Omnipotent was upon that house. She staggered on. She made her way into a bed-room. It was the colonel's. Above the mantel-shelf, supported on a small bracket, was a pair of pistols. They were of a large size, and she had heard from the current gossip of the house, how they were always loaded, and how the servants feared to touch them, and how even they shrank from making the bed, lest the pistol from some malice aforethought, or from something incidental to such watching, should go off at once of their own accord, and inevitably shoot whoever chanced to be in the room. Minna Gray laid her hand upon the dreaded weapons.

"For Tobias! for Tobias!" she gasped.

Then she paused to listen. All was still as the grave. Todd was not yet ready for the murder, or he wished to take their lives both together, and in the one room. That was more probable. Then she began to think that he must have some suspicion, and that it was necessary upon her part to do something more than merely make no alarm. The idea of singing occurred to her. It was a childish song that she had been taught, when a pretty child, that she now warbled forth a few lines of—

"If I were a forest bird,
  I'd shun the noisy town;
I'd seek the verdure of the spring
  The dear autumnal brown.
And even when the winter came,
  By sunny skies bereft,
I'd sleep in some deep distant cave,
  Which wanton winds had left."

She crossed the landing.

"Minna," said Tobias. "My Minna!"

"I come."

She passed into the room, and the moment she crossed the threshold—she turned her face to it and presented both the pistols before her. Then as she wound, inch by inch, into the centre of the room, all her power of further concealment of her feelings deserted her, and she could only say, in a strange choking tone—

"Todd!—Todd!—Todd!"

"No—no—no! Oh, God, no!" cried Tobias.

"Todd!—Todd!—Todd!"

"No—no! Help! help!"

"D—n!" said Sweeney Todd, as he dashed open the door of the chamber, and stood upon the threshold with a glittering knife in his right hand.

"Hold!" shrieked Minna Gray. "Another step, murderer, and I send you to your God!"

Todd waited. He could almost see down the barrels of the large pistols, which a touch of the young girl's finger would explode in his face. With a sharp convulsive cry, Tobias fell to the floor. The blood gushed from his mouth, and he lay bereft of sensation.

Heroic Conduct Of Minna Gray.

Heroic Conduct Of Minna Gray.

"Away!" cried Minna. "Monster, away! Another moment, and as Heaven hears me, I will fire; once—twice—"

Todd darted to the stair head, but he darted away again quicker than he had gone there; for who, to his horror, should he meet, advancing with great speed up the steps, but Mrs. Ragg, who had managed to get out of the kitchen, and who bore, as a weapon of offence and defence, the large kitchen poker, which was of a glowing red heat. Todd caught a touch of it on his face.

"Oh, you villain of the world!" cried Mrs. Ragg, "I'll teach you to come here murdering people. My poor Tobias is no more, I know; but I'll take the law of you, I will. Murder! murder! Police! Colonel!"

With an alacrity, that was far beyond to all appearance Mrs. Ragg's powers, that good lady pursued Todd with the red-hot poker. He dared not take refuge in Tobias's room, for there stood Minna with the pistols in her hand, so he darted up the first flight of stairs he saw, which led to the top of the house. Mrs. Ragg pursued him; but when she got to the head of the stairs, Minna pressed too hard upon the hair-trigger of one of the pistols, and off it went. Mrs. Ragg fully believed herself shot, and rolled down the stairs, poker included; while Todd, labouring under the impression that the shot was at him, became still more anxious to find some place of refuge. Upon the landing, which he was not a moment in

reaching, he found a great show of doors; for he was, in fact, upon the floor from which all the sleeping rooms of the servants opened. It was quite a chance that the first one he bounced into was one that had in the roof a little square trap-door, facetiously called "a fire escape;" but which, in the event of a fire, would have acquired the agility of a harlequin, and the coolness of a tax-gatherer to get through. Todd dragged a bedstead beneath the trap; and then his great height enabled him to thrust it open, and project his head through it. He found that part of his corporality was in the roof as it were—that is to say, in the cavity, between the ceiling of the room and the house. A trap-door of somewhat larger size in the actual roof, opened to the air. Todd dragged himself through, and was fairly upon the top of the colonel's house. A slippery elevation! But surely that was better than facing a red-hot poker, and a pair of hair-trigger duelling pistols; and so, for a time, the desire to escape kept down every other feeling. Even his revengeful thoughts gave way to the great principle of self-preservation; and Todd was only intent upon safely getting away. He glared round him upon the night sky, and a gaudy assemblage of chimney tops. What was he to do? In a minute he uttered a string of such curses, as we cannot very well here set down, and he turned preternaturally calm and still.

"Shall I go back," he said, "or escape?"

He heard the tramp of horses' feet, and peeping carefully over the front parapet of the house, he saw Colonel Jeffery arrive on horseback, and dismount. His groom led the horse away, and the colonel ascended the steps. Then, and not until then, Todd made up his mind.

"Escape," he said, "and be off."

There was a long sloping part of the roof close to where he was, and he thought that if he slid down that very carefully he should be able to get on to the roof of the next house, and so perchance through their trap door, and by dint of violence or cunning, or both united, reach the street.

It was a desperate resource, but his only one.

The top part of the long sloping roof was easily gained, and then Todd began to let himself down very carefully, but the angle of the roof was greater than he had imagined, and by the time he got about half way down he found a dangerous and most uncomfortable acceleration of motion ensuing.

It was in vain he tried to stop himself: down he went with a speed into the gutter behind the copping-stone, that left him lying there for a few moments half stunned, and scarcely conscious if he were safe or not.

The colonel's house, however, was stoutly built, and Todd's weight had not displaced anything; so that there he lay safe enough, wedged into a narrow rain gutter, from which, when he did recover himself sufficiently to make the attempt, he found some difficulty in wrenching himself out of.

Sore and shaken, Todd now looked about him. He was close to the roof of the next-door house. To be sure there was a chasm of sixty feet; but its width was not as many inches, so Todd ought, with his long legs, to easily step it.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.
TODD'S WONDERFUL ESCAPE.

The step was but a trifle; and yet, shaken as Todd was by his fall, it really seemed to him to be one of the most hazardous and nervous things in the world to take it.

He made two feints before he succeeded. At length he stood fairly upon the roof of the adjoining house. He did not say "Thank God!"; such words were not exactly in the vocabulary of Sweeney Todd; but he wiped the perspiration from his brow, and seemed to think that he had effected something at last.

And yet how far was he from safety? It is some satisfaction to have got such a man as Todd upon the house-tops. Who pities him? Who would be violently afflicted if he made a false step and broke his neck? No one, we apprehend; but such men, somehow, do not make false steps; and if they do, they manage to escape the consequences.

Surely it was about as ticklish a thing to crawl up a sloping roof as to come down one. Todd did not think so, however, and he began to shuffle up the roof of the house he was now on, looking like some gigantic tortoise, slowly making its way.

Reasoning from his experience of the colonel's house, Todd thought he should very well be able to pitch upon the trap, in the roof of the domicile upon which he was, nor was he wrong. He found it in precisely the same relative position, and then he paused.

He drew a long breath.

"What a mad adventure this is," he said; "and yet what a satisfaction it would have been to me, before I left England, to be able to feel that I had had my revenge upon that brat Tobias. That he had not altogether failed me after I had paid so much money to be rid of him. But that is over. I have failed in that attempt; but they shall not say it cost me my life. They will be bold people who stop me in my passage to the street in this house."

He felt the trap-door. It was fast.

"Humph!" he said, "doors are but bonds; and the rains of a few winters rot them quickly enough. We shall see."

The knife, with which he would have been well pleased to give poor Tobias his quietus, was thick and strong. He slid it under the wooden trap, and by mere force lifted it up. The nails of the bolt easily withdrew themselves from the rotten wood.

Todd was right. The rains of a few winters had done their work.

It was not exactly a time in the evening, when, in such a class of house, any one might be expected to be found in the attics; so Todd made no scruple of at once removing the lower trap in the ceiling.

He dropped comfortably enough on to the floor.

And now, coming suddenly as he did from the light, faint as it was, of the open air in the room, which he found himself, seemed to be involved in profound darkness; but that he knew would wear away in a few moments, and he stood still for his eyes to get accustomed to the semi-obscurity of the place.

Gradually, then, as though out of chaos, there loomed a bedstead and all the necessary appointments of a bed-room. It was untenanted; and so Todd, after listening intently, and believing, from the marked stillness that there prevailed, that the upper part of the house was deserted, walked to the door, and opening it, stood upon the landing.

"If I can now but step down stairs noiselessly, and open the street door, all will be well. People don't sit upon the staircase, and I may be fortunate enough to encounter no one."

There was no time to lose. Affairs in Fleet-street required his presence; and, besides, the present moment might be the most propitious, for all he knew, for the enterprise.

Down he went, not clinging to the balustrades—for who should say they might not wheeze and creak?—not walking upon the middle of the stairs, for there was no saying what tell-tale sounds they might give vocality to; but sliding along close to the wall, and stepping so quietly, that it would have required attentive ears to have detected his silent and steady march.

And so, flight by flight of these stairs Todd descended in safety, until he reached the passage. Yes, he got to the passage without the shadow of an interruption.

Then he heard voices in one of the parlours.

"Confound them!" said Todd, "they will hear me open the street door to a certainty; but it must be done."

He crept up to the door. There was some complicated latch upon it that defied all his knowledge of latches, and all his perseverance; and yet, no doubt, it was something that only required a touch; but he might be hours in finding out in the dark where to apply that touch.

He still heard the voices in the parlour.

More than five minutes—precious minutes to him—had already been consumed in fumbling at the lock of the street door; and then Todd gave it up as useless, and he crept to the parlour-door to listen to the speakers, and so, perhaps, ascertain the force that was within.

A female voice was speaking.

"Oh, dear me, yes, I daresay," it said. "You no doubt think that house can be kept for nothing, and that a respectable female wants no clothes to her back; but I can tell you, Mr. Simmons, that you will find yourself wonderfully mistaken, sir."

"Pshaw!" said a man's voice. "Pshaw! I know what I mean, and so do you. You be quiet wife, and think yourself well off, that you are as you are."

"Well off?"

"Yes, to be sure, well off."

"Well off, when I was forced to go to Mr. Rickup's party, in the same dress they saw me in last Easter. Oh! you brute!"

"What's the matter with the dress?"

"The matter? Why I'll tell you what the matter is. The matter is, and the long and short of everything, that you are a brute."

"Very conclusive indeed. The deuce take me if it ain't."

"I suppose by the deuce, you mean the devil, Mr. Simmons; and if he don't take you some day, he won't have his own. Ha! ha! you may laugh, but there's many a true word spoken in jest, Mr. Simmons."

"Oh, you are in jest, are you?"

"No sir, I am not, and I should like to know what woman could jest with only one black silk, and, that turned. Yes, Mr. Simmons, you often call upon the deuce to take this, and to take that. Mind he don't come some day to you when you least expect it sir, and say—"

"Lend me a light!" said Todd, popping his awfully ugly face right over the top of the half open door, a feat which he was able to accomplish by standing on his tip toes.

There are things that can be described, but certainly the consternation of Mr. and Mrs. Simmons cannot be included in the list. They gazed upon the face of Todd in speechless horror, nor did he render himself a bit less attractive by several of his most hideous contortions of visage.

Finding then that both husband and wife appeared spell-bound, Todd stepped into the room, and taking a candle from the table, he stalked into the passage with it.

The light in his hand threw a light upon the mystery of the lock. Todd opened the street-door, and passed out in a moment. To hurl the candle and candlestick into the passage, and close the door, was the next movement of Todd, but then he saw two figures upon the steps leading to Colonel Jeffery's house, and he shrunk back a moment.

"Now William," said Colonel Jeffery himself, "you will take this letter to Sir Richard Blunt, and tell him to use his own discretion about it."

"Yes, sir."

"Be quick, and give it into no hands but his own."

"Certainly, sir."

"Remember, William, this is important."

The groom touched his hat, and went away at a good pace, and Colonel Jeffery himself closed the door.

"Indeed," muttered Todd. "Indeed. So, Sir Richard Blunt, who is called an active magistrate, is to know of my little adventure here? Well—well—we shall see."

He darted from the door of the house, through which he had made so highly successful and adventurous a progress, and pursued William with such strides as soon brought him close up to him. But the thoroughfare in which they were was too public a one for Todd to venture upon any overt act in it.

He followed William sufficiently closely however to be enabled to take advantage of any opportunity that might present itself to possess himself by violence of the letter.

Now William had been told the affair was urgent, so of course he took all the nearest cuts he could to the house of Sir Richard Blunt, and such a mode of progress soon brought him into a sufficiently quiet street for

Todd's purpose.

The latter looked right and left. He turned completely round, and no one was coming—a more favourable opportunity could not be. Stepping lightly up to William he by one heavy blow upon the back of his neck felled him.

The groom lay insensible.

Todd had seen him place the colonel's letter in his breast-pocket, and at once he dived his huge hand into that receptacle to find it. He was successful—one glance at the epistle that he drew forth sufficed to assure him that it was the one he sought. It was duly addressed to Sir Richard Blunt—"With speed and private."

"Indeed, very private," said Todd.

"Wretch! Wretch!" cried some one from a window, and Todd knew then that the deed of violence had been witnessed by some one from one of the houses.

With an execration, he darted off at full speed, and soon placed a perfect labyrinth of streets between him and all pursuit. He thrust the letter all crumbled up into his pocket, and he would not pause to read it until he was much nearer to Fleet-street than to the colonel's house, or the scene of his attack upon the groom. Then, by the light of a more than usually brilliant lamp, which with its expiring energies was showing the world what an old oil lamp could do, he opened and read the brief letter.

It was as follows.

> "Dear Sir Richard.
>
> "Todd has been here upon murderous thoughts intent. Poor Tobias has, I fear, broken a blood-vessel, and is in a most precarious condition. I leave all to you. The villain escaped, but is injured I think."
>
> "Yours very faithfully,
> "John Jeffery."
> "To Sir Richard Blunt.

"Broken a blood-vessel," said Todd. "Ha! ha! Broken a blood-vessel. Ha! Then Tobias may yet be food for worms, and the meat of the pretty crawlers to the banquet. Ha!"

He walked on with quite a feeling of elation; and yet there was, as he came to think, a something—he could not exactly define what—about the tone of the letter, that began upon second thoughts to give him no small share of uneasiness.

The familiar way in which he was mentioned as Todd merely, without further description, argued some foregone conclusion. It seemed to say, Todd, the man whom we both know so well, and have our eyes upon.

Did it mean that? A cold perspiration broke out upon the forehead of the guilty wretch. What was he to think? What was he to do?

He read the letter again. It sounded much more unmeaning and strange now. He had at first been too much dazzled by the pleasant intelligence regarding Tobias, to comprehend fully the alarming tone of the epistle; but now it waked upon his imagination, and his brain soon became vexed and troubled.

"Off—off, and away," he muttered. "Yes, I must be off before the dawn. The interception of this letter saves me for some few hours. In the morning, the colonel will see Sir Richard Blunt, and then they will come to arrest me; but I shall be upon the German Ocean by then. Yes, the Hamburgh ship for me."

He was so near his home now that it was not worth while to call a coach. He could run to Fleet Street quicker, so off he set at a great pace till his breath failed him.

Then he held on to a post so faint and weak, that a little child might have apprehended him.

"Curse them all," he said. "I wish they all had but one throat, and I a knife at it. All who cross me, I mean."

Time was rather an important element now in Todd's affairs, and he felt that he could not allow himself a long period even to recover from the state of exhaustion in which he was.

After a few minutes rest, he pushed on.

One of those sudden changes that the climate of this country is subject to, now took place; and although the sky had looked serene and bright, and there had been twinkling stars in the blue firmament but a short time before, Todd began to find that his clothing was but little protection against the steady rain that commenced falling with a perseverance that threatened something lasting.

"All is against me," he said. "All is against me."

He struggled on with the rain dashing in his face, and trickling, despite all his exertions to the contrary, down his neck. Suddenly he paused, and laid his finger upon his forehead, as though a sudden thought of more than ordinary importance had come across his mind.

"The turpentine!" he said. "The turpentine. Confound it, I forget the turpentine."

What this might mean was one of Todd's own secrets; but before he went home, he ran down several streets until he came to a kind of wholesale drug warehouse.

He rang the bell violently.

"What is it?" said a voice.

"The small keg of turpentine that was to be sent to Mr. Todd's in Fleet Street, is particularly wanted."

"It was sent about half an hour ago."

"Oh, thank you—thank you. That will do. A wet night."

In a few minutes more he was at his own shop-door.

CHAPTER LXXXV.
SIR RICHARD MAKES PLANS.

Johanna had had a long time to herself in Todd's shop now. When first he left upon that expedition of murder, she had almost been afraid to stir, for she had feared he might momentarily return; but as his stay became longer and longer protracted, she plucked up courage.

She began to look about her.

"As yet," she said to herself, "what has been done towards arriving at a solution of the mysteries of this dreadful place?"

The more she thought, the more she felt compelled to answer this inquiry in an unsatisfactory manner. What had been done?

The only thing that could be said to be settled, was the fact that Todd was guilty, and that Mrs. Lovett was his accomplice. That he, by some diabolical means, murdered people who came into his shop to be shaved, was a fact, incontestable; but how he did the deed, still remained a mystery.

The care which Todd always bestowed for the purpose of concealing the manner in which he committed the murder, had hitherto been successful. No one but himself, and probably Mrs. Lovett, knew exactly how he did the deed.

It has been of course sufficiently observed that he never attempted anything amiss when two people were in the shop. That he always made it a point to get rid of Johanna upon occasions when he thought he had a chance of making a victim; and that in fact he had, by the very fact that

Sir Richard Blunt and his officers had in various disguises followed people into his shop, been for some time prevented from the commission of his usual murders.

Now without in the smallest degree disguising what he did know, it is quite clear that Sir Richard Blunt up to that time did not know how Todd did the deeds of blood for which his shop was to become famous, and himself infamous.

That people went in and never came out again, was about the extent of what was really known.

The authorities, including Sir Richard Blunt, were extremely anxious to know exactly how these murders were committed, and hence they waited with the hope, that something would occur to throw a light upon that part of the subject, before they apprehended Todd.

At any moment, of course, he could have been seized, and he little suspected that he was upon such a mine.

If anything, however, could be said to expedite the arrest of Todd, it would certainly be what had taken place at the colonel's house.

Now, to all appearance, when the colonel came home so close upon the events that had happened in his absence, and had so very nearly been fatal to both Minna Gray and Tobias, Todd had made his escape.

A rapid, but effective search of his, the colonel's house, sufficed to prove that there he was not.

The appearance of Tobias, with blood gushing from his mouth, was sufficiently alarming, and it was under the impression that he was dying from the rupture of a blood-vessel, that the colonel wrote the note to Sir Richard Blunt, which was intercepted by Sweeney Todd himself.

Upon the arrival, however, of the surgeon, who was immediately sent for, it was soon ascertained that the blood-vessel which had given way in poor Tobias, was not on the lungs, and that the danger arising from it was by no means great, provided he were kept quiet and properly attended to.

Minna Gray received this information with deep thankfulness, and the colonel, upon hearing it, immediately sought Sir Richard to consult with him upon the subject in its now altered state, for the idea that Tobias was dying, had made him, the colonel, view the affair much more passionately than prudently.

By dint of some trouble, the colonel found Sir Richard Blunt, and then to his no small surprise, for he had known his groom long, and thought he could thoroughly depend upon him, he found that the magistrate had received no note at all upon the subject, so that of course no steps had been taken.

Upon hearing the affair detailed to him, Sir Richard Blunt said—

"I regret this much, as it will put Todd in a fright and expedite his departure."

"But was he not going by the Hamburgh packet before day-dawn? At any rate, I understood you that by the manner in which you had dogged him, you had thoroughly ascertained that fact?"

"I had, but had taken steps to prevent him."

"You would arrest him to-night?"

"No, I do not think it advisable to arrest him just yet. The fact is, I do not know all that I want to know; but in order to stop him from leaving his shop to-night, I have caused the Hamburgh Captain Owners, to write to him, since he had taken a passage, telling him that the ships stores would not be ready until to-morrow, when at one hour before sunrise he would sail."

"Then you want to keep him in his shop another day?"

"I do. I hope and expect that during that day, something may occur to clear up the mystery that still attaches to the mode in which he commits his murders."

"It may so."

"I think I can take measures by running some little personal risk to make it do so; but something must be hit upon to calm his mind, regarding this affair at your house now, for he will expect nothing but instant arrest on its account."

"What can I do?"

"If you will be guided by me you will write Todd a letter, threatening him that if there is any more interference with Tobias, you will prosecute him, but that you will, if you hear no more of him at your house, say nothing of the past. You need be under no fear that he will derive any future advantage from such a promise, as any charge against him connected with poor Tobias will sink into insignificance, compared with other offences."

"True! true!"

"Such a letter, couched with the one concerning the non-departure of the ship, may keep him in his shop over to-morrow."

"And then—"

"Then he sleeps in Newgate, from which building he steps on to the scaffold."

"But has he not sent many trunks and packages to the ship?"

"Yes, and I have as regularly removed them all to the police-office at Bow Street. We have already some thousands of pounds worth of property of the most costly description."

"But Johanna? What is to become of her?"

"You may depend upon it that Todd will pursue the same course with her that he did with Tobias. He will give her a trifle of money, and tell her to get a night's lodging out; and in that case she knows where to come to be quite safe and comfortable. But if such should not be the case, my protecting arm is over her; I think I can almost defy Todd to do her any injury."

"Think you so?"

"Yes, I have made such arrangements that if she were missed only for ten minutes, Todd's house would be searched from top to bottom. I would not, for this right hand, that any harm should come to her."

"Nor I—nor I."

"Be at ease regarding her, colonel."

"I know how fully we may trust to you, and therefore I will be at ease regarding her; and I will at once write the letter to Todd you suggest to me."

"Do so. His fears upon your account must be calmed down."

The colonel accordingly wrote the necessary note to Todd. Of course, neither he nor Sir Richard Blunt knew that Todd had another reason for wishing to be off that night, which consisted in his great unwillingness to meet Mrs. Lovett in the morning; for it will be recollected that he had an appointment with that lady upon money matters at an early hour.

The reader is now fully aware of how matters stand, and will be able to comprehend easily the remarkable events which rapidly ensued upon this state of things, and therefore we can at once return to Todd.

We left him upon his door-step.

It was never Todd's custom to walk at once into his house as any one else would do upon their arrival, whose

> "Conscience was not redolent of guilt!"

but he would peep and pry about, and linger like a moth fluttering around a candle, or a rat smelling at some tempting morsel, which might be connected with some artfully contrived trap, before he entered.

He wanted sadly to get a peep at what Charley was doing.

Now, poor Johanna, fortunately at that moment, was only sitting before the little miserable fire, holding her face in her hands, and deeply thinking of the once happy past. She had brought out from beneath the counter the sleeve of a sailor's jacket, which she had found upon her

former examination of the shop, and after sprinkling it with some tears, for she fully believed it must have belonged to Mark Ingestrie, she had hidden it again.

And now as she sat in that house of murder all alone, she was picturing to herself every tone and look of her lover when he had first told her that he loved her before, as she might have said in the words of the old song—

> "He loved me, and he sped away
> Far o'er the raging sea,
> To seek the gems of other lands,
> And bring them all to me."

At that moment, with all external objects hidden from her perception she could almost fancy she could hear his voice as he had said to her —"My darling, I shall come back rich and prosperous, and we shall be happy."

Alas! how sadly had that dream ended. He who had escaped the perils of the deep—he who had successfully battled with the tempest, and all the perils by sea and by land incidental to the life he had embarked in, had returned miserably to perish, almost within hearing of her for whom he had adventured so much.

The thought was maddening!

"And I live!" she said; "I can live after that! Oh, Mark—Mark—I did not love you well enough, or I could not have existed so long after the horrible certainly of your fate has been revealed to me. They may say what they will to try to make me calmer and happier, but I know that he is Todd's victim."

After this she sat for a time in a kind of stupor, and it was during that interval that Todd arrived home.

There was no light in the shop but what at times came from a little flickering flame, that would splutter into a moment's brief existence in the fire; but Todd, as he glared through the upper portion of the half-

glass door at a spot where he knew the blind did not prevent him, could just see Johanna thus sitting.

"Humph!" he said. "The boy is quiet enough, and probably, after all, may suspect nothing; although I don't at all like his manner at times; yet it is safer to kill him before I go. It is absolute security. He shall help me to arrange everything to set the house on fire, and then when I have completed all my arrangements, it will be easy to knock him on the head."

With this he opened the door.

Johanna started.

"Well," said Todd, "well, any one been?"

"Only a man to be shaved, sir. I told him you would be home soon, but he could not wait, so he left."

"Let him leave and get shaved at the devil!" said Todd. "You are sure no one has been here peeping and prying, and asking questions which you would be quite delighted to answer, eh?"

"Peeping and prying, sir?"

"Yes, peeping and prying. You know the meaning of that. Don't put on a look of surprise at me. It won't do. I known what you boys are. Curse you all! Yes, I know what you are."

Johanna made no answer.

Todd took off his hat, and shook the rain from it violently. Then in a voice that made Johanna start again, he cried—

"Light the lamp, idiot!"

It was quite clear that the occurrences at the colonel's had not improved Todd's temper at all, and that upon very little pretext for it, he would have committed some act of violence, of which Johanna might be the victim. Anything short of that she could endure, but she had made up her mind that if even he so much as laid his hand upon her, her power of further patience would be gone, and she would be compelled to adopt

the means of summoning aid which had been pointed out to her by Sir Richard Blunt—namely, by casting something through the window into the street.

She lit the shop-lamp as quickly as she could.

"A lazy life you lead," said Todd. "A lazy life, indeed. Well, well," he added, softening his tone, "it don't matter—I shall polish you off for all that, Charley. What a pretty boy you are."

"Sir?"

"I say what a pretty boy you are. Why, you must have been your mamma's pet, that you must. I was. Ha! ha! Look at me, now. I was fondled and kissed once, and called a pretty boy. Ha!"

Johanna shuddered.

"Yes," added Todd, as he wiped himself down with a soiled towel, "yes, my mother used to make quite a pet of me. I often used to wish I was strong enough to throttle her! Ha! ha! That I did!"

"Throttle her, sir?"

"Yes," added Todd, fiercely. "What the devil did she bring me into the world for her own gratifications, unless she had plenty of money to give me that I might enjoy myself in it?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You don't know? Who the devil supposed you did know? Answer me that, you imp! Well, well, Charley, you and I won't quarrel about such matters. Come, my boy, I want you to be of use to me to-night."

"To-night, sir?"

"Yes, to-night. Is it broad daylight? Is the sun shining? Is there no such thing as night, under cover of which black deeds are done? Curse you! why do you ask if to-night is the time for action?"

"I will do your bidding, sir."

"Yes; and—Ah! who is this?"

"Is this here keg of turpentine for you?" said a man, with it upon his shoulder. "Mr. Todd's this is, ain't it?"

"Yes—yes. Put it down, my good fellow. You ought to have something to drink."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

"But you must pay for it yourself. There is a public-house opposite."

The man went away swearing; and scarcely had he crossed the threshold, when a letter was brought by a lad, and handed to Todd. Before he could ask any questions, the lad was gone.

Todd held the letter in his hand, and glared at the direction. It was to him, sure enough, and written in a very clerk-like hand, too. Before he could open it, some one hit the door a blow upon the outside, and it swung open.

"Is this Todd's, the barber?"

"Yes," said Johanna.

"Then give him that letter, little chap, will you?"

"Stop!" cried Todd. "Stop. Where do you come from, and who are you? Stop, you rascal. Will you stop? Confound you, I wish I had a razor at your throat."

CHAPTER LXXXVI.
TODD RECEIVES TWO EXTRAORDINARY LETTERS, AND ACTS UPON THEM.

Todd looked the picture of amazement.

"Two letters!" he muttered, "two letters to me, who seldom receive any? To me who have no acquaintances—no relations? Bah! It must be some mistake, or perhaps, after all, some infernal nonsense about the parish."

He tore open the last received one, and read as follows:—

"Colonel Jeffery informs Sweeney Todd that, although from a variety of reasons he may not think proper to prosecute him for his recent outrage at his house, he will, upon a repetition of such conduct, at once hand him over to the police."

Todd's countenance, during the perusal of this brief note, betrayed a variety of emotions; and when he had concluded it, he let it drop from his hands, and knitting his brows, he muttered—

"What does this mean?"

That there was—that there must be something much more than met the eye in this boasted clemency of the colonel towards him, he felt quite convinced; but what it was, he was puzzled to think for a time. At length, brightening up, he said—

"Yes, I have it. It is Tobias—it is Tobias. He cannot rid himself from the idea that I have some mysterious power of injuring his mother; and perhaps, after all, he may have made no disclosures to the colonel

injurious to me."

Comforted by this wide supposition, Todd picked up the letter again, and put it in his pocket carefully.

"It is as well," he said, "for I shall not now be hurried. No, I shall not be at all hurried now, which I might have been.—Charley."

"Yes, sir."

"Trim the lamp."

Johanna did so; and while the process was going on, Todd opened the other letter, it was as follows:—

> "Sir,—We beg to inform you that our Hamburgh vessel in which you have done us the favour to take passage, will not sail until to-morrow night at four, God willing, and that consequently there will be no occasion for your coming on board earlier.—We are, sir,
>
> "Your obedient servants,
>
> "Brown, Buggins, Muggs, and Screamer."
>
> "To Mr. S. Todd."

Todd ground his teeth together in a horrible manner. He dashed the letter to the floor, and stamped upon it.

"Curse Brown and Buggins!" he cried. "I only wish I could dash out Muggs and Screamer's brains with Brown and Buggins's skulls. Confound them and their ships. May they all go to the bottom when I am out of them, and be smashed and d—d!"

Johanna was amazed at this sudden torrent of wrath. She could not imagine what had produced it, for Todd had read the letter in a muttering tone, that effectually prevented her from hearing any of it.

Suddenly he rose and rushed into the back room, and bolted the door upon himself. He went to think what was best to be done.

When he was alone he read both the letters again, and then he burst out into such a torrent of wrath against the ship-owners, that it was a mercy Johanna's ears were spared the dreadful words that came from his lips.

Suddenly he saw a postscript at the foot of the ship-owner's letter, which he had at first overlooked.

> "P. S.—The ship is removed to Crimmins's Wharf, but will be at her old moorings at time mentioned above."

"D—n Crimmins and his wharf, too!" cried Todd.

He flung himself into a chair, and sat for a time profoundly still. During that period he tried to make up his mind as to what it would be best for him, under the circumstances, to do. Many plans floated through his imagination. He could not for a long time bring himself to believe that the letter of the colonel's was anything but a feint to throw him off his guard in some way.

At length he got into a calmer frame of mind.

"Shall I leave at once, or stay till to-morrow night, that is the question?"

He argued this with himself, pro and con.

If he left he would have to secret himself somewhere all the following day, and the fact of his having left would make an active search, safe to be instituted for him, which would possibly be successful. Besides, how was he to conveniently set fire to his house, unless he was off on the moment that the flames burst forth?

Then if he stayed he had Mrs. Lovett to encounter, but that was all; and surely he could put her off for a few hours? Surely she, of all people in the world, was not to run to a police-office and destroy both him and herself, just because she did not get some money at ten o'clock that he had promised to hand to her.

"She shall be put off," he said, suddenly, "and I will stay over to-morrow. I am safer here than anywhere else, of that I feel assured. If there are any suspicious whisperings about me at all, they will grow to loud clamours the moment I am gone, and then they may reach the ears of these ship-owners, and they may say at once, 'Why we have such a man with a passage taken in one of our Hamburgh ships.' Let them say that when

the ship is some twenty hours gone with me on board, and I don't care; but with me on land, and the ship only to sail, instead of having actually sailed, it is quite a different matter."

He rose from his seat. His mind was made up. He had not quite decided what he should say to Mrs. Lovett, but he had decided upon staying.

"Charley will live another day," he muttered; "but to-morrow night he dies, and his body will be consumed with this house, and, I hope, a good part of Fleet-street. It will not be prudent to get him to assist now in disposing the combustibles to fire the house. He might speak of it before to-morrow night."

Todd came out into the shop.

"Charley, my boy!" How kindly he spoke!

"I am here, sir."

"You must not mind what I say when I am vexed. Many things happen to put me out of the way. Sometimes people that I have done I don't know how much for, turn out to be very ungrateful, and then I get chafed, you see, Charley."

"Yes, sir, no doubt."

"But, after I have retired to the parlour and prayed a little, my mind soon recovers its usual religious tone, and its wonted serenity; and for the sake of the Almighty, who, you know, is good to us all, Charley, I forgive all that is done to me, and pray for the wicked."

Johanna shuddered. This hypocrisy sounded awful to her.

"Never go to rest, Charley, without saying your prayers. There's threepence for you. You can get yourself a bed in the neighbourhood for that amount somewhere, I daresay. I am very sorry I cannot accommodate you here, Charley. Now go away, and let me have you here by seven in the morning; and mind, above all things, cultivate a religious spirit, and do unto your neighbours as you would that your neighbours should do unto you."

Johanna could not reply.

"Here is a tract that you can read before you go to sleep, if they allow you a candle, when you get a-bed. It is entitled 'Groans of Grace, or the Sinner Sifted,' a most godly production, from a pious bookseller in Paternoster-row, Charley."

"Yes," Johanna just managed to say.

"Now you may go."

She darted from the shop.

"Hilloa! hilloa! Stop—stop, Charley! Stop—stop, will you? Confound you, stop! The infernal shutters are not up. Do you hear? I forgot them."

Todd rushed to his door. He looked right and left, and over the way, and, in fact, everywhere, but no Charley was to be seen. The fact is, that Johanna, the moment she felt herself released from the shop, had darted over the way, and into the fruiterers, where she had found so friendly a welcome before, and all this was done in such a moment, that she was housed before Todd could get his shop-door open.

"Welcome!" said a voice.

She found it proceeded from the fruiterer's daughter, who had behaved so kindly to her.

Johanna burst into tears.

"What has happened?—what has happened?" cried the young girl.

"Nothing, now," said Johanna. "But I cannot keep up longer than when I am in that shop. As soon as I am fairly out of the presence of that dreadful man, I feel ready to faint."

"Be of good cheer," said a deep-toned voice.

She looked up, and saw Sir Richard Blunt.

"You here, sir?"

"Yes, Johanna. I have been now for some time watching Todd's shop from our friend's first-floor window. I saw you dart across the road, and for the moment feared something had gone wrong. Did Todd get two letters?"

"He did."

"They will, I hope, keep him quiet until another night. Dare you go back again, Johanna, to that place?"

"Yes, if it be necessary; but he has told me to sleep out, and the gust of pleasure I felt at the permission, almost, I fear, betrayed me."

"He came to the door and looked furiously after you, but he did not see which way you had come. You were over here like a flash of light."

"He would have had me back again, then?—What could that be for?"

"At all events, you shall not go until the morning, and not then, unless after a night's rest here, you feel that you can do so with a good heart."

"Oh yes, I will fulfil my mission."

"Todd is putting up his shutters," said the fruiterer, as he came in from his front shop.

"Ah, then the secret is out," said Sir Richard Blunt. "That is what he wanted you back for, Johanna. He had forgotten at the moment all about the shutters you may depend. I am glad he spared you the trouble, at any rate. I do not like you to perform any service for such a rank villain as he is."

"It would not have been for him, sir."

"For who, then?"

"For the dead. I feel that I am bound to bring to justice the murderer of Mark Ingestrie. When I was here last, sir, you strove to comfort me, by making me feel a sort of hope that he was not dead, but I cannot think that—I would that I could, but indeed I cannot, sir."

"Do not be too sure, Johanna."

"Nay, look at that."

She laid before the magistrate the sleeve of the jacket that she had found at Todd's, and which fancy, for she certainly had no proof that way tending, told her had belonged to Mark Ingestrie.

"What is this?"

"Look at it, sir. My heart tells me it was his!"

"And so you suppose there was never but one sailor's jacket with ivory buttons on the wrist in the world, and never any one who wore one, but Mark Ingestrie?"

"Nay, the place in which it was found brings conviction."

"Not at all. Do you forget there was such a person as Thornhill in the world, Johanna?"

"No; but why will every one persist in fancying Thornhill and Ingestrie to be two persons, when I am convinced they were but one? Let who will identify this as part of Thornhill's apparel, and I will weep for Mark."

"I cannot just now shake this supposition."

"You never will."

"If I live I will, Johanna, I give you my word for so much. Pray who is the best to judge of such things? You, a young girl who have seen little or nothing of the world, and whose natural apprehension is rendered obscure by the conflict of your affections, or I whose business it is to come to an accurate conclusion of such matters? I repeat my conviction, that Thornhill was not Mark Ingestrie."

"Oh, if I could think so!"

"You will."

"You have no doubt, sir, but Thornhill perished by the hand of Todd?"

"None whatever."

Johanna looked deeply affected.

"Come," added Sir Richard, "you want both rest and refreshment, and you can have both here at this house. To-morrow I hope will end all your trials, my dear girl, and I shall live, I trust, to see you smile as you ought to smile, and to be as happy as only a very dim recollection of the past will make you."

"Ah, no—never happy."

"You must love some one. You must recover, and in the cares and joys of a new existence, you must only look back upon what has passed, as though you pondered upon the phantasma of some fearful dream; and when you see all around you smiling—"

"It will be cruel for them to smile, sir; and it is now cruel of you to speak to me of loving another, when you know my affections are with Ingestrie, in that world to which he has gone before me, but to which I look forward to as the place of our happy meeting, where we shall part again no more."

"Well, I thought I could find you a lover that would be to your mind when all these affairs were over."

"Sir?"

"Nay, be not offended. You know I am your sincere friend."

"I know you are, and that is what makes it so grievous to me to hear you talk in such a strain, sir."

"Then I will say no more."

"I thank you, Sir Richard; and I will forget what you have said, because I will recollect nothing from you, or committed with you, but kindness and consideration."

Sir Richard smiled slightly for a moment, as he turned aside and spoke to his friend the fruiterer for some minutes in a low tone. The young girl who had before behaved with such kindness to Johanna, took her by the hand, and led her up-stairs.

"Come," she said, "you shall tell me all you have suffered opposite since we parted last, and I will speak to you of him whom you love."

"You are too good to me."

While all this was going on so close to him, Todd, with many oaths and execrations, was putting up his own shutters, which he did with a violence that nearly knocked the front of the window in. When he had finished, he walked into his house, and closing the door, he said, in a low tone—

"I must make up my mind what to say to Mrs. Lovett in the morning. I am afraid she will be hard to pacify."

At this moment a man peered out from the inn gateway opposite, and said to himself—

"Now begins my watch. I dare say now Mrs. Lovett has some particular reason for watching this barber, though she did not tell me. However, a guinea for one night's work is not bad pay."

CHAPTER LXXXVII.
MR. LUPIN MEDDLES WITH OTHER FOLKS' AFFAIRS.

"Brother Oakley, is sister Oakley within?"

This rather cool speech—cool considering all the circumstances—was uttered by no other than the Reverend Mr. Lupin to Mr. Oakley, who was working in his shop on the morning after Johanna had gone upon her perilous enterprise to Todd's.

Mr. Oakley looked up with surprise upon his features.

"What?" he said.

"Is sister Oakley within, brother?"

"Don't call me brother, you canting hypocrite. How do you make out any such relationship, I should like to know?"

"Are we not all brothers in the Lord?"

"Pho! Go along."

"Nay, brother Oakley, my coming to you upon this day hath, in good truth, a meaning."

As he said these words, the countenance of the pious man had upon it a malignant expression, and there was a twinkle about his eyes, which said as plainly as possible, "And that meaning is mischief!" Old Oakley looked at him for some few seconds, and then he said—

"Hark you, Mr. Lupin, you have already meddled too much in my affairs, and I desire now that you will be so good as to leave them alone."

"Humph! brother Oakley, what I have to say, concerns thee to hear, but I would rather say it to thy wife, who is a sister in the faith, and assuredly one of the elect, than I would say it to you, who will assuredly go to a warm place below for your want of faith; so I say again, is sister Oakley within?"

"If you mean my wife," replied the old spectacle-maker, "I am sorry to say that nobody knows less of her going out and coming home than I do."

"Truly, she frequents the Tabernacle of the Lord, called Ebenezer, where we all put up a hearty and moving prayer for you."

"Nobody asks you. I believe you are a set of rascals."

"How pleasant this is."

"What is pleasant?"

"To be nailed. How charming it is for the friends of Satan to call the Saints hard names. Brother Oakley, you are lost, indeed."

"If you call me brother again, you shall be lost, Mr. Lupin. I tell you once for all, I don't know anything of my wife's going out or coming home, and I don't want to see you in my shop any more. If it were not for one person in this world, and that one an angel, if ever one lived upon the earth, I should not care how soon my head was laid low."

"Humph! brother Oakley! Humph!"

Oakley caught up a file to throw at the head of the hypocrite, but there was such an expression of triumph upon his face, that the heart of the old spectacle-maker sunk within him as he thought to himself, "This man brings ill news, or he would never look as he does." The file dropped from his hands, and pushing his spectacles up to the top of his head, he glared at Lupin as he said—

"Speak—speak! What have you to say?"

"Humph!"

"Speak man, if you be a man!"

"Humph, brother Oakley; you have a daughter—Johanna?"

"Yes, yes!" cried old Oakley. "My heart told me that it was of my child this wretch came to speak. Tell me all instantly. Speak—what of my dear Johanna? I will wrest the truth from you. Has anything happened—is she well? Speak—speak!"

Mr. Oakley sprang upon the preacher, and seizing him by the throat, forced him back until he fell upon an old chest in the shop that was full of tools and the lid of which giving way with Lupin's weight and the sudden concussion with which he came upon it, precipitated him into the box among a number of pointed implements, the effect of which may be better imagined than described, as the newspapers say.

"Murder! murder!" screamed the preacher.

"Now you rascal!" cried old Oakley. "Say what you have got to say, and at once, too."

"Murder!" again gasped Lupin. "Brother Oakley, spare my life."

"I will not spare it if you are not quite explicit as regards what you have hinted of my child. Speak at once. Tell me what you have to say?"

"Let me get up. Oh, be merciful, and let me get up."

"No. You can stay very well where you are. Be quiet and speak freely, in which case no harm will come to you."

"Did you say, be quiet, brother Oakley? Truly you would be anything but quiet in my situation. What induces you to keep all your tools in this chest with the points uppermost?"

"You are trying to prevaricate now," said Oakley, suddenly snatching from the wall of his shop an antique sword, that had hung there as a sort of ornament, not entirely inconsistent with his trade. "You are trying to

prevaricate with me now, and I must and will have your life. Prepare for the worst. You have now aroused feelings that cannot be so easily quelled again. Your last hour has come!"

The sight of the sword awakened the most lively feelings of terror in the mind of the preacher. He gave a howl of dismay, and made the most frantic efforts to get up out of the tool-chest; but that was no easy matter, particularly as old Oakley flourished the antique sword in dangerous proximity to his nose. At length, lifting up his hands in the most supplicating manner, he cried—

"Mercy—mercy, and I will tell."

"Go on, then. Quick."

"Yes—yes. Oh, dear! Yes. I was sojourning in this ungodly city, and taking my way, deep in thought, upon the wickedness of the world, the greater portion of the inhabitants of which will assuredly go down below, where there is howling and—"

"You rascal, I'll make you howl if you do not come to the point quickly."

A flourish of the sword, so close to the face of Mr. Lupin that he really believed for the moment it had taken the end of his nose off, admonished him that the patience of Mr. Oakley was nearly exhausted, and in a whining tone, he added—

"Truly, I was in the street called Fleet-street; when as I was crossing the way, a young lad nearly upset me into the kennel. He did not see me, but I saw him. Truly, brother Oakley, I saw the face of that—that individual."

"Well, what is that to me? I ask you what is he to me? Go on."

"Oh, oh, oh! Don't say I have not prepared you for the worst. Oh, oh, oh! Now, brother Oakley, I will tell you, even although it provoke an abundance of wrath. That boy—that individual who nearly overthrew me, one of the elect as I am, into the kennel, had the face of your daughter, Johanna."

The spectacle-maker looked confused, as well he might.

"The face of my daughter, Johanna?" he said. "What do you mean? Is all this cock-and-a-bull story about some boy in the street, who happened in your eyes to bear a resemblance to my child?"

"Humph! Ay, truly. Humph! so striking a resemblance, that sitting here, even as I am upon the points of many instruments of steel and of iron, I aver that that boy was Johanna Oakley."

Oakley staggered back, and the antique sword dropped from his hand, a proceeding which Mr. Lupin proffited sufficiently by to scramble out of the tool-chest, and make towards the door. In another moment he would have left the shop, for he had done all the mischief he could, by telling the anxious father such a tale, but suddenly Oakley snatched the sword from the floor again, and rushing after Mr. Lupin, he caught him by the skirts at the very nick of time, and dragged him into the shop again. Holding then the sword to his throat, he said—

"Scoundrel! How dare you come and tell me such a thing? Your life, your worthless life, ought to pay the penalty of such an odious falsehood."

"No, no!" cried Lupin falling upon his knees, for he saw the sword uplifted. "No! What if it be true? What if it be true?"

The old man's hands shook, and the point of the sword which had been in most dreadful proximity to Mr. Lupin's throat, was gradually lowered until it touched the floor.

"Tell me again—tell me again!" gasped Oakley.

The preacher saw that his danger was over, and rising, he took a handkerchief from his pocket, and began deliberately to dust his knees, as he said in a low snuffling voice—

"Truly, you are a vessel of wrath, brother Oakley."

"Stop!" cried Oakley. "I have told you before not to call me brother: I have no fellowship or brotherhood with you. Do not tempt me to more violence by the use of that word."

"Let it be as you please," said Lupin, "but as regards the maiden, who for a surety is fair to look upon, although all flesh is grass, and beauty waneth after a season—"

"I want none of your canting reflections. To your tale. When and where was it that you saw my child?"

"In the street called Fleet, as I and all of us are sinners. She wore nether garments suitable and conformable unto a boy, but not to a girl, as the way of the world goeth; and yet she looked comely did the maiden—ay, very comely. I was moved to see her truly. Her eyes there was no mistaking, and her lips—Ay, it was the maiden; but after sitting in the kennel for one moment into which I fell, and getting up again amid the laughter of the ungodly bystanders, I found that she was gone."

"And so you have come on to me with this monstrous tale?"

"Monstrous tail?" said Mr. Lupin, turning round as though he expected to find such an appendage flourishing behind him. "I am not aware—"

The old spectacle-maker staggered into a seat, and holding his hands clasped before him for a few moments, he strove to think calmly of what had been told to him.

The preacher was not slow in taking advantage of this condition into which Mr. Oakley fell, to protect himself against any further danger from the sword. He picked up that weapon from the floor, and not finding any place readily in the shop where he might effectually hide it, he held it behind his back, and finally thrust the long blade of it between his coat and his waistcoat, where he thought it was to be sure wonderfully well hidden. He did not calculate that the point projected above his coat-collar and his head some six inches or so, presenting a very singular appearance indeed.

He then waited for Oakley to speak, for to tell the truth, the curiosity of Lupin was strongly excited concerning Johanna, as well as his sense of enjoyment, tickled by the distress of the father whom he considered his enemy.

After this he waited patiently enough to see what course the afflicted man would pursue, and, indeed, the whole conduct of Lupin was most convincing of the fact, that he entertained no doubt whatever as to the identity of the supposed boy he had seen in Fleet Street. The time at which he had seen Johanna, must have been when she ran over the road from Todd's shop, and took refuge in the fruiterer's.

Well, then, poor Mr. Oakley was trying to think. He was trying to convince himself that it could not possibly have been Johanna who had been seen by the preacher; but then there was still present to his mind, the impression that had been made upon it by the singular manner in which she had bidden him adieu upon the last occasion of his seeing her. He remembered how she had come back, after leaving the shop with her young friend, Arabella Wilmot, and how then, with a burst of feeling, she had taken of him a second farewell.

No wonder then that, by combining that with the information Lupin had brought, the father found enough to shudder at; and he did shudder.

Mr. Lupin watched him attentively.

Suddenly rising, with a face pale as death itself, Oakley advanced to Lupin, and laying his hand upon his breast, he said to him—

"Man, I suspect that there is much hypocrisy in your nature. It may be unjust to do so—it may be that I am doing you a wrong, but yet I do think in my heart that you are one of those who adopt the garb and the language of piety for the selfish purposes of human nature. And yet you must have some feeling: at the bottom of even such a heart as yours, there must be some touch of humanity; and by that I conjure you to say if you have told the truth to me in this matter concerning my child."

"I have," said Lupin.

"If you have not, I will say nothing to you, I will be guilty of no attempt at revengeful violence. Only tell me so, and you shall go in peace."

"What I have told you of the maiden is true," said Lupin. "I saw her—with these eyes I saw her."

The spectacle-maker slipped off his working apron and the black sleeves he wore over his coat to protect it from the dust and other destructive matters incidental to his work-bench, and then he snatched his hat from a peg upon which it hung in the shop.

"Come," he said. "Come. You and I will walk together to the house, where I was told Johanna was to be; and if I do not find her there, I will thank you for the information you have given to me. I will not stop to inquire what were your motives in giving it, but I will thank you for it. Come. Come with me."

"Truly I will come with you," said Lupin, "for I am curious—that is to say, I am in a religious point of view, anxious to know what has become of the maiden, who was so fair to look upon always, although she had not a godly spirit."

Oakley locked up his shop, and put the key in his pocket. Then taking the preacher by the arm, he set off at a fast pace for the house of Arabella Wilmot.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.
TODD ASTONISHES MRS. LOVETT'S SPY.

We return to Todd. After he had put up his own shutters, and properly secured his doors for the night, he lit the lamp in his parlour, and glancing curiously around him, he muttered—

"Yes. This will assuredly be the last night here. How I hate the look of anything, and how eagerly I shall banish from my mind all kind of remembrance of this place when I am in another land, as I shall be shortly. Let me see: I will embrace the catholic religion, and I will be most devout. The regularity of my religious exercises shall do much for me. Indeed, I do not think I could have remained so long in London, if I had not had the prudence to be regular at the church. It is true that of late I have neglected all that, but then I am going soon, and it does not matter."

Todd sat down, and looked over the memoranda of things he had to do that he had made. He felt tolerably satisfied with the condition of affairs. That Colonel Jeffery and that others suspected him, he could not doubt; but he felt quite confident that he should be far off, before those suspicions repaired into anything dangerous to him.

He still clung to the idea that they knew nothing, or else they would arrest him; and while such did not ensue, he considered himself as in a tolerably safe position.

He then set about the preparations for firing his house. We need not follow him through those preparations. We need not state how he soaked clothes in turpentine and oil, and how he placed them in such

positions, combined with small packages of gunpowder, and lumps of rosin, that if a torch were to be applied at the lower part of the house, the whole would be in a few moments in a blaze. Suffice it to say, that Todd worked hard for the next two hours, and that by the time they had gone, he had got everything ready for the perpetration of that last crime which he intended to commit, before he crossed the threshold of his house upon the following night, to leave it for ever.

Todd Preparing Combustibles To Fire His House.

Todd Preparing Combustibles To Fire His House.

More than once during these two hours he drank brandy. The ardent spirit had become necessary to the existence of Todd now; and when he took a draught at the conclusion of his labours, he smiled grimly as he said—

"Charley Green will have quite a funeral of flame. He shall die, and his body shall be consumed in the blazing fragments of this house, and it will go hard but this side of Fleet Street suffers. Oh, if the flames would only spread to the old church, I should rejoice much at that, and they may do so.—Yes, they may do so. Ha! ha! I shall be remembered in London."

As he spoke, a dull heavy sort of sound at the outer door of his house came upon his ears. It was as though something heavy had been thrown against it. With fear expressed upon every feature of his face, Todd listened for a repetition of the sound.

It did not come again.

Todd began to breathe a little more freely, and yet he kept asking himself —"What was it?"—and the utmost powers of his imagination could return him no feasible answer to the interesting inquiry. But nothing was more easy than to go to the door and see if any one was there, or if anything had happened to it. Should he open it for such a purpose?

Should he unbar and unbolt at the risk of he knew not what? No: he would, from the first floor balcony, and there was a frail one, reconnoitre the street. He should then be easily able to see if there were any danger.

He had no sooner made this determination, than he carried it out, by ascending the dark blackened staircase, conducting to the upper part of his house, that staircase which was now so completely covered by combustible materials.

At every few steps he took he listened attentively. He thought there might yet be a repetition of the sound; but no—all was still; and by the time he reached his first floor, he was in some sort recovered from his first fright. That was something. He left his light upon the stair-head, for he had no wish to point himself out to the chance passengers in Fleet Street, or perhaps to some enemy, by going into that room with a light in his hand. No, Todd was much too acute for that; so carefully closing the door, so that no ray of light got in from the staircase, he crept to the window.

The shutters had to be unfastened, for Todd's house was always carefully closed up like the Duke of Wellington's at the present day. He very quickly unclosed one of the long-disused windows, and opening it gently, looked out over the edge of the little crazy balcony into the street.

Something big and black was against his door.

The more Todd bent his gaze upon this object, the more a kind of undefined terror took possession of him, and the more puzzled he was to give a name to the dark mass that had been laid upon his threshold. There was no lamp very near his house, or else, miserable as was the light from those old oil apologies for illuminators, some few rays might have fallen upon the dark mass, and told Todd what it was.

But no—all was dark and dubious, and he strained his eyes in vain to penetrate the mystery.

"I must go down," he said; "I must open the door. Yes, I cannot live and not know what this is. I must open the door, however reluctantly, and ascertain precisely. Ah!"

While Todd was talking, and still keeping his eyes fixed upon the mysterious object at his door, he saw suddenly in the midst of it a bright luminous spark, as if something connected with it was of a red heat, and slowly smouldering on fire.

If he was before puzzled to account for the phenomenon of a dark object, without shape or form, lying propped up against his door, he was now more than ever confounded, and his imagination started some of the most improbable conjectures in the world, to account for the appearance.

He thought that it must be some combustible, which, in the course of a few moments, would go off with a stunning report, and blow his street-door to atoms; but then again, what could be the object of such a thing?

The more he considered the affair from above, the more he was puzzled and terrified; so at last, with a feeling of desperation, he ran down stairs and began to unfasten the street-door. He did not pause in his work until he had flung it open, and then the mystery was explained.

A man, half asleep, with a lighted pipe in his mouth, rolled backwards into the shop; and as he did so, with the dreamy half-consciousness that he was upon some sort of duty, he said—

"I'll watch him, Mrs. Lovett. He shan't get away without your knowing of it, ma'am."

Todd understood the man's errand in a moment. Of course he had been employed to watch him by Mrs. Lovett, who had a slight idea that he might not be forthcoming for the promised morning settlement. Todd seized the man by the collar, and dragging him fairly into the shop, closed the door again.

"Ah!" he said, "a good joke."

"What's a joke, sir?" said the man. "What's a joke? Murder! Where am I? —where am I? Help!"

"Hush!" said Todd. "Hush! It's of no consequence. I know all about it man. Mrs. Lovett employed you to watch me. She was a little jealous, but we have made it all right now, and she asked me, if I saw you, to pay you and give you a glass of something, beside."

"Did she, sir?"

"To be sure she did; so come in, and you can tell her when you see her in the morning, that you had of me a glass of as good liquor as could be found in London. By-the-bye, what am I to pay you?"

"A guinea, sir."

"Exactly. It was a guinea, of course. This way, my friend, this way. Don't fall over the shaving-chair, I beg of you. You can't hurt it, for it is a fixture; but you might hurt yourself, and that is of more importance to you, you know. While we do live in this world, if it be for ever so short a time, we may as well live comfortably."

Talking away thus all suspicion from the man who was not one of the brightest of geniuses in the world, Todd led the way to the parlour—that fatal parlour which had been the last scene of more than one mortal life.

He closed the door, and then in quite a good-humoured way, he pointed to the seat, saying—

"Rest yourself, my friend—rest yourself, while I get out the bottle. And so it is one guinea that I am to give you, eh?"

"Yes, sir; and all I can say is that I am very glad to hear that you and Mrs. Lovett have made matters all right again. Very glad, indeed, sir, I may say. In course, I shouldn't have took the liberty of sitting down by your door, sir, if she had not told me to watch the house and let her know, if so, be as you come out of it, or if I saw any packages moving. She didn't say anything to me what it was for; but a guinea is just as well earned easy as not, you see, sir!"

"Certainly, my friend, certainly. Drink that."

The man tossed off the glass of something that Todd gave him, and then he licked his lips, as he said—

"What is it, sir? It's strong, but I can't say, for my part, that I like the flavour of it much."

"Not like it?"

"Not much, sir."

"Why it's a most expensive foreign liquor that is, and by all the best judges in the kingdom is never found fault with. Very few persons, indeed, have tasted it; but of those few, not one has come to me to say, Mr. Todd—"

"Good God!" said the man, as he clasped his head with both of his hands. "Good God, how strange I feel. I must be going mad!"

"Mad!" cried Todd, as he leant far over the table so as to bring his face quite close to the man's. "Mad! not at all. What you feel now is part of your death-pang. You are dying—I have poisoned you. Do you hear that? You have watched me, and I have in return poisoned you. Do you understand that?"

Todd Poisons Mrs. Lovett's Spy And Tells Him Of It.

Todd Poisons Mrs. Lovett's Spy And Tells Him Of It.

The dying man made an ineffectual effort to rise from the chair, but he could not. With a gasping sob he let his head sink upon his breast—he was dead!

"They perish," said Todd, "one by one; they who oppose me, perish, and so shall they all. Ha! so shall they all; and she who set this fool on to his destruction shall feel, yet, the pang of death, and know that she owes it

to me! Yes, Mrs. Lovett, yes."

He closed his arms over his breast, and looked at the body for some moments in silence; and then, with a sneer upon his lips, he added—

"No, Mrs. Lovett, you did not show your judgment in this matter. Had you wished to watch me, you should have done it yourself, and not employed this poor weak wretch who has paid the price of his folly. Go—go!"

He struck the chair from under the dead man with his foot, and the corpse that had partially been supported by it and the table, fell to the floor. Another kick sent it under the large table, and then, as another of Todd's victims had once done, it disappeared.

"To-morrow night, by this time," said Todd, musingly, "where shall I be!"

CHAPTER LXXXIX.
MR. OAKLEY IS IN DESPAIR AT THE LOSS OF JOHANNA.

The anxiety of poor Mr. Oakley increased each moment as he and the preacher neared the house of Arabella Wilmot's friends. We regret to say that Mr. Lupin did enjoy the mental agony of the father; but it was in his nature so to do, and we must take poor humanity as we find it.

It must be recollected that Mr. Lupin had, through Johanna, suffered great malefactions. The treatment he had received at the hands of Big Ben, although most richly deserved, had been on account of Johanna, and as regarded the old spectacle-maker himself, he had always occupied an antagonistic position as regarded Mr. Lupin.

No wonder then, we say, that human nature, particularly in its evangelical variety, was not proof against the fascination of a little revenge. Now, Mr. Lupin felt so sure that he had made no mistake, but that it was no other than the fair Johanna whom he had seen in what he called the unseemly apparel, that he did not feel inclined to draw back for a moment in the matter. Curiosity, as well as a natural (to him) feeling of malignity, urged him to stick by the father in order that he might know the result of inquiries that he, Lupin, had no opportunity or excuse for making, but which Mr. Oakley might institute with the most perfect and unquestionable profundity.

As we have before had occasion to remark, the distance between Oakley's shop and the residence of the friends of Arabella was but short, so that, at the speed which the excited feelings of the fond father induced

him to adopt, he soon stood upon the threshold of the residence, beneath the roof of which he hoped, notwithstanding the news so confidently brought by Lupin, to find his much-loved, idolized child.

"You shall see," he said to Lupin, catching his breath as he spoke; "you shall see how very wrong you are."

"Humph!" said Lupin.

"You shall see," continued poor Oakley, still dallying with the knocker; "you shall see what an error you have made, and how impossible it is that my child—my good and kind Johanna—could be the person you saw in Fleet-street."

"Ah!" said Lupin.

Mr. Oakley knocked at the door, and, as one of the family had seen him through the blinds of the parlour-window, he was at once admitted, and kindly received by those who knew him and his worth well. He asked, in an odd gasping manner, that Mr. Lupin might have permission to come in, which was readily granted; and with a solemn air, shaking his head at the vanities he saw in the shape of some profane statuary in the hall, the preacher followed Oakley to the dining-room.

It was an aunt of Arabella's to whom they were introduced, and, with a smile, she said—

"Really, Mr. Oakley, a visit from you is such a rarity that we ought not to know how to make enough of you when you do come. Why, it must have been Christmas twelvemonths since you were last beneath this roof. Don't you remember when your dear, good, pretty Johanna won all hearts?"

"Yes, yes," said Oakley, glancing triumphantly at Lupin. "My dear child, whom all the world loves—God bless her!—She is pure, and good, and faultless as an angel."

"That, Mr. Oakley," said the lady, "I believe she is. We are as fond of her here, and always as glad to see her, as though she belonged to us. Indeed, we quite envy you such a treasure as she is."

Tears gushed into the grateful father's eyes, as he heard his child—his own Johanna—she who reigned all alone in his heart, and yet filled it so completely—so spoken of. How glad he was that there was some one besides himself present to hear all that, although that one was an enemy! With what a triumphant glance he looked around him.

"Humph!" said Lupin.

That humph recalled Oakley to the business of his visit, and yet how hot and parched his lips got, when he would have framed the all-important question, "Is my child here?"—and how he shook, and gasped for breath a moment before he could speak.

At length, he found courage—*not* to ask if Johanna was there. No—no. He felt that he dared not doubt that. It would have been madness to doubt it, sheer insanity. So he put the question indirectly, and he contrived to say—

"I hope the two girls are quite well, quite—quite—well."

"Two girls!" said the aunt. "Two girls!"

"Yes," gasped Oakley. "Johanna and Arabella, you know—your Arabella, and my Johanna—my child."

"You ought to know, Mr. Oakley, considering that they are at your house, you know. I hope that neither of them have been at all indisposed? Surely that is not the case, and this is not your strange way of breaking it to us, Mr. Oakley?"

The bereaved father—yes, at that moment he felt that he was a bereaved father—clutched the arms of the chair upon which he sat, and his face turned of a ghastly paleness. He made an inarticulate effort to speak, but could only produce a strange gurgling noise.

"Gracious Heavens! he is ill," cried Arabella's aunt.

"No, madam," said Lupin. "He is only convinced."

"Convinced of what?"

"Of what he himself will tell you, madam."

"Help! help!" cried Oakley. "Help! My child—my Johanna—my beautiful child. Mercy—help. Give her to my arms again. Oh, no—no—no, she could not leave me thus. It is false—it is some desperate juggle! My child—my child, come once again to these arms.—God—God help me!"

Arabella's aunt rose in the greatest alarm, and rung the bell so sharply, that it brought everybody that was in the house to that room, and Mr. Lupin, when he saw what a congregation there was, rose up and said in a snuffling voice—

"Is there any objection to a prayer?"

"The greatest at present, sir," said Arabella's aunt. "Sir, there is a time for all things. The state of poor Mr. Oakley, now claims all our care. If you are his friend—"

At these words, Oakley appeared to shake off much of the prostrating effects of the first dreadful conviction, that what Lupin had told him was true, and he said—

"No—no, he is no friend—he is a bitter enemy. The enemy of my peace, and of my dear child. I am calmer now, and I demand—I implore, that that man be made to leave this house."

"Brother Oakley," said Lupin, "you brought me here."

"And I now command you hence. Begone, villain, begone; go and exult over the heart-broken father's grief; go and tell the tale where you will. You cannot move me now—go—go—go."

"Truly I will go presently, but first of all, I say to you, brother Oakley, hardened sinner as you are, repent. Down upon your knees all of you, and join me in prayer, that the unbelievers may roll upon billows of burning brimstone, and that—"

"Come," said a man, who happened to be in the house upon some domestic errand, "Mrs. Wilmot says you are to go, and go you shall. Come, be off—I know who you are. You are the rascal that married the

widow in Moorfields, but who, they say, has another wife in Liverpool. If you don't go, I shall give you in charge for bigamy, and the widow says she will spend her last penny in prosecuting you."

Mr. Lupin Unmasked.

Mr. Lupin Unmasked.

To meet any one half so well informed about his affairs, would have been a terrible blow to Mr. Lupin; but when he found that this man, who was a kind of jobbing cabinet-maker, knew so much, his great goggle eyes opened to an alarming width, and he made a movement towards the door. Still, he did not like to go without saying something.

"Flee, ye wretches," he said, "from the wrath to come! You will all go into the bottomless pit, you will, and I shall rejoice at it; and sing many songs of joy over you. Scoffers and mockers, I leave you all to your fate. The devil will have you all, and that is a great comfort and gratification to the elect and to the saints."

With this, Mr. Lupin made a precipitate retreat, having achieved about as little in the way of satisfying his curiosity as could very well be conceived.

It was a relief—a great relief to Mr. Oakley to be rid of such a witness to his feelings as Lupin; and when he had fairly gone, and the outer door was closed upon him, the spectacle-maker, with clasped hands, and countenance expressive of the greatest possible amount of mental agony, spoke—

"Dismiss all but ourselves, madam," he said. "There's that to say which may be said to you alone, but which it would break my heart to say to many."

The room was soon clear, and then Oakley continued in a low faltering voice to make those inquiries, each answer to which was so fatal to his peace of mind.

"Madam," he said, "is not my child—my Johanna—here staying on a visit with Arabella?"

"No, no—certainly not."

This was so frightfully conclusive, that it was some few moments before he could go on; but when he did, he said—

"Is Arabella in the house?"

"That, Mr. Oakley," replied the aunt, "is a question I cannot answer you at the moment; but rest and compose yourself for a few moments, and I will ascertain myself if she be in or out, and if the latter, when she was last seen."

"I am much beholden to you, madam. I am a poor old man, much broken in spirit, and with but one strong tie to bind me to a world which has nearly done with me. That tie is the love of my dear child, Johanna. Alas! if that be broken, I am all adrift, and at the mercy of the winds and waves of evil fortune; and the sooner I close my eyes in the long sleep of death, the better for me and all who feel for me."

"Nay, Mr. Oakley, I look upon it as a thing almost criminal to despair. There is one maxim which I have learnt in my experience of life, and which I am sure you must have had abundant opportunities of learning likewise. It is, 'Never to trust to appearances.'"

The old man looked at her with a saddened aspect. It was quite evident his feelings had been too strongly acted upon to make any philosophy available to him; and when she left the room to make the inquiries concerning Arabella, he wrung his hands, and wept.

"Yes," he said, "yes, I am indeed alone now—a wreck—a straw upon the ocean of society. The sooner I drift in the grave now, the better for me, and all who pity the old man. Oh, Johanna—Johanna. My child—my beautiful, why did you not wait until I was dead before you left me? Then I should have slept calmly, and known nothing; but now my days and nights will be dreams of horror."

The door opened and the aunt re-appeared.

"Arabella is not within," she said, "and has not been seen for some hours now. When last seen her manner was evidently perturbed. But now, Mr. Oakley, sit down by me and tell me as clearly and as distinctly, all you know and all you fear. There are few evils in this world but there are some remedies for, and you shall have my true and calm opinion if you will tell me all."

It is something astonishing, and yet one of the most ordinary of mental phenomena, to note what a power a cool and clear intellect will exert over one that is distracted and full of woe and clamorous grief. Mr. Oakley did sit down by the side of Arabella's aunt, and he told her all that happened the girl of which, of course, was the real or supposed appearance of Johanna in Fleet Street, in male attire. The collateral circumstances, such as the hurried and half frantic farewell of him in the shop by Johanna, and the misrepresentation by Arabella, that she (Johanna) was going to stop there, evidently made a deep impression upon the aunt. Her countenance changed visibly, as she said faintly—

"God help us all."

"Lost! lost," cried Oakley. "Yes, you—even you, hopeful as you were, and hopeful as you would fain have made me—even you, now that you know all, feel that she is lost. God, indeed, only can help me now."

"No, Mr. Oakley," said the aunt, rallying, "I will not yet trust to appearances, although I own that they are bad. I will come to no conclusion until I have seen Arabella, and got the truth from her. It is quite clear that there is some secret between the two young creatures. It is quite clear that there is something going on that we know nothing of, and to speculate upon which may only involve us in an inextricable labyrinth of conjectures. I say, there is some secret, but it may not be a guilty one."

"Not—not guilty?"

"No, Mr. Oakley, there are many degrees of indiscretion to pass through ere the gulf of guilt is reached at last. I have faith in Arabella—I have faith in Johanna; and even now, admitting for a moment the truth of

what that man whom you brought with you here, reports, Johanna may only have to be blamed for folly."

"Do—do you think he did so see her?"

"I doubt it much."

"Mother," said a lad of fifteen, coming hastily into the room. "Mother I —"

He paused upon seeing Mr. Oakley there, and stammered out some apology—

"He had only come to tell his mother that a whole suit of his clothes were missing from his room and that he could find them nowhere, and he could not make it out; and one of his hats was gone too, and a pair of shoes, and—"

Old Oakley fell back in his chair with a groan.

"She has them," he said. "She has them. My child, whom I shall never see again, has them."

CHAPTER XC.
MORNING IN FLEET STREET AGAIN.

Another day has dawned upon the great city—another sun has risen upon the iniquities of hosts of men, but upon no amount of cold-blooded, hardened, pitiless criminality that could come near to that of Sweeney Todd. No, he certainly held the position of being in London, then, the worst of the worst.

But who shall take upon himself now to say that in this pest-ridden, loyalty-mad, abuse-loving city of London, there are not some who are more than even Sweeney Todd's equals? Who shall say that hidden scenes of guilt and horror are not transacting all around us, that would, in their black iniquity, far transcend anything that Sweeney Todd has done or dreamt of doing? Let the imagination run riot in its fanciful conjectures of what human nature is capable of, and in London there shall be found those who will reduce to practice the worst frenzied deeds that can be conceived.

Yes, the dawn of another day had come, and Todd had made all his preparations. Nothing was wanting, but the match that was to set Fleet Street, he fondly hoped, in a blaze. His own house, he felt quite certain, could not escape. It would be a charred mass long before any effectual means could be procured to check the devastation of the flames, and then as the good ship spread its swelling sails to the wind to bear him to another shore, he should be lighted upon his way by the glare of the great fire in Fleet Street, that no one would be able to guess the origin of.

So he told himself.

Short-sighted mortals that we are! How little Todd, with all his cleverness—all his far-seeing thrift and fancy—dreamt of the volcano upon which he stood. How little he for one moment imagined it was possible that the sword of justice hung over him by so slender a thread. How he would have glared at any one who might have told him that he only moved about by sufferance; and yet such was the fact.

Sir Richard Blunt could put his hand upon him at any moment, and say, "Todd, you are my prisoner. To Newgate—to Newgate, from whence only you will emerge to your trial, and to the scaffold!"

No, Todd, good easy soul, had not the slightest idea of his real position upon that morning.

He waited rather impatiently for the arrival of Johanna to take down the shutters, and she urged upon Sir Richard Blunt and her friends at the fruiterer's, the propriety of her going and doing that morning piece of work; but they would not hear of it. She at length used an argument which made Sir Richard adopt another course than keeping her at the fruiterer's until Todd should get out of all patience and open his shop himself.

"It is possible," she said, "that I may be subjected to ill-usage if I am not there; and then being compelled to call for aid as I might, you would feel that you were forced to take Todd into custody before the time at which you have resolved so to do."

"That is true," said Sir Richard; and then, after some little consideration, he added, "I have a plan that will save you both ways. You shall be in time, and yet you shall not take down Todd's shutters."

They could none of them conceive at the moment how Sir Richard intended to manage this; but they quickly saw that it was easy enough. Opening just a little way one of the windows of the first floor at the fruiterer's, he blew a whistle that he had suspended round his neck by a small chain. In the course of a few moments, Crotchet walked into the shop.

"Governor here?" he said. "I heard him a chirping for me just now—didn't I?"

"Yes, Crotchet," said the fruiterer, who knew him quite well. "Step upstairs; you will find him there."

Crotchet was soon in the presence of Sir Richard, and Johanna, and the fruiterer's daughter. He made a rough sort of salute to the whole party, and then remarked again that he had heard the governor a chirping, he rather thought.

"Yes, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, "you're quite right. You know this young lady here?"—indicating Johanna.

"Reether!" said Crotchet.

"Well, then, you will seem to be passing Todd's shop when she commences taking down the shutters; and, seeing that they are too heavy for such a mere boy, you good-naturedly take them down for him—you understand? It is the last time that they will be taken down for Todd, I think."

"All's right," said Crotchet; "I understands—it's as good as done. Lord! what a scrouge there will be at the hanging o' that barber, to be sure, unless he manages to cheat the gallows; and I takes notice in my *hexperieace* as them 'ere wery bad 'uns seldom does try that 'ere game on, with all their bounce."

"Now, Miss Oakley," said Sir Richard Blunt, "I think, then, your time has come; and, as Crotchet will take down the shutters, you may as well go over at once. I think you thoroughly understand what you have to do—and if Todd asks you where you lodged, you had better say that the servants here offered to let you sleep by the kitchen fire, and you accepted the offer—for he may be watching for you now, and see you come out of this house, for all we know to the contrary. And now remember, without any reference to my plans or what I would rather do,

if you feel yourself, or fancy you feel yourself in the least danger, take the means I have pointed out to you of summoning aid, and aid will come to you."

"I will," said Johanna.

"Heaven speed you, then! This will be the last day, I think, of the career of that bold bad man. I intend to make such an effort to get under his house to-day, as I hope and expect will enable me to come at the grand secret, namely, of how he disposes of his victims so quickly—for that there is some wonderful jugglery in it, I am certain."

Johanna took a kind leave of the fruiterer's daughter, who had lavished upon her all those attentions which, in Johanna's position, became so precious from one of her own sex; and then, assuming a careless manner, with her hat put on in a boyish slovenly sort of way, she boldly crossed the road to Sweeney Todd's.

He had been watching through a hole in the upper part of one of the shutters. In a moment all sorts of ugly suspicions took possession of his mind. What could Charley Green, his errand-boy from Oxford, who knew no one, and was unknown to all London, doing at a tradesman's house in Fleet Street at such an hour in the morning? How came he to know the people of that house? How came he to dream of going there?

Todd was boiling with anger and curiosity when he opened the door and admitted Johanna, a thing that he was unmindful enough to do before she knocked for admission, which alone would have been amply sufficient to point out to her that she had been watched from some peep-hole in the house.

He stretched out his hand and dragged her in. He controlled his temper sufficiently to enable him to gratify his curiosity. He made quite certain that Charley Green would tell him some story of where he had been, which should not convict the fruiterer. By the light of a miserable candle that Todd had burning in the dark closed shop, he glared at Johanna.

"Well—well," he said. "A good night's rest, Charley?"

"Tolerable, sir!"

"Humph! ha! And did you find a place to sleep at cheaply and decently, my good lad, eh?"

"I was very fortunate indeed, sir."

"Oh, you were very fortunate indeed?"

"Yes, sir. I am, through being country bred I suppose, fond of fruit, so when I left you last night, I bought an apple at a shop opposite."

"Oh, at Mr. a—a—"

"I don't know the name, sir," said Johanna, "but I can run out and ascertain, I dare say."

Todd gave a low sort of growl. He did not know if he were being foiled by innocence or by art. With an impatient gesture, he added—

"Never mind the apples, I wish to know where you slept, Charley, that I may judge if it was a proper place, there are so many wicked people in London."

"Are there, sir?"

"Bah! Go on. Where did you sleep?"

"Well, sir, as there was a kind tempered-looking servant in the fruiterer's shop, I thought she might be able to tell me of some place where I could lodge, and when she had heard my story—"

"Story—story? What story?"

"How destitute I was, sir, and how kind you had been to employ me without a character, and how happy and contented I was in your service, sir. So when she had heard all that, she said, 'It is too late for you to go lodging-hunting to-night. There is an old bench in our kitchen, and if you like you may sleep on that.'"

Todd gave a growl.

"And so you slept there?"

"Yes, sir."

He paced the shop for some few moments in deep thought, knitting his brows and trying to make something out of what he had heard, contrary to what it seemed; but Johanna's story was too straightforward and simple for him to find any flaw in it, and after a few moments he felt compelled to admit to himself that it must be the truth. Turning to her with something of the amount of amiability one might expect from a bear, he said—

"Open the shop!"

"Yes, sir, directly."

Johanna propped the door wide open, and then having, by the dim light of the miserable candle, found a screw which fastened a bar across the shutters, she speedily released it, and then went into the street. At that moment Crotchet came along, whistling in so thoroughly careless a manner, that even Johanna thought he had forgotten his instructions and was about to pass the shop. She had her hand upon the bar when he stopped, saying, in an off-handed manner—

"Why little 'un, them 'ere shutters is too much for you, I'll give you a helping hand. Lor bless you, don't say anything about it. It ain't no sort o' trouble to me my little chap. Here goes."

Mr. Crotchet began opening Todd's shop with such a fury and a vengeance, that the clatter and the speed with which the operation was being accomplished, brought Todd out of the parlour to see what on earth Charley was about. When he saw Crotchet coming in with three shutters in his arms at once, he could scarcely believe his eyes, and he roared out—

"What's this? Who are you?"

"Easy—easy," said Crotchet. "Don't get in the way old gentleman. Easy. There now!"

Crotchet managed to give Todd such a rap on the side of the head with the shutters, that a thousand lights danced in his eyes, and he writhed with pain.

"Well, I never," said Crotchet, "I hope I haven't hurt you, old man? You see I was a passing, and seed as these here shutters was rather a bit top-heavy for your little son here, and I thought I'd give him a helping hand. To be sure he didn't want me to, but you see I would, and perhaps as your old head is getting better, you wouldn't mind a pint of beer, old gentleman?"

"You atrocious villain," yelled Todd, "I'll cut your throat. I'll polish you off. I'll—I'll—would you like to be shaved?"

"I've had a scrape already," said Crotchet, "and if you won't stand the beer, why you won't, and there's no bones broke arter all. Good morning, old Grampus. Good morning my little chap, I wishes you good luck; and if I am passing again, I don't mind lending you a helping hand, though the governor is about one o' the ugliest, nastiest tempered brutes, I ever came near in all my life."

Crotchet went away whistling with great composure.

CHAPTER XCI.
MR. TODD'S FIRST CUSTOMERS.

Todd seized Johanna by the arm, and dragged her into the shop. He locked the door, and then confronting her, he said—

"How kind it was of your friend, to take down the shutters for you, Charley Green."

"My friend, sir?"

"Yes, your friend who declined being shaved, you know, because you told him last night that he had better go to some other shop."

"Really, sir," said Johanna, "I don't know what you mean."

"Come, come, Charley, confess that you do know some one in London, as well as you know me. Confess, now, that people are so fond of interfering in other folk's affairs, that you have been set on to watch me. I shall not be at all angry, indeed, I shall not, I assure you. Not the least; only tell me the truth. That is all I ask of you, my boy, and you will find that it is no bad thing to make a friend of Sweeney Todd."

"If I had, sir, anything to confess," replied Johanna, "except that at times I do feel that I wish I had not run away from my mother-in-law at Oxford, I should soon tell it all to you."

"And so that is all, Charley?"

"All at present, sir."

"What a good lad. What an exemplary lad. Light the shop fire, if you please, Charley. Humph! I am wrong," muttered Todd to himself; "but yet I will cut his throat before I leave to-night. It will be safer and more satisfactory to do so, and besides, he has given me some uneasiness, and I hate him for his quiet gentle ways. I hate everybody. I would cut the throats of all the world if I could. Light the fire quickly, you young hound, will you?"

Johanna trembled. She felt that anything but a blow from Todd she could put up with, but in her pocket she kept a jagged piece of flint stone, which would go through the window in a moment; and she felt that through she must throw it, if he only so much as raised his hand against her.

The fire blazed up, and Todd at that moment had no further excuse for abusing Charley. With a sulky growl, he said—

"You can call me out if any one comes," and then he retired to his back parlour, closing and locking the door as usual.

The morning felt rather raw, and Johanna was glad to warm her hands at the fire in the shop, which soon burnt brightly; but she did not venture upon keeping up a bright blaze for long. Todd's mode of managing the fire, was always to keep a dry turf smouldering upon the top of it, from which ample heat enough was emitted to keep the shaving-pot upon the simmer. She now placed upon the fire one of those turfs, a small pile of which were always ready in the corner of the shop.

She had scarcely done so, when the shop door opened, and a man walked in.

"Is Mr. Todd in, my little man?" he said.

"Yes, sir. Do you wish to see him?" Johanna wished, if it were possible, to discourage visitors, but the man sat down at once in the shaving chair, and placed his hat upon the floor, adding as he did so—

"Yes, a right down good shave I want. As good as if *St. Dunstan* himself wanted one."

The manner in which the man pronounced the words St. Dunstan was so marked that Johanna felt convinced at once he was a friend, and she felt quite a gush of pleasure at the thought that Sir Richard Blunt had such a continual supervising eye upon her safety.

She felt that she must not look at this man otherwise than as a stranger. She felt that the least word of recognition might be fatal both to him and to her. She knew that Todd had some small orifice through which from his parlour he peeped into the shop, and that his eye was now upon her she did not doubt.

"I will call Mr. Todd, sir," she said in a moment. "He is close at hand."

"Thank you," replied the man. "I sit here as comfortable as *St. Dunstan*."

"Yes," said Johanna, as she heard the watch-word of safety and friendship once more uttered by that man who was in truth one of Sir Richard's most confidential and trustworthy officers.

She at once now proceeded to the door of the parlour, and tapped at it until Todd opened it, and popped his head out with a grim smile.

"Oh, Charley my dear," he said, "does a gentleman want me?"

"Yes, sir."

"A-hem! Good morning, sir," added Todd, as he advanced, tying on his apron. "A shave, I presume, sir? A close shave, sir? I do think of all the luxuries in life, sir, a good close shave—what I call a regular polish off, sir—is one of the greatest in a small way. Charley, ain't it near breakfast time, my good lad?"

"Yes, sir," said Johanna. "I daresay it is."

"Very good. The hot-water. Thank you my dear—you will take two pence from the till, Charley, and get yourself somewhere about the market a—Well now?"

A thin man in a cloak made his appearance at the door of the shop, and taking off his hat, made a bow, as he said—

"I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to the pious Mr. Todd?"

"My name is Todd, sir. What is it?"

"I am truly delighted," said the tall thin man sitting down upon the nearest seat, and placing his hat upon his knees. "I am truly delighted to see you. Pray go on shaving that gentleman, as I shall be some time."

"Some time about what?" almost screamed Todd.

"Finding the tract, from which I purpose reading to you a few extracts upon the all-important subject of the election of grace, and the insufficiency of works."

Todd stropped a razor, and glared at the intruder, who, fitting on his nose with great precision a pair of blue spectacles, began rummaging in his hat.

"Humph! this is it. No—this is not it. Well, I thought I had it here, and so I have. This is—no. This is an imaginary and highly religious discourse upon saints, and *St. Dunstan* in particular."

Johanna knew in a moment that this other man was a friend likewise. He, too, had pronounced the words St. Dunstan in a peculiar manner.

Todd suddenly became quite calm.

"Sir," he said, "I take it as a very particular favour, indeed, that you should have called here upon such an errand, and I only beg that you will not hurry yourself in the least; I can go on shaving this gentleman, and perhaps when he is gone, you will permit me the honour of operating upon you?"

"With great pleasure," replied the man. "Dear me, where can the tract be? Is this it? No—this is about the pious milkmaid, who always put up a prayer for the milking-pail, to prevent the cow from kicking it over. Dear me, where can it be? Oh, is this it? No—this is the story of the pious barber's boy, who, when he had an opportunity, went over the way and found his father there! Dear me, where can it be?"

Johanna started.

"The barber's boy," she thought, "who went over the way and found his father there? Those words are for me."

She was now in quite a fever of anxiety to leave the shop, for she did not doubt but that by some means her father had heard of her position, and she felt that then nothing but the actual sight of her in perfect health and safety would satisfy him. But she dared not show the anxiety she felt. She bent over the fire, and affected to be stirring the turf.

"You can go and get your breakfast, Charley," said Todd.

"Thank you, sir."

Johanna would not betray any haste, but she shook with agitation as she neared the door; and then she recollected that she had not taken the twopence from the till as she had been told to do, and that the circumstance of not doing so might create suspicion.

She crept back and possessed herself of the pence. Todd watched her with the eyes of a demon.

"Are you going, my dear Charley?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

She left the shop, and then her first impulse would have induced her to hurry over the road to the fruiterer's shop, but her eyes fell upon the figure of Sir Richard Blunt standing in the fruiterer's doorway. He moved his hand signifying that she should go towards the market, and she did so. He quickly followed her.

She did not look behind her, until she was quite in the old Fleet-market; and then, just as she looked round, Sir Richard Blunt touched her arm.

"You understood my message?" he said.

"Yes. My father."

"Exactly. It is concerning him. It appears that some busy-body, a man I understand named Lupin, has seen you in your present disguise, and informed him of it."

"I know the man. He is one of those saintly hypocrites, who make religion the cloak for their vices."

"Yes, there are not a few of them," said Sir Richard. "They revel in vice, and daily try to make the Almighty an accomplice in their offences against society. Well, then, Johanna, this man has tortured your father with an account of your being in this disguise."

"It would torture him."

"Naturally, without he knew all the reasons for it; but it appears that he went to the house of Miss Wilmot, and after some trouble saw her, when she, finding that he knew quite enough to make him wretched, and not enough to explain your position, frankly told him all, and brought him to me."

"It was the best."

"Most decidedly it was, and I need only say that he is anxiously waiting to see you, at our friend the fruiterer's house; but as it would not do for you to go direct from Todd's door to there, I have intercepted you, you see, to take you by a safer route."

"How good, and kind, and considerate you are to me," said Johanna, as she looked up in the face of the magistrate, while tears started to her eyes. "Without you how miserably I must have failed in this adventure. Todd would no doubt before this have discovered me, and taken my life."

"Don't say a word about that," replied Sir Richard. "Recollect that after all it was my duty to protect you; and if I have been a little more anxious than usual in the performance of that duty, it is because I admire your heroic constancy and courage, and hope to see you happy yet."

"Alas! the sun of my happiness has set for ever. I can only now pray to Heaven, that it will endow me with patience to bear its decrees with serenity."

"Well," added Sir Richard, "we will say no more upon that subject, just now. Come with me, and I will take you to your father by a safer way than just crossing the road from Todd's shop to the fruiterer's."

He led her down a court in Bridge-street, and thence through a complete labyrinth of passages, some of which still exist at the back of Fleet Street, and some of which have been swept away, until they reached a door in a dingy-looking wall, at which he paused.

"This is the back of the fruiterer's house," he said, "and I dare say some one is waiting for me."

He tapped three times distinctly at the door, and then it was opened immediately by the fruiterer's daughter, who with a smile clasped Johanna in her arms.

"Welcome," she said. "Welcome once again."

"Ah, my dear friend," said Johanna, "I shall learn to bless the circumstances, commencing in affliction as they did, that have brought me acquainted with such kind hearts."

They all three now crossed a little paved yard, and were soon in the fruiterer's house.

"Where is my dear father?" said Johanna. "Where is he?"

"This way," said the young girl, who took so great an interest in the fate of Johanna. "This way, dear. He is in our room up stairs, and will be no less delighted to see you, then you will be delighted to see him."

"I am sure of that," said Johanna.

She ran up the stairs with more speed that the fruiterer's daughter could make, and in another moment was in her father's arms.

CHAPTER XCII.
MR. OAKLEY'S ANXIETIES MUCH DIMINISH.

For some few moments after this meeting, neither Mr. Oakley nor Johanna could speak. At length the old spectacle-maker was just able to say—

"Great God, I thank thee, that once again I hold my darling to my heart."

"Father—father," said Johanna. "Did you think for one moment that I could have left you?"

"No my dear, no; but I was bewildered by all I heard. I was half mad I think until I was told all; and now we will go home, my pretty darling, at once, and we will have no secrets from each other. Dear heart, what a pretty boy you make to be sure. But come—come. I am in an agony until I have you home again."

"Father, listen to me."

"Yes my child—my darling. Yes."

"If it had not been for Sir Richard Blunt I should now have been with the dead, and you and I would never have met again, but in another world, father. I owe him, therefore, you will say, some gratitude."

"Some gratitude, my darling? We owe him a world of gratitude. Alas, we shall never be able to repay him, but we will pray that he may be as happy as his noble heart deserves, my dear. God bless him!"

"And, father, we will do any little thing he asks of us."

"We will fly to obey his commands, my dear, in all things. Night or day, he will only have to speak to us, and what he says shall be our law."

"Then, father, he asks of me, for the cause of public justice, that I should go back to Todd's, and wear this dress for the remainder only of to-day. Can we refuse him?"

"Alas! Alas!" said the old man, "more trouble—more anxiety—more danger."

"No, father. No danger. He will watch over me, and I have faith that Heaven is with me."

"Can I part with you again?"

"Yes, for such an object. Do not, father, say no to me, for you may say, and I will obey you; but with your own free consent, let me go now, and do the bidding of the great and the good man who has saved me to once more rest upon your breast, and kiss your cheek."

The old man shook for a moment, and then he said—

"Go, go, my child. Go, and take with you my blessing, and the blessing of God, for surely that must be yours; but, oh! be careful. Remember, my darling, that upon your safety hangs my life; for if I were to hear that anything had happened to you, it would kill me. I have nothing now but you in the world to live for."

"Oh, father, you do not mean to tell me that my mother is no more?"

"No, my dear. No.—Ask me nothing now. You shall know all at another time. Only tell me when I shall see you again."

"At sunset," said Sir Richard Blunt, as he stepped into the room at this moment. "At sunset, I hope, Mr. Oakley; and in the meantime be assured of her perfect safety. I offer my life as security for hers, and would not hesitate to sacrifice it for her."

The manner of the magistrate was such that no one could for one moment doubt that he spoke the genuine sentiments at his heart; and such words, coming from such a quarter, it may be well supposed were

calculated to produce a great impression.

"I am satisfied," said Mr. Oakley. "I should be more than an unreasonable man if I were not fully convinced now of the safety of Johanna."

When she had got her father to say this much, Johanna was anxious to be off, and she signified as much to Sir Richard Blunt, who fully acquiesced in the propriety of the measure, for already her absence had been quite long enough from the shop, and Todd might not be in the best of humours at her return.

After one more embrace, Johanna tore herself from her father's arms, and followed the magistrate from the fruiterer's house, by the same route which had conducted her to it.

On their way, he explained to her some little matters of which she was in ignorance, or at least concerning which she could only conjecture.

"Both the persons, whom you left in Todd's shop," he said, "belong to my force; and the one only went for the protection of the other, as I, of course, surmised that you would be at once sent out of the way upon some real or mock errand, to give Todd opportunity of committing a murder. My great object is to find out precisely how he does the deed; and the man who came in to be shaved was to make what observations of the place he could during the ceremony, while the other distracted Todd's attention."

"I understand," said Johanna. "I of course knew that they were friends when they mentioned the watchword of St. Dunstan to me."

"Exactly. I gave them instructions to seize the very first opportunity of letting you hear the watch-word. Are there any large cupboards in the shop?"

"Yes. There is one of great size."

"Would it, do you think, hold two men?"

"Oh, yes. Perchance you, who are tall, might have to stoop a little; but with that exception as to height, there is most ample space."

"That will do then. I cannot tell you, of course, the exact hour; but be it when it may, the moment Todd leaves the shop to day to go upon any business out of doors, two persons from me will come to hide themselves in that cupboard."

"They will use the watch-word?"

"Yes, certainly; and you will so dispose any movable article in the shop, as to take away any idea that the cupboard had been visited, or in the slightest degree interfered with."

"That I can easily do."

"Well, here we are, then, in Fleet-street again; and mind all this that I have planned has nothing to do with your proceedings to call for assistance, if any special or unforeseen danger should occur to you."

Johanna, upon this, showed him the jagged stone she had in her pocket, to cast through the window.

"Yes, that would do," said Sir Richard; "but I would gladly supply you with arms. Do you think you could manage a pistol, if you had one?"

"Yes. I have often looked at some fire-arms that my father had in his shop to sell once, and I have seen them used."

"I am glad of that," continued Sir Richard. "Here are two very small pistols loaded. They may be thoroughly depended upon in a room; but they would not carry any distance, in consequence of the shortness of the barrel. If, however, you should be in any sudden and extreme danger from Todd, anywhere else than in the shop, or there, if you are pushed for time, one of these fired in his face will be tolerably effective. You can keep them both in your pocket."

The magistrate, as he spoke, handed to Johanna a pair of very small, but exquisitely made pistols, encircled with silver mounting, and she carefully concealed them, feeling still more secure from any treachery

upon the part of Todd, now that she held his life as much, if not more, in her hands, than he held hers in his.

Sir Richard Gives Johanna Pistols For Her Protection.

Sir Richard Gives Johanna Pistols For Her Protection.

She shook her kind friend warmly by the hand, and then hastened to the barber's shop. As she got near to it, she saw the tall thin man who had so perplexed Todd about the religious tract, come out, and Todd followed him to the door, looking after him with such an expression of deadly malice, that Johanna could not but pause a moment to look at him.

He suddenly turned his eyes towards her, and saw her. He beckoned with his finger, and she entered the shop.

"Well, Charley," he said, with quite an affectation of good humour. "You are a good lad."

"I am glad you think so, sir," she replied, seeing that Todd paused for an answer.

"I cannot but think so. I shall have to look over some accounts in the parlour this morning, and if anybody—any female, I mean—comes for me, say I have gone to the city, and that, after that, I said I would call in Bell Yard before I came home. You well remember that, Bell Yard. Be vigilant and discreet, and you shall have the reward that I have all along intended for you, and which you should not miss upon any account."

"I am much beholden to you, sir. But if any one should come to be shaved while you are in the parlour, what shall I say to them?"

"You can say I have gone to the Temple to dress Mr. Block's new wig, if you like, so that you got rid of them, for I must not be disturbed on any consideration."

"Very well, sir."

"Put another turf on the fire, Charley, and make yourself quite comfortable."

What inconsistent amenity this was upon the part of Todd. It seemed as though he had turned over a new leaf completely, and intended to put an end to all suspicions, if he had any, of Charley Green; and after that—after that, Todd still preserved his kind intention of cutting his throat with one of the razors.

"The very best thing you can do with people," muttered Todd to himself, as he went into the parlour, "is to cut their throats as soon as they cease to be useful to you, for from that moment, if you do not put them out of the way, they are almost certain to be mischievous to you."

What a pleasant lot of maxims Todd had, and what a beautiful system of moral philosophy his was, to be sure!

One thing was quite evident, and that was that he fully expected and dreaded the visit of Mrs. Lovett upon money matters. It will be recollected that ten o'clock was named as about the hour when that lady was to bring in her little account in the partnership affair of Todd, Lovett, & Co.; and as he (Todd) had for once in his life been fairly bothered to make any further excuses to so pertinacious a creditor as Mrs. Lovett, he had hit upon the plan of trying to put her off during the day by one means or another, and at night he would, at an earlier hour than he had before intended, be off and away.

Everything was in readiness, and he considered Mrs. Lovett his only hindrance—a danger he scarcely thought her—for, at the very worst, he could not conceive that even her passion would be sufficient to induce her to sacrifice herself, for the sake of revenge upon him.

His house was prepared so that a match would at any moment suffice to give the touch that would set it in a blaze; and then, as he said—"Who shall say where the conflagration among the old well-dried wooden houses of Fleet-street may reach to?"

His passage in the Hamburgh ship was secure—the fearful proceeds of his life of rapine and murder were in her hold. How uncommonly safe Todd thought himself, and how well he considered he had managed his affairs.

Short-sighted mortals that we are! How often we mistake the shifting morass of difficulty for the *terra firma* of prosperity, and how often do we weep for those events, which, in themselves and their results, form the ground-work of the happiness of a life! Truly we are

> "Such things as air is made of."

If Todd now for one moment could have imagined that his plunder, which he believed was so safe on board the Hamburgh ship, was actually, on the contrary, at the office of Sir Richard Blunt, in Craven-street, what would have been his sensations? Would he have laughed and sniggered over the bumper of brandy he was holding to his lips in his parlour? No, indeed.

If he could but have guessed that the ship in which he had intended to embark, was then twenty-four hours on her route, and battling with the surging waves of the German Ocean, how would he have felt!

Strange to say, he never had felt so confident of success and triumph as upon that day. He could have said with Romeo in Mantua—

> "My bosom's lord sits lightly on its throne,"

while, like Romeo, he was on the eve of a blow that at once was to topple to the dust the very structure of all his hopes. He of course fully expected a visit from Mrs. Lovett, but he did hope that she would take an answer from Charley, and go away again. If she did not he trusted to the inspiration of the moment to be able to say something to her which might have the effect of producing that which he wanted only, namely, delay.

CHAPTER XCIII.
SIR RICHARD BLUNT'S SUBTERRANEAN EXPEDITION.

While Todd is thus waiting anxiously for the arrival of his old ally in iniquity, but who now he considered to be his most deadly foe, and his worst possible hindrance to carry out his deeply—by far too deeply—laid schemes, we shall have time to take a peep at some proceedings of Sir Richard Blunt's, which are rather entertaining, and decidedly important.

Johanna had not been long gone from the fruiterer's shop, before Sir Richard said to the fruiterer—

"If you are ready we will go now to the church at once. I have left quite a sufficient guard over the safety of Miss Oakley, and besides this affair will not take us I daresay above a couple of hours."

"Not so long I think," replied the fruiterer. "I am quite ready, and no doubt your men are in the church by this time. They are apt to be punctual."

"They would not suit me for long if they were not," replied Sir Richard. "Punctuality is the one grand principle which is the hinge of all my business, and the secret of by far the larger portion of my success."

They walked rapidly up Fleet Street together, until they came opposite to St. Dunstan's Church, and then they crossed the road and tapped lightly at a little wicket in the great door of the building. The wicket was immediately opened by a man who touched his hat to Sir Richard.

"All right?" asked the magistrate, "and every one here?"

"Yes, sir. Every one."

"That will do then. Be sure you fasten the door in the inside, so that that troublesome beadle, if he should be smitten with a desire to visit the church, cannot get in; and if he should come and be troublesome, take him into custody at once, and shut him him up anywhere that may keep him out of harm's way for the next twelve hours or so."

"Yes, sir."

This man, whose business it evidently was to stay by the door, carefully fastened it, and Sir Richard Blunt with his friend from Fleet Street advanced into the body of the church. He had not gone far before a pew opened, and six persons came out. One of these was a well-dressed elderly man, who said, as the magistrate approached him—

"I have made all the necessary observations, Sir Richard, and am quite easy and confident that I can direct your men how to excavate directly to Todd's house."

"Thank you Sir Christopher," said the magistrate. "I am very much indebted to you for the trouble you have taken in this affair, which I think is now near its climax."

"I hope so, Sir Richard. This way if you please."

The whole party now proceeded to the same slab of stone which the magistrate had had before removed, for the purpose of making his inquiries below the surface of the earth. The slab was standing on its edge against a column of the nearest aisle, and the deep dark opening to the vaults was before them.

"There is but little foul air," said Sir Christopher. "The stone has been off they tell me many hours. Shall I go first, or will you, Sir Richard?"

"Allow me," said the magistrate; "should there be any risks, it is my duty first to encounter them."

"As you please, Sir Richard. As you please, sir. I willingly give place to you, because I know, if there be any difficulty how much better calculated you are than any one here to overcome it."

The magistrate made a slight bow to the compliment, and then taking a link in his hand, he descended the stairs leading to the vaults of St. Dunstan's.

It will be well recollected that he had been in those vaults before, and that he had made certain discoveries, which to a vast extent implicated Mrs. Lovett in the crimes of Sweeney Todd; but his object upon this present visit was of a different character. In plain language, this was an attempt to ascertain if there were any underground modes of communication between Todd's house, and the vaults of old St. Dunstan's church.

That there were some such subterraneous passages had become, after the most mature consideration, a firm conviction upon the mind of Sir Richard Blunt, and hence he had resolved upon such an exploration of the spot as should confirm or dispel the idea for ever.

Those whom he had with him, were all persons upon whom he could thoroughly depend; and the ancient architect, who had given his services, was to point out the exact direction in which to proceed.

Upon reaching the foot of the stone steps, instead of traversing the passage that led in the direction of Bell Yard, which he had formerly done, Sir Richard turned directly the other way, saying as he did so—

"This, I presume, will be our direction?"

"We shall see in a moment," said the architect. "I have taken the bearings so exactly, that I can point out to you the precise course."

He forced into the ground to a sufficient depth to make it stand steady, his walking stick, and then removing a little gold cap from the top of it, he disclosed a small compass, which after some oscillations, steadied itself.

"Then," said Sir Christopher, "through that wall would lead in a direct line to Todd's house."

"This will assist us," said Sir Richard. "We will, before we actually begin excavating, endeavour to find some of the vaults which may run in that direction, and so perhaps save ourselves an immense amount of labour."

"Very good," said Sir Christopher Wren, "I can at any time give you, from any place, the exact bearing of Todd's house, for I have it fixed in my mind, and can read it off from the compass plate in a moment."

They now at once made their way into the vaults, and by dint of keeping to the right hand, they avoided going much out of their course. These vaults were of great extent, and although some of them, owing to being full of the dead, had been bricked up, yet they were very easily opened, and in many cases a direct thoroughfare for considerable distances was affected.

Ever and anon the compass was appealed to, and showed them that they were approaching Todd's house.

One of the party, a well-dressed gentlemanly-looking man, now stepped forward, and said to Sir Richard—

"Here, according to the plans of the church, the vaults end."

"Then we can get no further?"

"Not an inch, Sir Richard."

"Then here commences in reality our mission, which is to try to discover some communication between the lower part of the house occupied by Sweeney Todd, and these vaults. Let us each use our utmost discrimination to affect that object."

He lighted for himself a small lantern, and commenced a rigorous search of the walls, but for some few minutes could find nothing to excite the least suspicion. At length he paused at one portion of one of the vaults, where a kind of wooden tomb had been erected close to the wall. A large piece of dirty oak was placed upright against the earth work.

"If there be any mode of leaving this vault, but the one we have entered," he said, "it is here."

At these words, so significant as they were of some discovery having been made by Sir Richard, all those who were with him made their way to that spot, and from their several lanterns, a glare of light was thrown upon the wooden monument.

"This," said the person who had before spoken of the plan of the vaults, "this is the monument of a Sir Giles Horseman, who was killed by accident and interred here about twenty-two years ago. It was a very unusual thing to make any such erection in a vault, but his widow wished it, and the authorities saw no good reason for interfering."

The monument had evidently consisted of an oaken kind of square ornamental tomb affixed to the wall, and extending out about six feet into the vault. That portion of it which did so extend into the vault had fallen in, but the piece of oak which had been originally affixed to the wall there remained.

"What leads you to suppose, Sir Richard," said the architect, "that this place will show us anything?"

"This," said the magistrate, as he picked up from amid the rubbish of the broken monument, a nearly new glove of thick leather. "How did this get here?"

The glove was passed from hand to hand, and duly examined. No one owned it, and the only remark that could be made upon it was, that it was of an immense size.

"Then," said Sir Richard Blunt, "since it belongs to none of us, I give it as my opinion that it belongs to Sweeney Todd, and has fallen from his hand in this place."

"It must be so," said the fruiterer. "I know of no hand in the City of London that such a glove would fit but his."

"But how came he here?" said Sir Christopher. "That is the question. How could he get here."

"We shall see," said the magistrate. "Lend me that small iron crow-bar, Jenkins."

The crow-bar was handed to Sir Richard Blunt, and at one touch with it down come the piece of oak that was against the wall. That was conclusive, for, instead of the solid wall beyond it, there was a deep crevice or opening just sufficient to enable one person to go through it.

"This is the place," said the magistrate.

There was a death-like silence among all present. Every ear was on the stretch, and every eye was fixed upon the narrow opening in the wall of the vault. It would almost seem as though every one expected Sweeney Todd to appear with one of his victims on his back that he had just, to use his own expressive phraseology, succeeded in polishing off.

Sir Christopher stuck up his compass again, and it was his voice that first broke the stillness.

"The route is direct," he said.

"To Todd's house?" asked Sir Richard.

"Yes, direct."

"Then all we have got to do is to follow it. It is an enterprise perhaps attended with some danger, and certainly with much horror, I think. Now, I do not ask any one to follow me, but go I will."

"I will follow you, Sir Richard," said the fruiterer. "I reside in Fleet Street, and rather than not ferret out such a villain as Todd from the neighbourhood, I would run any risks. I am with you, sir."

"And I," said Sir Christopher Wren.

"And I—and I," cried every one.

"Come on," said the magistrate. "Come on. I will take the small lantern, and if I meet Todd, my great aim will be to take him a prisoner, not to kill him; and mind all of you, if by any chance a scuffle with that man should ensue, it would be a scandalous cheating of the gallows to do him any injury that might even delay his execution. Now, come on."

It required no small amount of real courage to lead the way in that expedition into the very bowels of the earth as it were; but with the small lantern elevated as far above his head as the roof of the passage would admit of, Sir Richard stepped cautiously and slowly on.

The excavation in which they were was roughly but well made. At intervals of about twelve feet each, there always occurred two upright pieces of plank supporting a third piece on the roof, and firmly wedged in, so that there was but little likelihood of a fall of earth from above.

Suddenly a scuffling noise was heard, and Sir Richard for a moment paused.

"What is it?" said the fruiterer.

"Only some rats," he replied. "I daresay there are plenty of such gentlemen in this quarter of the world, and probably they never saw so large a party here before. They are scudding along in a regiment here."

After going on for about twenty paces further, Sir Richard found a door completely blocking up the passage. By dint of careful investigation of it, he found it was locked, and the key in the other side of the lock. He pushed it through with some difficulty, and then, with a skeleton key, opened the door in the course of a few moments.

"Come on," he said. "Ah! this is a different place."

They now found themselves in some regularly constructed vaults, arched with stone, down the sides of which there rolled long streams of moisture. They were all quite at a loss to know what place they had got into, for they knew of nothing of the sort beneath Fleet Street, and they gazed about them with wonder.

CHAPTER XCIV.
IN THE VAULTS.

"Who on earth would have thought of vaults like these in such a situation?" said the fruiterer.

"They are," said Sir Christopher, "undoubtedly the remains of some public building, which probably at a very distant date has occupied the site above. They are well built, and really of considerable architectural beauty in some respects. I am quite pleased at the opportunity of seeing such a place."

"It looks," remarked the magistrate, "as though it had been long hidden from the world. It is such men as Sweeney Todd who find out more underground secrets in a month than we should in a lifetime; but I hope that we shall find out all his cleverness and most abhorrent iniquities now."

The air in this stone place was by no means very bad, and indeed, after the vaults, there was rather an agreeable damp kind of freshness in it; while it was evident, by the manner in which the lights burnt in it, that there was no want of vitality in its atmosphere. At first it was no easy matter to find any kind of outlet from the place. After some searching, however, another door was discovered, very similar, indeed, to the one that Sir Richard Blunt had opened with the picklock, and that, too, was found to be locked on the other side, and the key, as in the former case, in the lock.

"All this locking of doors," said the magistrate, "was, I have no sort of doubt, to protect himself from any night visit upon the part of Mrs. Lovett, from whom I feel certain that Sweeney Todd has been expecting attempts upon his life, as much as to my own knowledge he has made attempts upon hers; but by some kind of fatality, or providence, they seem to be unable to harm each other."

"It is a providence," said Sir Christopher. "They must both suffer the penalty of outraging, as they have done, the laws of God and man; and the retribution would be by no means complete were they to fall by the hands or each other."

"I think you are right, sir," said the fruiterer.

The door which was now opened, only led to some other vaults, which somewhat resembled those the party had just left, only that they were by no means so lofty or so carefully constructed as they were; and before they had proceeded far, some evidences of habitation began to show themselves. Some old boots occupied a place in one corner, and some old hats, and other articles of clothing, were lying in a confused heap in another. Sir Richard Blunt looked upon all this as ample testimony that he was quite close to the abode of Sweeney Todd, and he accordingly turned to his friends, saying—

"It is necessary that we proceed with the utmost caution. I think, a very few steps will take us into the cellars of Todd's house, and the object now is not by any means to give him the least alarm, but merely to find out, if possible, by what means he murders and disposes of his victims."

Acting upon this caution, they extinguished all the lights, with the exception of one lantern, and that Sir Richard Blunt himself carried, as he still continued to head the expedition. Suddenly he came upon an arched doorway without a door; and hardly had he proceeded a few paces, when he saw something lying in a strange confused mass upon the floor, which, upon a closer examination, proved to be a dead body.

The reader will probably in this body see the spy who had been employed by Mrs. Lovett to see that Todd did not run away in the course of the preceding night.

The Body Found Under Todd's House.

The Body Found Under Todd's House.

The body was lying upon some stones, that seemed to have been placed one upon another in such a position that their most jagged corners and uneven surfaces should be uppermost. A glance at the roof showed a square, black-looking hole.

Sir Richard Blunt was upon the point of saying something, when overhead they heard the distinct tramp of a man. The magistrate immediately placed his finger upon his lips, and all was as still as the grave in that place. Presently they heard a voice, and they all knew that it was the voice of Sweeney Todd. It came from above, and reached their ears with sufficient clearness to enable them to catch the words—

"Her death is certain if I can but get her to cross the threshold of this parlour!"

Then the pacing to and fro of that really wretched man continued. The few words that Todd had spoken, had been sufficient to convince Sir Richard Blunt of one thing, which was, that they were beneath the parlour, and not the shop. It was from the shop the people disappeared, so the heart of Todd's mystery remained yet to be reached. There was another small door-way a little to the left of where he stood, and Sir Richard, upon the impulse of the moment, passed through it alone. He came back again in a moment.

"Gentlemen," he whispered, "have we seen enough?"

They nodded, and without another word, he led the way back again from the dreary subterranean abode of murder. It was only to the fruiterer he whispered, after they had gotten some distance from the spot upon

which the dead body lay—

"I know all."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. When we get back to your home, I will tell you. Let for the meantime the general impression be, that all there was to learn consisted of the secret of that square hole in the flooring of the parlour."

"Yes, yes! But there is more?"

"Much more. You and Sir Christopher at present, I think, are the only two persons I shall be communicative with. The whole world will know it all, soon enough, but long and old habits of caution, always induce me to keep my information as quiet as I possibly can."

"You are quite right, Sir Richard. Even I shall feel it to be no offence if you keep entirely to yourself what you have seen."

"No, no! I wish to avail myself of your advice, which has done me good service upon more than one occasion; so when we get to your house, we will talk the matter fully over."

By this time they had got so far from the immediate vicinity of Todd's house, that such excessive caution in conversing was no longer necessary, and the magistrate pausing, made a general remark to all.

"The less that is said about what we have seen here, the better it will be. Let me beg of every one not to give the smallest hint to any one, even in the most confidential manner, of the discoveries that have been made here to-day."

An immediate assent was of course given to this proposition, and in the course of five minutes they were all in St. Dunstan's church. It was something amusing to Sir Richard, at that moment, to notice the look of relief there was upon every countenance, now that the investigation into that underground and unknown region was over. Each person seemed as if he had just escaped from the toils and hazards of a battle. By a glance at his watch, Sir Richard ascertained that only one hour and a quarter

had been consumed in the whole affair, and he was pleased to think how soon again he should be personally superintending the safety of Johanna.

Before, however, the party got half way to the door of the church, they heard a vociferous argumentation going on in that quarter, and the voice of the beadle, who was well known to Sir Richard, was heard exclaiming —

"I will come in. I'm the beadle. Fire! Fire! I will come in. What! keep a beadle out of his own church? Oh! Oh! Oh! Conwulsions conwulsions! It ain't possible."

"Gentlemen," said the magistrate, "we must repress our friend the beadle's curiosity. Let us all say 'Hush' to him as we go out, and not another word."

This was generally understood, and they walked slowly in a kind of procession to the church door.

"Pitchforks and hatchets!" cried the beadle. "I will come in. Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes. Look at my hat and coat; I ain't a himposter, but a real beetle! Bless us, who is here? Why—why, there ain't no service nor a wedding. What a lot of folks. Have they been a grabbing of the Communion plate? Oh, murder, conwulsions, and thieves!"

Sir Richard went close up to him, and in the most mysterious way in the world, whispered in his ear "Hush."

"Eh?" said the beadle.

Sir Christopher took hold of him by the collar of the coat, and said —"Hush."

"Well, but—but—"

The fruiterer beckoned to him with great gravity, and when he come forward a pace or two, said—"Hush."

"But good gracious what am I to hush about? What is it all—what does it mean—tell us, for goodness gracious sake? I don't know anything; I'm an ass—an idiot. What am I to hush about—I shall sit upon no end of thorns and nettles, till I know.—What is it?"

"Hush! hush! hush!" said every one as he passed the now nearly distracted beadle, and finally there he was left in the church porch with nothing in the shape of information, but hush! The man who had been left by the magistrate as a sentinel at the church door, was the last to leave, and he took his cue from all the others; and when the beadle laid hold of him crying—"I'll take you up. I won't let you go," he gently sat him on the floor; and then saying "Hush!" away he went likewise.

The large slab in the church, that usually covered up the passage leading to the vaults, was left uncovered; but then the beadle perfectly understood that that was for the sole purpose of relieving the vaults, during the week, of the accumulation of mephitic vapours supposed to be in them; and at all events no impulse of curiosity could be sufficiently strong in him to induce so desperate a step as a descent alone into those dreary abodes of the departed; so that he was, in a manner of speaking, compelled to put up entirely with "Hush!" for his portion of the mystery.

Sir Richard bade good-day to every one but the fruiterer at the door of the church; and then with him he walked to his shop opposite to Todd's. Crotchet was close at hand, and he came into the shop, at a signal from the magistrate to do so.

"Is all right, Crotchet?"

"Right as a trivet, sir. Lord bless you about so much as a sneeze, but I'll find it out; and as for little Miss Thingamybob, he shan't hurt a hair of her pretty little bit of a head."

"That's right, Crotchet. Remember that the bringing to justice, with ample evidence of all his crimes, of Sweeney Todd, is a great object; but it is an infinitely greater one to preserve the life of Johanna Oakley."

"I knows it," said Crotchet.

"Resume your charge, then, Crotchet. All will be well, and this will be Todd's last day out of Newgate."

Crotchet nodded, and made his exit.

In the succeeding half hour, it would seem that Sir Richard Blunt made his old acquaintance, the fruiterer, thoroughly acquainted with all he knew of the way in which Todd got rid of his victims. What that way was will very shortly now appear; and we think it had better appear in this regular and most authentic narrative, than in a chance conversation between Sir Richard Blunt and his friend.

It was the special duty of one officer to come into the fruiterer's shop with a report and a description of whoever went into Todd's house, and now this man made his appearance.

"Well, Jervis," said the magistrate, "so Todd has a customer, has he?"

"I don't know, sir. It is a woman, well dressed, and rather tall than otherwise."

"Mrs. Lovett, without a doubt. No one need go and look after that lady, for I don't know any one, except you or I, Jervis, who is so capable of taking care of number one. Todd will find her a troublesome customer, and if she is at all the woman I take her to be, she will not go into his back parlour quite so easily as he would fain persuade her."

"Then no one need follow, sir?"

"No; but if the young lad comes out, you may just look in and ask some frivolous question to see what is going on. If the female is not in the shop —she is dead."

"Dead, sir!"

"Yes. She will not live a minute after she leaves the shop; but you may depend she will not do so; she is to the full as well acquainted with Todd as we are, so there is no sort of apprehension of her coming to any harm. I should indeed be sorry to lose her."

Sir Richard Blunt was right in his guess. It was no other than Mrs. Lovett, who, agreeably to her appointment with Todd, called upon him for her half of the plunder for the last few years.

CHAPTER XCV.
MRS. LOVETT IS VERY INTRACTABLE INDEED

Before entering the shop, Mrs. Lovett hovered about it, peeping at the things in the window, and glancing about her as though she had some uncomfortable ideas in her mind concerning the place, and was coquetting with her feelings a little before she could make up her mind to go into it.

At length she laid her hand upon the handle of the door, and turned it. She stood upon the threshold, and her sharp glance at once comprehended that Todd was not there. Johanna advanced towards her, and waited for her to speak.

"Oh," she said. "Is Mr. Todd in?"

"No," said Johanna. "No, madam."

Johanna did not think it worth while at that time to expose herself to the great danger of disobeying Todd's positive commands, to say he was not at home, merely upon a point of punctilious truth. Mrs. Lovett looked keenly at her.

"So," she said, "he is out—is he?"

"Yes, madam."

"And you are Mr. Todd's *boy*?"

The emphasis which Mrs. Lovett placed upon the word boy, rather alarmed Johanna, and she was more terrified when Mrs. Lovett marched twice round her, as though she were performing some incantation, glaring at her all the while from top to toe.

Whatever was Mrs. Lovett's opinion of Johanna, however, she magnanimously kept it to herself; but the young girl had a sort of perception, that her suit had not escaped the keen and penetrating eyes of Mrs. Lovett. This conviction gave a great air of timidity to Johanna's manner in speaking to the bold bad woman who confronted her.

"And so he is out?" added Mrs. Lovett.

"Yes, madam."

"How long has he been gone?"

"Only a short time."

"Well, my principal business this day, is to see Mr. Todd. I have made such arrangements at home, that I can wait here the whole day if necessary, for see him I must—and see him I will; I had a sort of presentiment that he might be out, notwithstanding I have an appointment with him."

With this Mrs. Lovett sat down and composed herself evidently for a long wait—she did not sit in the shaving-chair though. Johanna thought that as she passed it, she rather shuddered; but that might have been a mere fancy upon the part of our young friend.

Mrs. Lovett was not exactly of the shuddering order of human beings.

"Did he say when he should return?"

"No, madam."

All these questions of Mrs. Lovett's were asked with a sneering kind of incredulity, that was quite sufficient to show Johanna how completely she disbelieved the statement concerning the absence of Todd. That she would wait until Todd was perforce obliged to show himself, Johanna did not doubt. There was something about the pale face and compressed

lips of Mrs. Lovett that at once bespoke such a determination; but should any scene of unusual violence ensue, Johanna made up her mind to rush from the shop, if near the door, and if not able to do that, to cast a missile through the window, which she knew would bring her immediate help.

"How long have you been with Mr. Todd?" asked Mrs. Lovett of Johanna.

"Only a few days, madam."

"And what made you come?"

"My necessities, madam. I was in want of a situation, and Mr. Todd wanted an errand boy."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Lovett. "This is very strange." She rested her head upon her hand for a few moments, and appeared to be lost in thought, and at times Johanna could see that she was keenly eyeing her. Truly, Johanna had never felt so thoroughly uncomfortable since she had been in Todd's shop, for she could not but feel that she was discovered.

The only question was now whether, when she did see Todd, Mrs. Lovett would think it worth her while to speak of the affair at all. The probability, however, was that she was too much engrossed in the business that brought her there to pay more than a passing attention to a mystery which, to all appearance, could not in any way concern her.

But Todd all this while was a prisoner in his own parlour, and it may easily be imagined how he chafed and fumed over such a state of things. If any convenient mode of taking the life of Mrs. Lovett had but presented itself to him, how gladly he would have embraced it; but none did; and after enduring the present state of affairs for about a quarter of an hour, he coolly opened the parlour door and walked into the shop as if nothing were amiss.

Mrs. Lovett was not at all taken by surprise at this proceeding. She merely rose and took a step towards the door, as she said, in a cool sarcastic tone—

"I am glad you have come home."

"Come home?" said Todd, with a well-acted look of surprise. "Come home? What do you mean, my dear madam? I am particularly glad to see you, and was particularly desirous to do so."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, to be sure. Really, do you know, I told the lad here, to deny me to anybody but you."

"And he made the slight mistake of denying you to me only."

"Is it possible?—Can such things be? Oh, you careless rascal. Upon my word, some employers would pull your ears—that they would. I'm ashamed of you—that I am. Really, Mrs. Lovett, these boys are always annoying one in some way or another; but walk in, if you please—walk in, and we will soon settle our little affairs."

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Lovett, "I prefer the shop, Mr. Todd."

"You don't say so?"

"You hear me say so, and you might know by this time, that when I say anything—I mean it."

"Of course, Mrs. Lovett, of course," said Todd; "I know you for a lady of infinite powers of mind—of great susceptibility—of feeling—of uncommon intellect and thrift. Please to step into the parlour, and I will settle with you at once, for I believe you call for a small trifle that you are entitled to from me, Mrs. Lovett."

"I do call for what I am entitled to, and I will have it here."

"Charley, just go to St. Dunstan's, my lad, and bring me word the exact time; and then, you can do it all under one, you know, just walk down Fleet-market, and see if you can find any love-apples, and if so, you can ask the price of them, and let me know."

"Yes, sir," said Johanna.

In another moment she was gone. Mrs. Lovett took another step nearer to the door, and actually laid her hand upon it to prevent it closing thoroughly. She did not think that she would be safe if it were shut; and then addressing Todd, she said—

"All disguise between you and I, is useless now, Todd. Give me my half of the money that has been earned by blood. It may have the curse of murder clinging to it, but I will have it—I say I will have it."

"Are you mad?"

"Not yet—not yet. But I shall be, and then it will be time for you to beware of me."

"Mrs. Lovett—Mrs. Lovett, is it not a melancholy thing, that you and I, who may be said to be at war with all the world, should begin to quarrel with each other? If we are not true to one another, what can we expect from others? Have we not for so long carried on our snug little business in safety, merely because we were good friends?"

"No, Todd, no. We never were friends—you know that as well as I do. It is a principal of human nature, that those who are associated together for wicked purposes are never friends. You and I have not been exceptions to the rule. We hate each other—we always did and will, you know it."

"Dear, dear!" said Todd, lifting up his hands, and approaching a step nearer to Mrs. Lovett. "This is afflicting—this is truly afflicting to hear such words from you, Mrs. Lovett."

"Keep off—keep off, I say! Another step, and I will at once into the street, and then to the passers-by scream out for public vengeance upon Todd the murderer!"

"Hush!—hush! God of Heaven! woman, what do you mean by speaking of murder in such a tone?"

"I mean, Todd, what I say; and what I threaten I will do. Keep off—keep off! I will not have you another step nearer to me with that hang-dog look."

"Moderate your tone, woman!" said Todd, as he stamped upon the floor of the shop; "moderate your tone, woman, or you will destroy yourself and me."

"I care not."

"You care not?—what do you mean by that? Have you gone mad in earnest? What do you mean by you care not? Has the scaffold any charms for you?"

"It might have for once, with you for a companion on it, Sweeney Todd; but if I am desperate and reckless, you have yourself to thank for it. Well you know that, Todd. I have toiled, and sinned, and murdered, for what you have done the same, for gold!—Gold was the God of my idolatry, and it was yours. We both seized the same idea. We both saw how gold alone was worshipped in the land. We saw how Heaven was affected to be worshipped by all; but we found out that gold was the real divinity. We saw that it was for the lucre of gain that the priest clothed himself in the garments of his pretended ministry, and spake his mock prayers to the people. We saw that it was for gold only that the rulers of the land struggled and fought. We found that the love and the worship of gold was the true religion of all; and we sought to possess ourselves of the idol."

"Mad!—mad!" cried Todd.

"No, I speak sanely enough now. I say, we found out that by the possession of gold in christian, canting, religious, virtuous England, we should find many worshippers. We found out that thousands upon thousands would bend the knee to us on that account, and on that account only. If we were paragons of virtue, we might rot and starve; but if we were monsters of vice, if we had but gold, and kept but by the side of the law, we should be kings—emperors upon the earth."

"Bah! bah! bah!" cried Todd.

"Well, we took a royal road to our object. We murdered for it, Todd. You dipped your hands in gore, and I helped you. Yes, I do not deny that I helped you."

"Peace, woman!"

"I will not hold my peace. The time has come for you to hear me, and I will make you do so. I will speak trumpet-tongued, and if you like not that word murder, I will shriek it in your ears. If you like not the word blood, I will on the house-tops proclaim and tell the people that it is synonymous with Todd. Ha! ha! You shrink now."

CHAPTER XCVI.
THE BOAT ON THE RIVER.

Todd did shrink aghast. This wild vehemence of Mrs. Lovett's was something that he did not expect. Every word that she uttered filled him with alarm. He began really to think that she had gone mad, and that he might have everything to dread from her wild vehemence, and that probably he had gone too far in cheating her out of the result of her labours.

"Peace," he said. "Peace, and you shall be satisfied."

"I will be satisfied."

"Well, well, of course you shall. But you cannot be if you destroy both yourself and me, which your present conduct threatens."

"I tell you I joined with you in murder for the love of gold, and I will have my recompense. Give me that which is mine own. I will have it, or I will drag you with me to the halter. Do you understand that, Sweeney Todd? I ask you, do you understand that?"

"It is plain enough," said Todd.

"Then give me my gold—gold for blood. Give it to me, and let me go."

"You are really so precipitate. Upon my word, Mrs. Lovett, you are quite an altered woman, that you are. I certainly never did expect to hear such language from you. Any one would think that you had an idea I meant to cheat you."

Mrs. Lovett made an impatient gesture, but Todd continued—

"Now, anything more repugnant to my feelings than that could not possibly be, I assure you; and I consider you fully entitled to £22,000 8s. 3d., which is precisely your half of the proceeds of the little business."

"Give me the money."

"Now, do you suppose, Mrs. Lovett, that I am so green as to keep here in the house no less a sum than £22,000 8s. 3d.? You really must think I have taken leave of my senses, to dream for one moment of such a thing."

"Where is it, then?—where is it? I see you are bent upon driving me mad."

"Why, really, Mrs. L., it would be insulting you to say that you were perfectly in your right senses at this moment; but come, sit down, and we will see what can be done. Sit down, and compose yourself."

"In the shaving chair"

"Ha—ha, that's a good joke. In the shaving chair! Ha—ha! No Mrs. L., I don't exactly want to polish you off. Sit down where you like, but not in the shaving chair, if you don't fancy it, Mrs. L. Pray sit down."

"For you to cut my throat?"

"What?"

"I say, for you to cut my throat? Do you think I am not sharp sighted enough to see that razor partially hidden in your sleeve? No, Todd, I am well aware that you are panting to murder me. I tell you I know it, and it is useless your making the faintest attempt to conceal it. The fact is broad and evident; but I am upon my guard, and I am armed likewise, Todd."

"Armed?"

"Yes, Todd, I am armed, and you are terrified at the idea, as I knew you would be. Nothing to you is so horrible as death. You who have sent so many from the world, will yourself go from it howling with fright. I am armed, but I do not mean to tell you how."

"You are wrong, Mrs. Lovett. What on earth would be the use of my taking your life?"

"You would have all then."

"All? What do I want with all? I am not a young man now, and all I wish is the means of enjoyment for the remainder of my days. That I can well command with a less sum than my half of that which we have to divide will come to. I have no one that I care to leave a sixpence to, and therefore what need I trouble myself to hoard? You are quite mistaken, Mrs. Lovett."

"Give me my money then."

"I will, of course; but I tell you it is at the banker's, Messrs. Grunt, Mack, Stickinton, and Fubbs. Yes, that is the name of the highly respectable firm in whose hands for the present both my money and yours is deposited; and from the high character of the house, I should say it could not possibly be in safer hands."

"My share will be quite safe with me, or if unsafe, you need not care. I will have it."

"Step into the parlour, and I will write you an order for your half, and you can get it in half an hour."

"No Todd. You will make the attempt to murder me if I step into the parlour. I will not even come further into your shop, than here upon the threshold of it, with the door in my hand. Why do you keep a razor concealed in your sleeve?"

"Oh—I—It's a little habit of mine; but allow me to assure you how very incorrect your suspicions are, Mrs. Lovett; and if you will not come in, I will write the order, and bring it to you; or what do you say to my going with you to the bankers, where you can yourself ask what is the amount of the sum standing in my name there; and when you have ascertained it, you can have half of it to a sixpence."

"Come, then. I confess, Todd, I am sufficiently suspicious of you, that I would rather not lose sight of you."

"Dear me, how dreadful it is for friends to be in such a state of feeling towards each other, to be sure. But the time will come, Mrs. Lovett, when you will see my conduct in a different light, and you will smile at the suspicion which you say you now entertain, but which sometimes I cannot help thinking are not the genuine sentiments of your heart."

"Come—come, at once."

"I must wait for the boy; I cannot leave the shop until the boy is here to mind it in my absence.—Oh, here he is."

At this moment, Johanna, who had not troubled herself to go to the market at all, came back.

"Well, what is the exact time," said Todd, "by St. Dunstan's?"

"A quarter-past eleven, sir."

"How very satisfactory. I am only going a little way with this lady, and will soon be back. You can keep up the fire, Charley, and in that corner you will find some religious tracts, which will I hope improve your mind. Above all things, my lad, never neglect your religious exercises. I hope you said your prayers last night, Charley?"

"I did, sir," said Johanna, and she said it with a look that added the query, "did you say your's?"

Todd hesitated a moment, as though something were passing through his mind respecting Johanna, and then he muttered to himself—

"There is time enough, yet."

No doubt he had begun to entertain serious suspicions of Master Charley, and in those few words was alluding to his intention of taking his life before the coming night.

"Now, my dear Mrs. Lovett," said Todd, as he put on his hat, and pressed it down unusually over his brows, "I am ready."

"And I," she said.

Todd only glanced round the shop, to be certain that he had left everything as he wished it, and he tried the parlour door. Then he at once stalked into Fleet Street, followed by Mrs. Lovett.

"It will look better for you to take my arm," he said.

"I don't care how it looks," she replied. "All I want is my money. Do not touch me, or you will see good cause shortly to me having done so. Go on and I will follow you; but if you attempt to escape me, I will raise the street in pursuit of you, by screaming out that you are Todd the mur—"

"Hush—hush, woman. Do you know where you are?"

"Yes, in the street, but I do not care. All I want is my money, and I will have it."

"Curses on you and your money too," muttered Todd, as he crossed Fleet Street, and turned up Bridge Street at a rapid pace. He passed all the turnings leading to the city, and kept on his way towards the bridge.

Mrs. Lovett followed him closely.

"Stop!" she said. "Stop!"

Todd stopped and turned about. He was mortally afraid that she would carry out some of her threats if he exhibited anything of a restive spirit towards her.

"Whither are you going?" she said. "This is not the way to the City."

"It is by the Thames."

"By the Thames?"

"Yes, I go by water; I do not wish to run the risk of meeting all sorts of people in the streets. I have not communicated to you that we are in great danger, but it is a fact. I do not now think that I shall get fairly off, but you will, if I am not interfered with before you get your money. By taking a boat at the stairs here by Blackfriars Bridge, we can be landed at a spot within about twenty yards of the banking-house, which will be by far the safer route."

Mrs. Lovett did not much fancy the river excursion; but she considered that after all there would be a waterman in the boat, and that the river at that time of the day was populous, so she thought that Todd dared not attempt anything.

"Very well," she said; "so that we are quick, I care not."

"I am to the full," said Todd, "as anxious as you can be to get the job settled."

Mrs. Lovett thought that there was something ominous in the way in which he pronounced the word "job;" but then she thought perhaps she was too critical, and she followed him to the stairs by the side of the old bridge, certainly not without suspicions, but they were only general ones. The idea struck her, however, that she should be safer with two watermen, and she said—

"We will have two men, and by so doing we shall go quicker down the stream."

"So we shall," said Todd; "it is a good idea. Hilloa! first oars, here—first oars!"

"Here you are, sir," said a waterman.

"We want a couple of you," said Todd.

"Yes, your honour. Here we are—me and my mate. All's right, your honour. Now, Bill, look alive.—Mind the step, ma'am. That's yer sort. Where to, your honour?"

"To Pigs Quay."

"Ay, ay. Give way, Bill, give way. A nice day for the water, your honour; a fine fresh air, and not too much of it. Easy, Bill."

"Very," said Todd, as he took his place beside Mrs. Lovett in the stern of the boat, which in a moment, propelled by the vigorous strokes of the two rowers, shot out into the middle of the stream. He whispered to Mrs. Lovett—"Now, how delightful it would be if you and I, with all our money, were going from England to-day!"

"No."

"No? Why, I cannot conceive anything more pleasant. Ha! ha!"

Both Todd and Mrs. Lovett were so much occupied in watching each other, that they did not perceive another boat push off from the same stairs at which they had embarked with two men in it, and which kept in their wake pretty closely. The two watermen of Todd's boat, however, saw it, and they looked at each other, but they said nothing. They went upon the wise plan, that it was no business of theirs; and so they pulled away, while Todd glanced uneasily into the pale face of Mrs. Lovett.

To say that Mrs. Lovett kept an eye upon Todd, would be but faintly to express the feline-like watchfulness with which she regarded him, as they sat together in the boat. There was not the slightest movement of his eye—the least twitch of a muscle of his face, that she did not observe, and strive to draw some conclusion from; and he felt that his very soul was being looked into by that bold woman, who had been the companion of his iniquity, and whom he was now plotting and planning, by some mad desperate means, to deprive of her share of that ill-gotten wealth, which never in this world, even if ten times the amount, could make either of them happy.

CHAPTER XCVII.
THE ATTEMPTED MURDER ON THE THAMES.

The boat that followed Todd did not, after a time, keep quite in the wake of the one containing him and Mrs. Lovett. It rather went on a line parallel to it, but it kept at a convenient distance; and there were those in that boat, who never took an eye off Todd and his female accomplice.

It must not be for one moment supposed that Mrs. Lovett was quite deceived by Todd's representations concerning the money; but then it must be considered that, with all her cunning, that lady was in a very difficult position indeed—one that it was impossible to change for the better.

If she had boldly told Todd that she doubted—nay, that she absolutely disbelieved all that he said about the money being lodged with a firm in the city, she gained nothing, but simply placed herself in a position that forced upon her some violent action.

What that action could be would have been Mrs. Lovett's great difficulty. Of course she would have had no trouble in the world in going at once to a police-office, and denouncing Todd. That, to be sure, would have been a great revenge; but then, in the midst of all her anger, she did not forget that by so doing she had to criminate herself, and from that moment put an end to all her dreams of revelling in some foreign land upon the produce of her crimes.

Situated, then, as she was, Mrs. Lovett felt that she had no sort of resource but to follow Todd up, as it were—to keep close to him, and partly to worry him, and partly to shame him into doing her justice. Well she knew that he was upon the point of fleeing from the scene of his iniquities; and well she knew what a hindrance it would be to his arrangements to have her at his elbow continually.

And so she thought that he would see it was better to pay her, and be rid of her, and so every one would have thought; but Todd's nature was of that mad implacable character, that anything in the shape of opposition only made a wish a passion.

"I will not pay her," he muttered to himself, "if my refusal so to do brings us both to the gallows!"

If Mrs. Lovett could have dived sufficiently deep into Todd's mind to be aware of this sentiment, she might have changed her tactics; but who could have thought it? Who could have supposed that any passion but self-preservation could master all others in his mind?

The two boats sped on towards London Bridge—not the elegant structure that now spans the Thames, but the previous one, with its narrow arches, and its dangerous fall of water when the tide was ebbing, which was the case upon this occasion.

The watermen looked uneasily at the arch through which it would be necessary to go, and where the tide was raging with unexampled fury, and lashing the sides of the arch like a mill-stream, bearing upon its surface millions of bubbles, and making such a seething roaring sound, that it was a point of attraction to some idle chance passengers upon the bridge to watch any adventurous wherry as it shot through the dangerous passage.

"A rough tide, Bill," growled one of the watermen.

"Ay," said the other. "Do you want to go through the bridge, master?"

Todd smiled grimly as he replied by asking a question.

"Is it dangerous?"

"Why, you see, master, it may be or it may not. But we are not the sort to say no, if a fare says as he wants to go through the bridge. To be sure there be times when there is a squall upon the river, and then any man may say no."

"But that is not now," said Todd.

"No, master, that is not now, so if you must go through the bridge, only say so, and through we go. We have been lots o' times when it's as bad, ay, and perhaps a trifle waser than it is now. Haven't we, Bill?"

"Ay, ay."

"If," said Todd, "the lady has no particular objection."

"Can we not land upon this side of the bridge?" said Mrs. Lovett.

"In course, ma'am," said one of the boatmen. "In course, ma'am."

"But," added Todd hastily, "we must, then, until to-morrow, abandon the business upon which we came, as landing upon this side of the bridge will not suit me by any means."

"Pass through," cried Mrs. Lovett sternly. "I for one will not abandon the business upon which I came, except with my life. It is more than life to me, and I will go upon it, let it lead me where it may."

"And I," said Todd, in a voice of great indifference, "I, too, am of precisely that opinion. So through the bridge we must go at any risk, if you, my men, will take us."

"Pull away. Bill," was the only reply of the waterman. "Pull away, Bill, and keep her steady. On we go."

By this time a curious throng of persons had assembled on the bridge to watch the wherry, for previous to its approach two others had declined the dangerous passage of the arch, and had landed their passengers at a small stairs some distance from the strong eddying current that leaped and bubbled through the arch. It was therefore something of a treat for

the crowd to see their boat make for the dreaded spot, an evident determination on the part of the rowers to shoot through the arch of the bridge if it were possible so to do.

No one spoke on board the boat. The watermen pulled very steady into the current, keeping over their shoulders a wary eye upon the head of the boat. Todd's eyes gleamed like two coals of fire, and Mrs. Lovett was as pale as death itself.

Perhaps at that moment she reflected that she had trusted herself with all her sins on board that little boat amid the wild rush of waters; but if she did, she said nothing. Neither by word nor by action did she give indication of the fear that was tugging at her heart.

And now the little wherry was floating in the boiling surge that flew towards the arch, and made when it got there such a battle to get through. There was no occasion for pulling. The only good they could now do with their oars was to steady the little craft, and so far as was possible to keep her head to the current.

That this was done by the two watermen with admirable and practised skill, every one who watched the progress of the party from the bridge or elsewhere could perceive; and now the critical moment was at hand, and the boat being caught like a reed, was swept under the bridge by the rapid current.

"Easy, Bill," cried one of the men.

"Easy it is," said the other.

"You will upset us, my dear madam," said Todd, "if you move;" and then, while the two men were fully engaged with the boat, and by far too much occupied with the necessary movements for the preservation of themselves and their little craft, Todd, with one blow upon the head, struck Mrs. Lovett overboard.

She uttered a piercing shriek.

"What's that?—what's that?" cried the boatmen.

The boat scraped against the side of the arch for a moment, and then shot through it with a terrific bound into the comparatively still water on the other side of the bridge.

"I'm afraid," said Todd, "that the lady has fallen overboard."

"Afraid!" cried one of the watermen. "Why, good God! don't you see she has; and there she goes, along with the stream. Pull away, Bill; don't you see her? There she goes!"

"Alas, poor thing!" said Todd.

Old London Bridge.—Todd Tries His Murderous Hand On Mrs. Lovett.

Old London Bridge.—Todd Tries His Murderous Hand On Mrs. Lovett.

He affected to be overcome by his feelings, and to be compelled to rest his head upon his hands, while he kept his hot-looking blood-shot eyes fixed upon the form of Mrs. Lovett in the water.

And now a scene ensued of deep interest to Todd—a scene which he watched with the greatest attention. It was a scene upon the issue of which he felt that his life depended.

If Mrs. Lovett were saved, his life would not be worth an hour's purchase. If she were drowned, he was, so he fancied, a free man; and he saw that from the shore several boats put off after her, while the two men in his wherry pulled as though their lives depended upon hers.

Todd could have struck them for the exertions that they were making, but he dared not even speak one deprecating word to make them pause. He was condemned only to watch what was going on; and truly a most interesting scene it was.

Mrs. Lovett had on a large cloak, and it was by the aid of that, as well as by the strength of the current, that she floated so long as to make it quite remarkable, and to induce the opinion in the minds of some of the spectators that she was swimming.

Suddenly, just as a boat that had put off from the stairs by the Custom House reached her, down she went.

"Gone!" said Todd.

"Yes, she's gone," said one of the watermen. "She's gone, poor thing, whoever she was, and no one will get her now."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Ah, master, as sure as may be; but you are a witness that it was no fault of ours, master."

"Certainly," said Todd. "The fact is, that she got alarmed the moment the boat shot under the arch, and rose up. I tried to catch her, but she toppled over into the water."

"Natural enough, sir. If she did get up, over she was sure to go. Did you hear what a shriek she gave, Bill? My eye, if I don't dream of that, I'm a Dutchman! I fancy it is ringing in my ears. Yet I have heard a few odd sounds on the river in my time, but that was the very worst."

"And she is gone," said Todd. "Why does that boat linger there upon the spot where she went down? Stay—stay, I cannot see if you pull into shore so quick. Now that barge is between me and the boat."

"There's nothing to see now, sir."

"Well—well. That will do—that will do. Poor creature! Viewing it in one way, my friends, it's a happy release, for she was a little touched in her intellect, poor thing; but it's dreadful to lose one to whom you are much attached; notwithstanding, I shall shed many a tear over her loss, and of the two I had really much rather it had been myself. Alas! alas! you see how deeply affected I am!"

"It's no use grieving, sir."

"Not a whit—not a whit. I know that, but I can't help it. Take that and divide it between you. I give it to you as a kind of assurance that it is not your fault the poor thing fell overboard."

"Thank your honour," said the man in whose huge palm Todd had placed a guinea. "We may be asked who you are possibly, sir, if the body should be found."

"Oh, certainly—certainly," said Todd, "that is well thought of. I am the Rev. Silas Mugginthorpe, preacher at the new chapel in Little Britain. Will you remember?"

"Oh, yes sir. All's right."

Todd ascended the slippery steps of the little landing-place with an awfully demoniac chuckle upon his face, and when he reached the top of them he struck his breast with his clenched hand, as he said in a voice of fierce glee—

"'Tis done—'tis done. Ha, ha, ha! 'Tis done. Why, Mrs. Lovett, you have surely been singularly indiscreet to-day. Ha, ha! Food for fishes, if fishes can live in the Thames. Ha, ha! Farewell, Mrs. Lovett, a long farewell to you. So—so you thought, did you, to get the better of Sweeney Todd? To stick to him like a bear until he should be compelled to, what you called, settle with you? Well, he has settled with you—he has! Ha, ha!"

Thus in wild ferocious glee did Todd walk through the city back to his own house after perpetrating this the worst murder, if there can be at all degrees in murder, that he had ever done. People got out of his way as they heard his wild demoniac laugh, and many, after one glance at his awful face, crossed over to the other side of the street with precipitation.

"Good-day, Mrs. Lovett," he kept muttering. "A charming day, Mrs. Lovett, and charmingly you look to-day, only a little swelled and bloated with the water. You wish me to settle with you? Oh, of course, I will settle with you before we part. Ha, ha!"

Todd had never been so thoroughly pleased in all his life. More than once he stopped in the street to laugh, and twice on his route he called at noted hostels in the city to refresh himself with a glass of something strong and hot. He fancied that he wore upon his countenance quite an amiable aspect, and if one can fancy the devil himself looking sentimental, or an ogre looking religious and humane, we may have some sort of mixed idea of how Todd looked when he was amiable.

In this blissful condition he reached Fleet Street, and just as he crossed the way from Ludgate Hill to the top of Fleet Market he was accosted by a miserable-looking woman in widow's weeds, with a girl in one hand and a boy in the other. They were begging, that was evident, for each of the children, and genteel pleasant-looking children they were, although now dejected by destitution, had upon its breast a little written paper with the one word, "Want" upon it. That word ought to have been sufficient to unlock the hearts of the passers by, and yet how the crowd hurried on!

The Widow Asks For Charity Of Her Husband's Murderer
—Todd.

The Widow Asks For Charity Of Her Husband's Murderer
—Todd.

"Oh, Mr. Todd," said the woman, "can you spare a trifle for the little ones?"

"Who are you," he said, "that you address me by my name, woman?"

"My name is Cummins, sir. Don't you recollect how my poor husband, John Cummins, went out one day about a month ago, to carry the watch-cases he had to polish to his employers, saying that he would call at your shop and be shaved before he went into the city, and didn't call, sir, as you kindly told me, but has never been heard of since? The city people

will have it that he ran away; but ah, sir, I know him better. Would he run away from me and from those that he loved so well? Oh, no—no—no, I know John better."

CHAPTER XCVIII.
JOHANNA HAS A VISITOR WHILE TODD IS GONE UPON THE RIVER.

"Well?" said Todd.

"Well, sir, I was thinking that—that you might spare a trifle for the children, sir. They are starving—do you hear, Mr. Todd?—they are starving, and have no father now."

"What was the value of the watch-cases your husband had with him, Mrs. Cummins, when he disappeared?"

"About a hundred pounds, sir, they tell me. But don't you believe, sir, for one moment that John deserted me and these—ah no, sir."

"You really think so?"

"I am sure of it, sir, quite—quite sure of it. He loved me, sir, and these—he did indeed, sir. You will help us, Mr. Todd—oh, say that you will do what you can for us."

"Certainly, my good woman—certainly. What is this little fellow's name, Mrs. Cummins?"

"William—William is his name," said the poor woman, in such a flurry from the idea of what Todd was going to do for the children that she could hardly speak, but caught her breath hysterically. "His name is William, Mr. Todd."

"And this little girl, ma'am?"

"Ann, sir—Ann. That is her name, Mr. Todd. The same, if you please, sir, as her poor mother's. Look up, Ann, my dear, and courtesy to the gentleman. God bless you, Mr. Todd, for thinking of me and mine. God bless you, sir!"

"Ann and William," said Todd, "Ann and William; and very nice children they are, too, in my opinion, Mrs. Cummins."

"They are good children, sir." Mrs. Cummins burst into tears at the idea of what Todd was going to do for the children, for the whole of the parish was impressed with the idea that he was well to do. "They are very good children Mr. Todd; and although a charge to me, are still a blessing; for now that John is gone, they seem to hold me to the world, sir."

"Well, Mrs. Cummins, I am glad you have applied to me, for if you had not, I certainly should not have known the names of your children. As it is, however, whenever I pray, I will think of them, and of you; and in the meantime, I commend you to the care of that Providence which, of course, cannot permit the widow and the fatherless to want anything in this world, or the next either."

Todd walked leisurely on.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed. "Good again. What have I to do with charity, or charity with me? I am at war with all the world, and at war with Heaven, too, if there be one, which I will not admit! No, no—I will not admit that."

While Todd was away upon this errand of getting rid of Mrs. Lovett, which we have seen he has accomplished so much to his satisfaction, Johanna was not entirely without visitors. The excellent watch that was kept upon the movements of Todd, in their minutest particular, by Sir Richard Blunt and his officers, let them know perfectly well that Todd was from home; but it was not from them that Johanna had her first visit after Todd was gone.

He had not left the shop above ten minutes when Johanna heard a mysterious noise outside the door of it. It sounded as if someone were scraping it with something. At first she felt a little uneasy at the sound, but as it increased she calmed herself, and resolved upon ascertaining what it was.

Turning to the door, cautiously she opened it a little way. That was quite sufficient to dispel any fears that she might have, for the paw of a dog was immediately thrust through the opening; and when upon this Johanna opened the door freely, Hector, with a loud bark, dashed into the shop.

So fierce was the dog's demeanour, that Johanna shrank aside, but master Hector saw with half an eye that he had frightened her, so he went up to her, and licked her hand in token of amity, after which he barked loudly at the shop, as though he would have said, "Mind though I am friends with you, I am still the uncompromising foe of all else in this place."

"Alas poor dog," said Johanna as the tears rushed to her eyes, "you will never see your master again."

The young girl's grief for the loss of her lover seemed all to be roused up freshly from the depths of her heart at this appearance of the dog, which she had some reason to believe had been the companion of Mark Ingestrie. She sat down upon the little stool by the fire, and covering face with her hands, she wept bitterly.

In the meantime, Hector, finding that Todd was not there to do battle with him, made up his mind for a grand rummage in the shop; and truly he conducted it with a perseverance and a recklessness of consequences that was wonderful. He was on the counter that ran along under the window—he was under it—he was on every shelf, and he tore open every cupboard; but alas! poor Hector could find no token of his lost master. At length the howling and the scratching that he made induced Johanna to look up to see what he wanted. She was rather appalled at the

confusion he had created, and she could not think what he wanted until she found that there was a shelf at the top of the cupboard, that was equally out of her reach as it was out of his.

"I cannot help you, my poor friend," she said. "There seems to be nothing on that shelf."

Hector, however, having retired to a remote corner of the shop, and got on a chair in order that he might get a good look at the shelf, was of a different opinion; and, finding that he was not to calculate upon any help from Johanna, he made various springs up to the shelf with his mouth open, until at last he caught hold of a little bit of tape that seemed to be hanging over the edge of it.

The tape was attached to something, which Hector immediately, with a loud bark of defiance, took possession of, partly by standing upon it, and partly by holding it in his mouth. Upon stooping to see what this was, Johanna discovered that it was a waistcoat of blue cloth.

At first Hector did not seem much to fancy even letting her look at it; but after looking intently in her face for a few moments, he very quietly resigned it to her, only he kept very close to it while she turned it round and round and looked at it. It might have been Mark Ingestrie's. It looked something like the sort of garment that a master mariner might be supposed to wear, and the evident recognition of it by the dog spoke wonders in favour of the supposition that it had belonged to his master at one time or another.

Johanna thought that in one of the pockets there seemed something, and upon putting in her hand she found a small piece of paper folded in four. To undo it was the work of a moment, and then she saw upon it the following words:—

"Mr. Oakley, Spectacle-maker, 33, Fore Street, City."

Her senses seemed upon the point of deserting her. Every object for a moment appeared to whirl round her in a mad dance. Who should know better—ah, who should know half so well as she—the handwriting which

conveyed those few words to her senses? It was the handwriting of her lost lover, Mark Ingestrie!

"Hilloa! Pison, is you here?" cried a voice at the shop door at this moment.

Johanna started to her feet.

"Who are you?—what do you want?" she cried. "Murder!—murder! He has been foully murdered, I say; I will swear it—I—I—God help me!"

With the little scrap of paper in her hand, she staggered back until she came to the huge shaving-chair, into which she sank with a long-drawn sigh.

"Why, what's the row?" said the man, who was no other than Hector's friend, the ostler, from the inn opposite. "What's the row? Now what an out-and-out willain of a dog you is, Pison, to cut over here like bricks as soon as you can git loose to do so. Don't you know that old Todd is a busting to do you an ill turn some o' these days? and yet you will come, you hidiot."

"Mr. Todd is out," said Johanna.

"Oh, is he, my little man? Well, the devil go with him, that's all I say. Come along, that's a good dog."

Pison only wagged his tail in recognition of the friendly feeling between him and the ostler, and then he kept quite close to Johanna and the waistcoat, which the moment he saw her drop, he laid hold of, and held tight with such an expression as was quite enough to convince the ostler he would not readily give it up again.

"Now what a hanimal you is," cried the ostler. "Whose blessed veskut is that you as got?"

"He found it here," said Johanna. "Did you see his master on the day when he came here?"

"No, my little chap, I didn't; but I don't care who knows it—it's my 'pinion that whosomedever his master was, old Sweeney Todd, your master, knows more on him than most folks. Come away, Pison, will you?"

The dog did not now show much disinclination to follow the ostler, but he kept the waistcoat firmly in his grasp, as he left the shop after him. Johanna still held that little scrap of paper in her hand, and oh! what a world of food for reflection did it present her with. Was it, or was it not, an establishment of the fact of Mark Ingestrie having been Todd's victim? That was the question that Johanna put to herself, as through her tears, that fell like rain, she gazed upon that paper, with those few words upon it, in the well-known hand of her lover.

The more Johanna reflected upon this question, the more difficult a one did she find it to answer in any way that was at all satisfactory to her feelings. The strong presumption that Mark Ingestrie had fallen a victim to Todd had not been sufficiently obliterated by all that Sir Richard Blunt had said to her to free her mind from a strong bias to fancy anything that transpired at Todd's a corroboration of that fact.

"Yes," she said, mournfully, "yes, poor—poor Mark. Each day only adds to my conviction that you became this man's victim, and that that fatal String of Pearls, which you fondly thought would be a means of uniting us together by removing the disabilities of want of fortune, has been your death. That waistcoat, which your faithful dog has carried with him, is another relic of you, and this scrap of paper is but another link in the chain of circumstances that convinces me we shall never meet again in this world."

Poor Johanna was absolutely reasoning herself into an agony of grief, when the door of the shop opened, and an old man with white hair made his appearance.

"Is Mr. Todd within?" he said.

"No, sir," replied Johanna.

"And is it possible," added the old man, straightening himself up, "that I am disguised so well that even you do not know me, Johanna?"

In a moment now she recognised the voice. It was that of Sir Richard Blunt.

"Oh, sir," she said, "I do indeed know you now, and I am very—very wretched."

"Has anything new occurred, Johanna, to produce this feeling?"

"Yes, sir. The dog, that my heart tells me belonged to poor Mark, has been over here, and with a rare instinct he found a piece of apparel, in the pocket of which was this paper. It is in *his* writing. I know it too—too well to be denied. Ah, sir, you, even you, will no longer now seek to delude me with false hopes. But do not tarry here, sir; Todd has been long gone, and may at any chance moment come back again."

"Be at rest upon that point, Johanna. He cannot come back without my being made aware of it by my friends without. But tell me in what way you attach such serious importance to this piece of paper, Johanna?"

"In what way, my dear friend? Do I not say that it is in poor Mark's own handwriting? How could it come here unless he brought it? Oh, sir, do not ask me in what way I attach importance to it. Rather let me ask you how, otherwise than upon the supposition of his having become one of Todd's victims, can you account for its being here at all?"

"Really," said Sir Richard, "this Mark Ingestrie must have been a very forgetful young man."

"Forgetful?"

"Yes. It seems that it was necessary for him to carry your name and address in his pocket. Now if he had given such a slip of paper as this to another person for fear he should forget what was not so deeply imprinted in his memory I should not have wondered at it for a moment."

Johanna clasped her hands and looked the magistrate in the face, as she said—

"Then, sir, you think—that is, you believe—that—that this is no proof of poor Mark having been here?"

"As I hope for mercy in Heaven, it is to my mind a proof the other way, Johanna."

She burst into a passion of hysterical weeping. Sir Richard Blunt knew too much of human nature to interfere by word or gesture, with this effort of nature to relieve the overchanged heart, and he waited patiently, affecting to be looking upon some old prints upon the wall until he heard the sobs decrease to sighs. Then he turned with a smile to Johanna, and said—

"My dear girl, gather hope from that scrap of paper, not despair. Depend upon it the address of your father held too conspicuous a place in the heart of him who loved you to require that it should have been written upon a piece of paper. You know that my theory on the subject is that Mr. Thornhill was actually sent to you by Mark Ingestrie, and that it was he who perished here."

"And Mark himself—if that were so?"

"His fate has still to be elucidated; but that he perished here I do not believe, as I have often told you."

"This is an exquisite relief," said Johanna, as she laid her hand upon her heart.

"Make much of it," said Sir Richard; "something even yet seems to tell me that you will be happy. I cannot think it possible that Heaven would permit such a man as Todd to destroy your earthly felicity. But how comes the shop in such confusion?"

"It was the dog. He would look everywhere, and I had not the heart nor the strength to prevent him. Todd has a horror of him; and fright will keep him quiet when I tell him the cause of the mischief that is done here."

"Perhaps then it will be better to leave it as it is," said Sir Richard, "than awaken his suspicions by attempting to put the place to rights, in which you might fail in some particulars known to him. And now tell me, Johanna, what passed between him and this Mrs. Lovett?"

"But a few words, sir, before I was sent out. There is one thing though that I suspect, and that is that Mrs. Lovett has found out my secret."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, she regarded me with a strange gaze that made me feel that she penetrated my disguise. I know not if she will say as much to Todd, but one glance of his eye upon me when he returns will satisfy me upon that, I think."

At this moment a bugle sounded in Fleet Street.

"That is my signal," said Sir Richard. "Todd is coming. I will be close at hand, Johanna, lest Mrs. Lovett has told him your secret, and you should find yourself in any danger. Farewell! Heaven hold you in its keeping."

CHAPTER XCIX.
THE COOK FEELS THAT ALL THE WORLD NEGLECTS HIM, AND THEN HE GETS A LETTER.

Sir Richard Blunt left the shop, and Johanna had just time to conceal the scrap of paper which she had found in the waistcoat, and to seem to be busy at the fire, when Todd made his appearance. She had never seen such a grim smile upon Todd's face as it now wore. He was for once in his life fairly pleased. When had he made such a morning's work as that? Not even in his acquisition of those fatal Pearls had he gained so much as by that one slight push that had sent Mrs. Lovett and her claims into the river so neatly.

No wonder Sweeney Todd was elated and delighted. He had all the money now to himself. There was no one now to say to him "Where is my share?" He had all the produce of another's awful criminality to add to his own. Was he not thus a very happy man for a little while?

The sunshine of the heart was not a thing to last long in such a bosom as Sweeney Todd's. His was not that sweet and lasting hilarity of soul that can alone arise from a deep and sincere consciousness of right. No! The fierce delight of a successful stroke of villany may for a time resemble happiness, but it is a resemblance as weak as that between the faint watery ray of a winter's sun and the full blaze of the god-like luminary in all the beauty of the vernal season.

But for the time, we say, Todd was pleased, and the demoniac triumph of his soul beamed forth from his eyes and played around the puckered corners of his huge mouth.

"Well, Charley," he said, "how goes it with you, my lad?"

Johanna stared as well she might to hear Todd speak in such a mild pacific sort of way.

"Sir?" she said.

"I say, how goes it with you, my good boy. How have you passed the time in my unavoidable absence upon a little business?"

"Quite tolerable, sir, thank you, with the exception that a dog pushed his way into the shop, and, as you see, sir, has made some confusion."

"A dog?"

"Yes, sir. A large one, black and white. I had no strength to turn him out, so he had his will in the shop, and tossed the things about as you see, sir."

"My malediction upon that confounded dog. He is mad, Charley, I tell you, he is stark, staring mad. Why did you not throw open razors at him until one had transfixed him?"

"I don't like touching the razors, sir."

"You don't—you don't? He! he! What will he think when one touches him?" muttered Todd to himself as he turned aside and made a movement as though cutting a throat. "You don't like touching the razors, Charley?"

"No, sir, I thought you would be angry if I had, so the dog had all his own way here. I would have put the place to rights, but I thought you aught to see it as it is."

"Right, my boy—right. To-morrow will be quite time enough to put it to rights. Yes, to-morrow. Has any one called, Charley?"

"No, sir."

"Well I am glad of that, for when one is off upon an action of charity one don't like one's business to suffer as well. It's quite unknown what I give away, and I always like to see the object myself, you know, Charley, as I find I can then better adapt my benevolence to their real wants, which is a great—a very great object."

"I should think it was, sir."

"You are a clever observant lad, Charley, and you will, when you leave me, I feel convinced, drop into a genteel independence. You will want for nothing then, I feel quite assured, Charley."

"You are very good, sir."

"I strive to be good, Charley, and by the help of the gospel we may all be good to some extent—sinners that we are. Now, simple as is, it's really a great thing to be supplied in an unlimited manner with cold water."

"No doubt of it, sir."

"Well, I have supplied the person to whom my benevolence has extended this morning, with, I hope, an unlimited quantity, and always fresh. He!"

Todd here executed one of his awful laughs, and then went into his parlour grinning at his own hideous facetiousness over the murder he had committed. Johanna had managed to say, from time to time, what was expected by way of answer to him, but it was with a shuddering consciousness that he had been about some great crime that she did so; and when he had left the shop, she said faintly to herself—

"He has murdered Mrs. Lovett."

It was sufficient, if Todd went out with an enemy and came home jocular, to conclude what had happened. That person then might be fairly presumed to be no more, and hence, with a shudder of horror pervading her frame, did Johanna whisper to herself—

"He has surely murdered Mrs. Lovett."

The first thing that Todd did when he was alone in his parlour, and the door fast, was to produce the memoranda he had made of all that he had to do previous to leaving England. One item ran thus:—

"Mem. To pay Mrs. Lovet in full."

After that item he wrote *paid*, and then he laughed again in his hideous way, and leaning his head upon his hand, or rather his chin upon it, he spoke in a chuckling tone.

"She will turn up some day—yes, she will turn up some day, and the swollen disgusting mass, that was once the bold and glittering Mrs. Lovett, will be pulled through the river mud by a boat-hook, and then there will be an inquest, and a verdict of found drowned, with a statement that the body was in too advanced a state of decomposition to be identified. Ha!"

Todd actually rubbed his hands together, and then he took a good drop of brandy, and felt himself quite a pleasant sort of character, and one upon whom the fickle goddess, Fortune, had taken to smiling in her most bland and pleasant way.

"When I am snug and comfortable at Hamburgh," he said, "how eagerly I shall look for the London papers, to let me know how far the fire in Fleet Street, that is to happen to-night, has extended. How I shall laugh if it travel to the old church, and burns that down likewise. Ha! I think I shall take to laughing as a regular thing when I am fairly abroad with all my money, and safe—so safe as I shall be, so very—very safe."

Yes, there sat Sweeney Todd rejoicing. He might have said with Romeo in Mantua—

> "My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne,
> And all this day an unaccustomed spirit
> Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts."

But as it was with the young husband of the sainted Juliet, the day of reckoning was coming to Todd, and the spirit that spoke of comfort, joy, and security to his heart and brain, was after all a false one.

But we must leave Todd to his self-felicitations, while we request the reader's kind company to Bell Yard, for certain things had taken place in the establishment of Mrs. Lovett which it is highly necessary should find a place in this veracious and carefully collected narrative.

When Mrs. Lovett, with a full notion of the projected perfidy of Todd, left home for the purpose of bringing that individual to a sense of his wrong doings, and insisting upon a settlement, she did not awaken popular remark or popular interest by shutting up her shop, but she took such measures as she believed would last very well until she got back again.

She was not sanguine upon the subject of getting back very soon, for she had made up her mind that back she would not come without the money.

Previously, then, to leaving, she sought the narrow opening in the strong iron-door through which she was accustomed to speak to the discontented cook, and fastening a bottle of wine by the neck to a piece of cord, she let it down into the prison-house of pie-manufactory, saying as she did so—

"I keep my word with you. Here is wine. I trust that you will keep your word with me. A batch is wanted at twelve to-day, as you know."

"Very well," said the cook. "Very well. They shall be ready. But you promised me freedom, Mrs. Lovett."

"I did, and freedom you shall have shortly. All you have to do now is to attend to business for a little while. When I ring at twelve, send up the batch."

"I will—I will. But yet—"

"What is it now?"

"If you only could fancy, Mrs. Lovett, what it was to pass one's time in this place, you would have some feeling for me. Will you send or bring me some real butcher's meat?"

Bang went the wicket-door, and the cook found himself once again shut out from the world in those dismal vaults of Mrs. Lovett's house.

"Twelve o'clock," muttered Mrs. Lovett, as she proceeded to her parlour. "I shall surely be home by twelve. Todd will find out that I am too persevering for him. His fears will force him to pay me, although his justice never would. I will threaten him into payment. The odious villain! to attempt yet to deprive me of all that I have toiled for, with the exception of what of late I have had the prudence to keep in the house!"

The next thing that Mrs. Lovett had to do was to get some one to effectually mind the shop in her absence, and for that purpose she pitched upon a Mrs. Stag, a tall, gaunt-looking female, who acted as a kind of supernumerary laundress in Lincoln's Inn. With this person Mrs. Lovett felt that she need have no delicacy as regards locking-up and so forth; and as Mrs. Stag laboured under a defect of hearing, she would not be likely to pay any attention to what might take place below; but still Mrs. Lovett was determined to leave nothing to chance, and she left Mrs. Stag a note which was to go down on the movable platform to the cook in case she, Mrs. Lovett, was not at home at the twelve o'clock batch. This note contained the following words, which, as Mrs. Stag's parents and guardians had omitted to include reading in her education, were perfectly safe from her scrutiny—

"Send up the four o'clock batch, and you will be free within twenty-four hours from then."

This she concluded would keep him quiet; and within twenty-four hours Mrs. Lovett felt that her affairs must be settled in some way or another; so that it was a very safe promise, even if she had not still retained in her own hands the means of breaking it if there should be occasion so to do.

Truly, Mrs. Lovett was, in the full acceptation of the term, a woman of business.

Mrs. Stag was sure to look in the first thing in the morning upon Mrs. Lovett; so that as soon as that useful and submissive personage made her appearance in Bell Yard, she was duly installed in authority in the

shop—the parlour being properly fastened up against Mrs. Stag and all intruders.

"You will be so good as to sit here until I come back, Mrs. Stag?" said Mrs. Lovett; "and sell as many pies as you can. I am going to the christening of a friend's child, who is anxious that I should be its godmother."

What a delightful godmother Mrs. Lovett would have made!

"Yes, ma'am," said Mrs. Stag.

"I think I shall be back at twelve o' clock; but if I am not, you can let this note go down with the empty tray on the trap-door after you have slid off it the twelve o' clock batch of pies."

"Yes, ma'am."

"You will answer no questions to any one. All you have to say is, that I am out in the neighbourhood, and may come home at any minute, as indeed I may. I shall, of course, pay you, Mrs. Stag, for your whole day. Pray help yourself to a pie or two, as you feel inclined. Good morning."

"Good mornin', ma'am, good mornin'. She's a very pleasant woman," said Mrs. Stag, after Mrs. Lovett had left; "she's a remarkably pleasant woman. What a delicious pie, to be sure!"

Mrs. Stag was deep in the mysteries of a yesterday's veal.

"It's very odd," added the laundress, as she wiped the gravy from the sides of her mouth; "it's very odd that Mrs. Lovett is so very particular in shutting up her parlour always, when she might know what a likely thing it is that anybody may want to look at the drawers and cupboards. It's a most remarkable thing to think what she can have there that she will lock up in such a way."

Upon this, just with a faint forlorn sort of hope that the door might be left open, Mrs. Stag tried it, but it was fast; and, with a sigh of disappointment, she returned to her seat again.

In another moment a yesterday's pork yielded up its fascinations to the appetite of Mrs. Stag.

This, then, was the sort of life that Mrs. Stag passed in the shop. Lamentations and gravy—gravy and lamentations; and while she was thus occupied, the cook was pacing the cellars in rather a discontented mood, with his hands behind his back, reflecting upon things past, present, and to come, and upon his own dismal situation in particular.

"I cannot stand this," he said, "I really cannot stand this. I have had promises from Mrs. Lovett of freedom, and I have had similar promises from he who came to the grating in the door, but none of the promises have been fulfilled. I cannot stand this any longer, it is impossible. I am driven mad as it is already. I must do something. I can no longer exist in this way."

The cook looked about him, as many people are in the habit of doing when they say they must do something, without having a very clear notion of what it is to be; but as he at length fixed his eye upon that piece of machinery, far up to the roof, by which the batches of pies went up to the shop, and by which flour and butter and other matters, always excepting meat, found their way down to him, an idea took possession of him.

What that idea was will show itself in another place.

CHAPTER C.
TODD TAKES HIS LAST WALK UP FLEET STREET AND TO BELL YARD.

The twelve o'clock batch of pies went up, and down came the little missive of Mrs. Lovett respecting the four o'clock lot to the cook; but no Mrs. Lovett made her appearance, to relieve Mrs. Stag from her duties in the shop.

"Ah," said that elongated lady, "it's all very well of Mrs. L. to say she would pay me for the day. I suppose she means to make a day of it, and that's the reason. Now, young man, what's for you?"

"A pork with a nob of veal in it to give it a relish," was the reply of the young scion of the law, to whom Stag had addressed herself.

"Go along with you, I don't want none o' your impertinence."

"Now, ma'am, look alive. Two veals if you please. One pork—five porks—four veals. Do you make half a veal?"

"No we don't."

"A hot pork—three porks—two porks—eight veals. Don't be pushing in that way—four porks—smash. There, now, I've dropped mine, and it's all along of you."

"Do be quiet," said Stag, "gentlemen do be quiet; 'patience,' says Paul, 'and I'll soon serve you all.' What are you laughing at, you little jackanapes? You ought to be ashamed of yourself to be making faces at a female twice you age."

"And three times your size," said a voice.

There was a great roar of laughter at this, but by degrees poor Stag got through the business of the twelve o'clock batch, and sat down with a sigh, to console herself, by eating two or three of the most luscious-looking that remained.

"It ain't to be denied," said Stag, "but they are good. I never met with such gravy in all my life as is in 'em. Yes, they are first-rate. I'll just put one in the crown of my bonnet, for there's no knowing a minute now when Mrs. L. may pop in upon one at unawares-like. It's a comfort to have one of these pies, promiscous like, at one's hand, to lay hold of just in this sort of way, and pass in one's mouth in this kind of way. Oh, heart alive, but this is a good one. I declare the gravy is running out of it like water from a plug, when there's no house on fire, and it ain't wanted."

Mrs. Stag would have done very well indeed if she could but have got something to drink. That certainly was a drawback, that at first the lady's ingenuity did not present any means of speedily overcoming; but as necessity is the mother of invention, Mrs. Stag at last hit upon a plan.

"There's plenty of money in the till, of course," she said, "and suppose I stand at the door, and wait, till some wretch of a boy passes, and then give him a halfpenny for himself, just to run to the corner and get me a drop of something warm and comfortable."

Mrs. Stag had no sooner started this "suppose," than she felt a burning desire to carry it out; and accordingly, history says, that at a quarter to one she might have been seen at the door of Mrs. Lovett's pie-shop, with a shilling in one hand, a halfpenny in another, and a bottle concealed in her pocket, looking like an ogress at every boy who passed, and who looked as though he wanted a halfpenny, and consequently would go upon the secret message, for the purpose of earning one there and then.

Presently one came along the centre of Bell Yard, who seemed just the sort of person.

"Boy, boy!" cried Mrs. Stag.

"Well, old 'un," he replied, "what do you bring it in—Wilful Murder with the chill off, or what?"

"Don't be owdacious. If you want to earn a penny—I mean a halfpenny—honestly, take this shilling and this bottle, and go to the corner, and get a quartern of the best."

"The best what?"

"Oh, you foolish boy. Gin, of course; but remember that my eye is upon you."

It was well that Mrs. Stag spoke in the singular regarding her optical organ, for she had but one. The boy professed a ready acquiescence, and away he went, with the bottle and the shilling. Alas! Mrs. Stag was left lamenting. He came not back again, and from thenceforward Mrs. Stag lost the small amount of faith she had had in boyhood. The well-concocted scheme had failed, and there she was, with countless halfpence in the till, and so thirsting for strong water, that she was half inclined to make a grand rush herself to the nearest public-house, and chance any one in the interim helping themselves to the pies *ad lib*.

But she was not reduced to that extremity. Suddenly the window was darkened by a shadow, and through one of the topmost panes an immense hideous face, with an awful grin upon it, confronted Mrs. Stag.

The good lady was fascinated—not in an agreeable sense, but in quite the reverse—she could not take her eyes from off the hideous gigantic face, as it placed itself close to the frame of ill-made greenish glass, in order to get a good view into the shop.

"Goodness gracious, it's *Luficer* himself!" said Mrs. Stag. "I'm a lost woman. Quite a lost woman. I'm undone. It's *Luficer* himself, I'm sure and certain!"

Probably the hideous eyes that belonged to the hideous face, conveyed the impression to the brain behind them that Mrs. Stag was in a state of apprehension; for suddenly the face was withdrawn, and Todd—yes,

Todd himself, for to whom else could such a face belong?—made his way into the shop.

Mrs. Stag groaned again, and in a stammering voice, said—

"If you please, sir. I—I ain't ready yet."

"Ready for what?" said Todd.

"To go to—to—the brimstone beds, if you please, sir. I haven't done half enough yet."

"Pho!" said Todd. "My good woman, you don't surely take me for the devil? I am an old friend of Mrs. Lovett's, and a neighbour. I have just stepped in to ask her how she does to day."

Mrs. Stag drew a long breath of relief as she said—

"Well, really, sir, I begs your parding. It must have been the pane of glass that—that—that—"

"Threw my face out of shape a little," said Todd, making one of his most hideous contortions, and finishing it off with a loud "Ha!"

Mrs. Stag nearly fell off her chair. But it was not Todd's wish to frighten her, although he had, in the hilarity of his heart, yielded, like Lord Brougham, to the speculative fun of the moment. He now tried to reassure her.

"Don't be at all alarmed at me, madam," he said. "Mrs. Lovett laughs often at my little funny ways. Is she at home?"

Todd knew what sort of home he had provided Mrs. Lovett with, and this visit to Bell Yard was one partly of curiosity and partly of triumph, to ascertain how she had left things in her absence from her establishment.

"No, sir," said Mrs. Stag, replying to the question of Todd; "she is not at home, sir."

"Dear me, I thought she was always in at this time of the day. When, madam, do you expect her?"

"Leastways," said Mrs. Stag, "I don't know, sir."

"Were you here, madam, when she left home?"

"Yes, I *were*."

"Oh, and did she leave any message, madam, in case Mr. Todd from Fleet Street should call? Pray recollect yourself, my dear madam, as it may possibly be important. I do not say that it is, but it may be."

"No, sir," replied Mrs. Stag; "oh dear, no. All she said was, that she was going to a christening."

"A christening? Ha! She has been christened!"

"Sir!"

"I only said she had been christened, and no stint of the water, that was all, madam; but I perfectly understand you. Mrs. Lovett has gone to the christening of some one of those sweet little innocents, all perfume and flabbiness, that take one's heart completely by storm. Ah, my dear madam, when one looks at the slumbering infant, how one feels an irresistible desire to smother it."

"Lor, sir!"

"With soft kisses, my dear madam. Only fancy me now a baby!"

Todd made so awful a contortion of visage contingent upon this supposition that poor Mrs. Stag, in the nervous condition which the whole adventure had thrown her into, nearly fainted right away. Indeed, the only thing that recovered her was hearing her visitor say—

"I am really very thirsty to-day. How do you feel, madam?"

These were delightful words.

"Oh, sir," she said, "how very odd. I am thirsty likewise."

"Well, that is remarkable," said Todd. "Now, my dear madam, I don't make a common thing of saying as much to anybody, but you, who are a lady evidently of refined taste and intellectual capabilities, I am sure, will understand me, and make allowances for my feelings when I say that I prefer to anything else—gin!"

"You don't mean it, sir?"

"Indeed, but I do."

"Oh, how could I mistake you for anything but a very nice man indeed, and a perfect gentleman. It's one of the most singular things in all the world, but I never do hardly take anything, yet what I do take is—is—"

"Gin."

Mrs. Stag nodded and smiled faintly.

"Well, my dear madam, I don't see why we should not have a drop while I wait for Mrs. Lovett. Don't you trouble yourself, my dear madam. Now really do not. I know that you will like to have to say to that good, delightful, Mrs. Lovett, that you have not left the shop since she was absent; I will get it. They will lend me a bottle, and I have capacious pockets."

"But for you, sir, to—"

Todd was gone.

"Well, really, he is a very nice sort of conversable man," said Mrs. Stag to herself, "when you come to know him, and he ain't near so ugly as he looks after all. I do hope Mrs. Lovett won't trouble herself to come home for the next half hour, since Mr. Todd has been so good as to call and to make himself so very agreeable about the—the gin."

Todd went into Fleet Street for the gin, and he returned by the dark archway leading into Bell Yard. It was darker then than it is now, and in the deepness of an ancient doorway, he paused to drop into the gin—not a deadly poison—but such a potion as he knew would soon wrap up the senses of Mrs. Lovett's substitute in oblivion.

This narcotic he took from a small phial he had in his breast-pocket.

He did not say anything, but he gave one laugh, and then he walked on to the pie-shop, where he was eagerly and warmly welcomed by Mrs. Stag, who very assiduously placed a chair for him, saying, as she did so,

that "Mrs. Lovett would quite stare if she were to pop in just then, and see them enjoying themselves, in a manner of speaking, in so delightful a manner."

"I should stare!" said Todd.

"You would, sir?"

"Yes; I rather am inclined to think that that christening business will detain her. By this time she has got into the thick of it, my dear madam, you may depend, although I am quite certain she will be strictly temporate, and take nothing but water."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"I am sure of it. Can you find a glass, madam? I have not the happiness of knowing your name."

"Stay, if you please, sir. I have one glass here without a foot. It's an odd thing, but Mrs. Lovett shuts up the place when she goes out, as if we were all thieves and murderers."

"Does she really? Well—well, we will manage with one glass, my dear Mrs. Stag. It is the first time we have had a drop together, and I have only to hope that it will not be the last. I ought not, perhaps, to say it before your face, but you are the most entertaining company that I have met with for a long time.—Drink, madam."

"After you, sir."

"No—no, I insist."

Mrs. Stag drank off the full glass that Todd presented her with, and then affecting to pour one out for himself, but dexterously keeping the bottle between him and the lady, he only carried the empty glass to his lips. Now, Mrs. Stag was a decided connoisseur in gin, and she suddenly assumed a thoughtful air, and looked up to the ceiling as she slightly moved her lips.

"Rather an unusual taste after it's down, don't you think, sir?" she said.

"Has it? Well, I don't know. Perhaps you have been tasting a pie, madam, and that may have influenced the flavour. Try it again. You never can tell the taste of a glass of gin, in my opinion, until you have taken two at least. Try this, Mrs. Stag."

"Really I—I. Thank you, sir."

Off went a second glass, and then Todd glared at her with the eyes of a fiend, as he said, placing the bottle upon the counter, "That ought to be a dose, I think."

"Sir?" stammered Mrs. Stag. "I—I—God bless me—I—sir—gin—I—that is lots of pies—gin—gravy. Mrs. Lovett—in the crown of a bonnet—I—my dear, my dear—Bless us all. Lock it all up—no—no—no. Gin—I—good again—Pies—gravy."

Todd caught her by the throat or she would have fallen; and then, as she became quite insensible, he thrust her under the counter.

Todd Performs An Operation On Mrs. Stag.

Todd Performs An Operation On Mrs. Stag.

CHAPTER CI.
TODD MAKES HIMSELF QUITE AT HOME IN BELL-YARD.

"Idiot!" said Todd, as he spurned the insensible form of Mrs. Stag with his foot. "Idiot! I would kill you, but that it would not do me any good. The narcotic you have taken in the gin may or may not carry you off for all I care. It don't matter to me one straw."

He glared around him for a few moments with the fierceness of an ogre, and then walking to the shop-door, he deliberately locked and bolted it, so that no one could get in, even if they were expiring for a pie.

"Humph," he said. "This is a time of day when it is not likely the shop will be troubled with many customers. It is between the batches, I know, so I am safe for an hour; and during that time if I do not make some discoveries here, it will surely be my own fault."

Again he glared around him with the ogre-like aspect, and he ran his eyes carefully over the whole shop, from corner to corner—from floor to roof, and from roof to floor. At length he said—

"Where now, if I were hiding anything, would I select a place in this shop?"

After putting this question to himself Todd again ran his eyes over the shop, and at length he came to the conclusion that it was not there he should seek for any hiding place at all, and he certainly paid the sagacity of Mrs. Lovett one of the highest compliments he possibly could by concluding that she would do as he would under like circumstances.

"No," he said. "The shop is no hiding place for the secret store of my late friend Mrs. Lovett. No—no. I must seek in the very centre of her home, for that which I would find. Let me think—let me think."

Todd felt himself quite at home in Bell Yard. He was in truth the landlord of the house. It had not been safe to make the extensive underground alterations in the place if Mrs. Lovett had been the tenant of a stranger merely; so Todd had purchased the freehold, and such being the case, and his tenant, the charming Mrs. Lovett, being as he firmly believed, at the bottom of the Thames, who should feel at home in the place if he, Sweeney Todd, did not?

He felt that he had time, too. There was no hurry in life, and he quite smiled to himself, as he said—

"How often I have longed for a rummage among my dear departed friend Mrs. Lovett's goods and chattels, and now how many happily and singly circumstances have changed about to enable me to gratify my inclination. Ha!"

Todd, in the security of his bad heart, uttered one of his old laughs—but then for the whole of that day he had been unusually happy. His good terms with himself shone out even of his eyes, horrible eyes.

"Yes," he said, "yes, she is dead—dead—dead. Ha! ha! Mrs. Lovett—clever, fascinating creature—how muddy you lie to-night. Ha!"

It was not prudent, however, to waste time, although he had plenty of it—it never is; so up rose Todd, and proceeded to the parlour. How fast-locked the door was!

"Now really," he said, "it is a thousand pities that poor dear Mrs. L. has gone down to the bottom of the Thames with her keys in her pocket. It would have made no manner of difference in the world to her to have let me have them. It would have saved me some little trouble, and the doors some little damage."

With a malicious grin, as though he delighted in the mischief he had made, he dashed himself bodily against the parlour door, and burst it open with a crash.

"That will do," he said. "To be sure, the party who, when my absence gets noised about, comes to take possession of this house, would rather that the doors were whole; but what of that? Ha! I have mortgaged it twice over for its full value, and they may fight about it if they like. Ha! ha! How they will litigate, and I shall read the pleasant account of it in the papers."

By this time Todd was in Mrs. Lovett's parlour, and folding his arms across his breast, he gazed about him with a feeling of marked satisfaction, as he said—

"For five years she has been making, of course, a private purse for herself, the dear creature, as well as looking to the share of the money in the bank; and for the last few weeks, since our agreement together has not been quite so perfect, she has kept all her takings herself; so reasoning upon that, she must, bless her provident spirit, have a tolerable sum laid by somewhere, which I, as her executor, will most assuredly pounce upon."

At this moment some one clamoured for admission at the shop-door, rapping at it with a penny-piece in a manner that sounded very persevering.

"Curses on you," muttered Todd, "who are you?"

"A twopenny—a twopenny—a twopenny!" cried a boy, who was at the door, in a sing-song sort of voice—"I want a twopenny—a twopenny."

Rap, rap, rap! went one of the penny-pieces against the upper half of the shop-door, which was of glass. Rap, rap, rap! Todd felt quite convinced that that boy would not go without some sort of answer being given to his demand, so he slunk round the shop, crouching down, until he came

close to the door, and then assuming one of his most hideous faces, he suddenly rose up, and from within half an inch of the boy's face upon the other side of the glass, he confronted him.

So horrible and so completely unexpected was this face to the boy, that for a moment or two he seemed to be absolutely paralysed by it, and then, with a cry of terror, he dropped the penny-piece with which he had been rapping the window, and fled up Bell Yard as though the evil one himself were at his heels.

"That will do," said Todd.

He went back to the parlour and glared round him again in the hope of finding something there, but the only cupboard which he observed was fast locked. One blow with the poker, using it javelin-like, forced it open, and Todd began flinging out upon the floor the glass and china, with which it was well enough filled, without any mercy. What cared he for such matters? Would he not before twelve hours now be miles and miles away? What, then, was glass and china to him? Nothing—absolutely nothing.

He was disappointed, though, for he did not find the supposed concealed hoard of Mrs. Lovett behind the other things in this cupboard.

"Be it so," he said. "No doubt she fancies her bed-room is the safest place, after all, for her money—that is easily sought. Bless you, Mrs. Lovett, I will find your gold yet!"

With this view, Todd, by the aid of the poker, broke open another door, namely, the one which led from the parlour to the staircase, that would enable him to ascend to the upper part of the house. Truly, Mrs. Lovett was great in the locking-up way—very great indeed.

Todd was now getting out of patience just a little, but only a little, that was all. He naturally enough in his own house wanted to make discoveries a little quicker than he was making them, that was all; and so

he felt put out of his way a little, as any gentleman might under such circumstances. He swore a little, and was not so polite in his mention of the deceased Mrs. Lovett as he might have been.

He ascended the stairs three at a time.

"I wonder," he said, when he reached the top of the first flight; "I wonder where the wily wretch slept. She never would let me up stairs since she occupied the house."

The locking-up propensities of Mrs. Lovett did not continue past the ground-floor; and Todd found all the doors upon the floor he was now on readily enough yield to his touch. The second one he went into was undoubtedly the room he sought. It was rather elegantly furnished as a bed chamber; and as Todd stood in the centre of the floor, he chuckled to himself, and muttered—

"Ha! when she rose this morning, she did not quite fancy she was taking her last look at this chamber. Ha! ha! Well, my dear Mrs. L., you had some taste, I will admit, for this room is very nicely got up. It is a world of pities you had not sense enough to be my slave, but you must try to be my equal, which in your poor vanity you thought I could permit. No—no—no!—that was impossible. Why should I single you out of all the world, Mrs. Lovett, to be just to?"

This, in Todd's estimation, was a very conclusive argument, indeed. Whether it would have been so to Mrs. Lovett is another thing.

And now the arch villain commenced a search in the chamber of his victim of the most extraordinary character for minuteness that could possibly be conceived. It was quite clear that there he expected to find something worth looking for, and that if he were foiled, it should not be for want of due diligence in the investigation.

Todd Destroys Mrs. Lovett's Furniture.

Todd Destroys Mrs. Lovett's Furniture.

In the course of ten minutes, the trim and well-kept bedroom was one scene of confusion and disorder. The dressing-glass was thrown down, and, being in his way once, was kicked to the other end of the room, and smashed to fragments. The bed-clothes were tossed hither and thither in the most reckless manner. Boxes were burst open and ransacked, but all in vain. Not one penny-piece could Todd discover.

"Confound her!" he said, as he wiped his brow with a lace cap he picked off the dressing-table; "confound her! I begin to suspect that what she had of her own she put in her pocket this morning, and it has gone down to the bottom of the river with her! How infernally provoking!"

He peeped up the chimney, and got nothing by that motion but a flop of soot in his eye.

He stamped and swore and cursed in the most horrible manner that can possibly be conceived.

Feeling that Mrs. Lovett in the matter of her little private savings had been one too many for him, he looked rather hopelessly through the other rooms of the house. They were all completely vacant, and from the appearance of the dust upon the floors of them did not seem to have been entered for years past. He gave up the search in despair, and gloomily walked down stairs to the parlour again.

"It is lost," he said. "It is lost. Well, I must even be content with that which I have: I don't think any one will be the richer for what is here. No, no. It could not have escaped my search, and if it has done so by a miracle, or next thing to one, it will remain until the house falls to pieces years hence, perhaps, and fall into the hands of some one when I am de —No—no—what puts that word *dead* into my mouth? I hate to think of it! I am young in constitution, and shall live many—many years yet; oh, yes, I—I need have no fear of death."

Todd glared round him as though he expected that the very impersonification of the grim King of Terrors would rise up before him to take vengeance for being treated so slightingly; but all was still.

He wiped his brow again with the lace cap of Mrs. Lovett, which he had mechanically retained when he left the bed-room, and then he began to ask himself what should be done with the shop.

"For a few hours yet," he said, "a few short hours, there must be no disturbance and no commotion in this neighbourhood with which my name may possibly be connected. After that, they may do what they like and say what they like, but now all must be peace and silence. What shall I do with this confounded shop, now? I wish I had not given so strong a dose of the narcotic to you, old woman, left in charge by Mrs. Lovett. Ah, what is that?"

The sound from the shop as of some one being violently sick, came upon Todd's ears.

"Ah," he said, "so the narcotic has taken that effect, has it, upon Mrs. Lovett's representative? Well, well, she will recover from it much sooner than I thought she would, and that will now be all the better, for it absolves me of my difficulty about the shop for the next few hours."

He walked into the shop and found Mrs. Stag sitting up behind the counter, and in rather a dubious condition as regarded the peace of her stomach.

"Well, ma'am," said Todd. "How are you now?"

"The Lord have mercy upon us!"

"Amen! But how came you in this state, ma'am?"

"The pies, sir. The pies. You really have no idea of how very rich they are, sir. It's all along of the pies, that's all, sir; but I am getting better, though my head is none of the best."

"Yes," said Todd. "Of course it was the very rich pies. It could not have been what you drank."

"Oh, no, no. Oh, dear no. That wasn't enough to hurt an infant, sir, as you ought to know. What a mercy it is that Mrs. Lovett has not come home, for she is rather a violent woman at times. It's really quite a

mercy."

"She won't be home just yet, I think," said Todd. "You will have time to get completely to rights before you see her, and when you do see her I would advise you to make your peace with the other world as quickly as you can!"

Todd closed the parlour door; and as it was only the lock that had given, it did not show much symptoms of what had happened to it; as that in all likelihood Mrs. Stag, supposing that it was fast as she had first found it, would not pay any attention to it or scrutinise it sufficiently to be aware that it had been at all tampered with by any one.

"Only a few hours after all," muttered Todd, "and then I don't care what anybody thinks or says about this shop and its affairs, or about me in connection with them. Ah, I had quite forgotten. I wonder what Mrs. Lovett's cook is about?"

Todd paused, and gave some few moments' thought to the cook. He had an idea of going down to the oven cellar, and killing him, so that he might feel quite certain he was out of the way of perpetrating any mischief; but a second thought determined him in the other way.

"No—no," he said. "What can he do? No doubt the house will be shut after a time, and then he will starve to death. Ha!"

CHAPTER CII.
TAKES A SLIGHT GLANCE AT TOBIAS AND HIS INTENDED.

The idea of the cook being starved to death, had quite reconciled Todd to the notion of leaving him alone; so he left the shop, and proceeded to his own domicile in Fleet Street, and as nothing of great moment has occurred during his absence, we will take the liberty of conducting the reader to the house of Colonel Jeffery, and taking a slight peep at our old friend Tobias, whom we left in rather a critical position.

Tobias had been in so delicate a condition, prior to the last outrage of Todd at the colonel's house, that one might suppose such a thing would go far towards terminating his mortal career, and so indeed it did; but in youth there is such a tenacity to life that we may fairly look for the most extraordinary things in the shape of clinging to the vital principle, and in the way of getting over injuries. Poor Tobias was, to be sure, thrown back by Todd's attack, but he was not destroyed. The medical man gave it as his opinion, that the mental shock was by far worse than the physical injury, and he said to the colonel—

"Some means must be devised to make him believe that he is quite free from any further attack upon the part of Todd, or he will never recover. He will awaken, it is true, from the trance he is now in, but it will be to all the horrors and dread of some expected fresh attack from Todd."

"But I will assure him of my protection," said the colonel. "I will in the most positive manner tell him that he shall here be perfectly safe from that man."

"Excuse me, colonel," replied the surgeon, "but all that was done before, and yet Tobias has found that Todd reached him, even in one of the rooms of this house. You will find that he will be very sceptical regarding your powers to protect him now from that bold and infamous man. I hope I am not offending you, colonel, by my plain speaking?"

"Not at all my dear sir, not at all. Do not think of such a thing. Plain speaking, when it is dictated by friendly feeling, is one of the most admirable things in all the world, and no one can possibly admire it more than I do. I feel, too, the full force of what you have said, and that to the ears of Tobias it would sound like a farce for me to offer to protect him from the further assaults of Sweeney Todd."

"But something may be done that is quite of a decisive character upon the subject, colonel."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, that to sick folks I say anything that I think will tend to their recovery, even although I may feel that I am a little transgressing the bounds of truth. We must consider what we say to people in the position of Tobias, as so much medicine artfully administered to him."

"I quite agree with you, and I feel that you have some important suggestion to make to me regarding Tobias. What is it?"

"Then, colonel, if I were you, I should not hesitate for one moment to tell him that Todd was dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, that is the only thing that will thoroughly convince Tobias he has nothing further to fear from him. I think it not only one of those delusions that are in themselves harmless, but I think it a justifiable dose of moral medicine."

"It shall be done," said the colonel. "It shall be done. I do not hesitate about it for a moment. I thank you for the idea, and if that will do Tobias any good, he shall have the full benefit of it at my hands. Shall we seek him now?"

"Yes, I hope that he is in a state to fully comprehend what is said to him, and in that case the sooner we say this from which we expect such good results, the better it will be. I am most anxious to witness the effect it will have upon his mind, colonel. If I mistake not, it will be one far exceeding anything you can suppose."

Upon this they both went up stairs to the chamber in which poor Tobias lay. The boy was upon a bed, lying to all appearance bereft of sense. His breathing was rather laborious, and every now and then there was a nervous twitching of the muscles of the face, which bespoke how ill at ease the whole system was. At times too he would mutter some incoherent words, during which both the medical man and the colonel thought they could distinguish the name of Todd.

"Yes," said the surgeon, "that is the spectre that is ever present to the imagination of this poor boy and we must speedily get rid of it from him, or it will assuredly kill him. I would not answer for his life another twenty-four hours, if his fancy were still to continue to be tortured by an expectation of the appearance of Todd."

"Will you, or shall I, speak to him?"

"You, if you please, colonel; he knows your voice better no doubt than he does mine."

Colonel Jeffery bent his head close down to Tobias's ear, and in a clear correct voice spoke to him.

"Tobias, I have come to say something very important to you. It is something which I hope will do you good to hear. Do you comprehend me, Tobias?"

The sufferer uttered a faint groan, as he tossed one of his arms uneasily about upon the coverlet.

"You quite understand me, Tobias? Only say that you do so, and I shall be satisfied to go on, and say to you what I have to say."

"Todd, Todd!" gasped Tobias. "Oh, God! coming—he is coming."

"You hear," said the surgeon. "That is what his imagination runs upon. That is proof conclusive."

"It is, poor boy," said the colonel. "But I wish I could get him to say that he fully comprehends my words."

"Never mind that. I would recommend that you make the communication to him at once, and abruptly. It will, in all likelihood, thus have more effect than if you dilute it by any great note of preparation before it reaches his ears."

The Colonel nodded his acquiescence; and then, once more inclining his mouth to Tobias's ear, he said, in clear and moderately loud accents—

"Sweeney Todd is dead!"

Tobias at once sprang up to a sitting posture in the bed, and cried—

"No, no! Is it really so?"

"Yes," added the colonel. "Sweeney Todd is dead."

For a moment or two Tobias looked from the colonel to the surgeon, and from the surgeon to the colonel, with a bewildered expression of countenance, and then burst into tears.

"That will do," said the surgeon.

"It has succeeded?" whispered the colonel.

"Fully. It could not do better. He will recover full consciousness now when those tears are over. All will go well with him; but do not, by word or look, insinuate the remotest doubt of the truth of what you have told him. It would be better to say the same thing to any of the servants that may come about him."

"I will—I will; and particularly to his master, whom I would as soon trust with a secret as I would with the command of a regiment of cavalry."

Tobias wept for the space of about ten minutes, and then he looked up with a face in which there was a totally different expression to what it had borne but a short time previously, and with a faltering voice he

spoke—

"And so Todd is gone at last?"

"He has," replied the colonel; "and, therefore, you may now, Tobias, make your mind quite easy about him."

"Oh, quite—quite!"

By the long breath that Tobias drew, it was evident what an exquisite relief it was to him to be able to feel that the man who had been the bane of his young life was no more. No assurance of protection from him could have come near the feeling of satisfaction that he now felt in the consciousness of such a release. But Todd being dead, settled the affair at once. There was no drawback upon his satisfaction.

"Oh!" he said, "I do indeed feel that life is with me again, and that I can be happy. Where is Minna?"

"She cannot remain here always," replied the colonel; "but she will be in the house shortly, upon a visit to your mother, and you shall yourself have the pleasure of communicating the welcome news of Todd's death to her—news which to her bears as great a significance as it does to you."

"Oh, yes," replied Tobias. "Minna will be pleased. We ought not to rejoice at the death of any one; but then Todd was so very, very bad a man, that his dying is a good thing, as it keeps him from loading his soul with more wickedness."

"That," said the medical man, "is the proper view to take of the matter, Tobias; but now you will permit me to say to you that you should not talk too much, nor overtax your young strength. I will darken the room, by closing the shutters; and it is highly desirable that you should enjoy a few hours calm sleep, which now, with the conviction that Todd is dead, I do not see any difficulty in your doing."

"Oh, no—no," said Tobias, with quite a bright expression upon his face. "Oh, no. I shall sleep well now. Quite well, for what have I to fear now?" These few words were spoken in such a tone of calm composure, that the colonel had every reason to rejoice in the experiment he had tried, upon

the advice of the medical man. The latter closed the shutters of the room all but one, so that there was but a soft and chastened light in the room; and then, with a smile upon his face, Tobias—after hoping that they would arouse him when Minna should come, and receiving a promise that way—turned his face to his pillow, and composed himself to the first pure rest he had had since the attack that the villain Todd had made upon him in the colonel's house.

"It is not much of a deception," said Colonel Jeffery to the surgeon, when the latter was leaving the house, "for I believe now that Todd's hours are indeed numbered. He will be arrested to-night."

"I am glad to hear it," replied the surgeon. "Such a notable villain ought to be as quickly as possible put out of the world."

"He ought, indeed; and from what I hear from Sir Richard Blunt, I believe that before twenty-four hours are gone over my head, the whole of London will ring with the name of Todd, and the story of his frightful criminality."

Tobias slept quietly, and securely for four hours, during which space of time he was twice visited by Minna Gray, who had arrived while he was in that state of repose. The colonel, although he felt the danger of letting Mrs. Ragg know that the report to Tobias of the death of Todd was premature, felt no such scruple with regard to Minna. Indeed he considered that it would have been an insult to her judgment not to have told her exactly how the case stood.

When she heard it all, and upon visiting Tobias's bed-room, found what a sweet sleep he was in, and what a quiet gentle smile was upon his face, she tearfully acknowledged what a good thing the innocent deception was which had produced such a result.

"It will save him," she said.

"It will," replied the colonel; "and be sure that you keep sufficient guard over yourself to keep from betraying the secret."

"Oh, sir, trust me, I will."

"And remember that in this house, Minna, it is known only to you and to me. If Tobias should ask you anything about it, you had better know nothing, for I promised him that he should have the pleasure of making the communication to you himself, therefore you cannot be puzzled by any questions regarding particulars when he is your informant."

Minna joyfully concurred with all that the colonel said upon this head; and then, after a long talk with Mrs. Ragg in the kitchen—that good lady having the most implicit faith in the story of the death of Todd, and the profoundest hope that she should soon hear the full particulars of that event—she betook herself to the bedside of Tobias, there to await his awakening.

When he did open his eyes, they were clear and bright, and the fever had left his brow and cheeks. The first object his eye rested upon was Minna, and the first words he said were—

"Todd is dead!"

"Ah, then, Tobias, you have nothing now to fear, for you have not an enemy in the world."

"No," he cried, "I have now nothing to fear—but, my Minna, my own, my beautiful! how much I have to love! We shall be now, Minna, very, very happy, indeed, and God will bless me for your dear sake!"

CHAPTER CIII.
MR. LUPIN HAS A SINGULAR INTERVIEW WITH MRS. OAKLEY.

Amid all the exciting circumstances that it has been our duty to relate—amid the turmoil of events consequent upon the wild villainy of Todd, and the urgent attempts of Mrs. Lovett to get her accounts audited—we have very much lost sight of Mrs. Oakley.

Perhaps the reader has not been altogether unwilling to lose sight of a lady who, we will admit, was not calculated to make great advances in his esteem.

But yet one thing must be recollected, and that is that Mrs. Oakley is Johanna's mother! That we opine is a fact which she should be given some degree of attention for; and insomuch as the bright eyes of the fair and noble-minded Johanna might be dimmed by an additional tear if anything very serious was to become of Mrs. Oakley, we will go a little out of our way just now to see what that deluded parson-ridden woman is about.

The outgoings and the incomings of Mrs. Oakley for a long time past had been so various and discursive, that the poor spectacle-maker had long since left off considering that he had anything in the shape of a domestic establishment. Certainly, Johanna was always at hand, until lately, to attend to her father's comforts—but the wife never. There was either a prayer-meeting, or a love-feast, or some congregation or another

assembled to hear or to see Mr. Lupin; so that if the wife and the mother went to such places to learn her duties, it was pretty evident that the lesson occupied the whole of her time.

But still at times she did come home. At odd seasons she was to be found groaning and snuffling at the fireside in the little dark parlour at the back of the shop; but now for some few days she had totally disappeared.

Mr. Oakley was alone.

Up a dingy court in the City, not a hundred miles from the dingy purlieus of Monkwell Street, there was a dingy conventicle, upon the front of which the word "Ebenezer" announced its character, or its would-be character. The upper part of this chapel was converted into a dwelling-place, and there luxuriated Mr. Lupin.

The flock (geese, of course!) of the reverend gent rented the edifice, so that there he was rent free, and there he was in the habit of inviting to tea such of the females of his congregation who either had money of their own, or whose husbands had tills easily accessible, or pockets into which the wife's hand could be dipped at discretion; and dipped it generally was at in-discretion;—for folks, whether they be wives or not, when they can dip into other folks' pockets, do not always know how much to take just and no more.

Now Mr. Lupin had established a Three-days-two-hours and-general-subscription-saving grace-prayer, which consisted of praying every two hours for three days and three nights, and at each prayer making an offering in hard cash for the use of the church and the gospel, he (Mr. Lupin) being both the church and the gospel.

Alas! what will not human folly in the name of religion stoop to! There were women—mothers of families, who came to Mr. Lupin's house above the chapel with what plunder they could get together, and there actually stand the three days and three nights, the reverend gent making it is duty to keep them awake at the end of every two hours at least, as he

pretended to pray, and sending them away completely placid, but with the comfortable conviction, as they themselves expressed it, that their "souls were saved alive."

Mrs. Oakley was one of these dupes.

Now, although these proceedings were very profitable to Mr. Lupin, he found that it was very irksome to get up himself in the middle of the night to awaken the sinners to prayer, so he used to introduce brandy-and-water after he had pretty well tired out his devotee, and ascertained the amount of money he was likely to get, and in the confusion of mind consequent upon that gentle stimulant, the time went on very glibly.

"Sister Oakley," said Lupin, on the evening of the first day of Mrs. Oakley's residence beneath his highly-spiritual roof. "Sister Oakley, truly you will be a great brand snatched from the burning—How much money have you got?"

"Alas!" said Mrs. Oakley, "business must be bad, for I only found in the till three pounds eleven-and-sixpence."

Mr. Lupin groaned.

"But I will from time to time take what I can, and let you have it, for the welfare of one's precious soul is above all price."

"Truly, Sister Oakley, it is, and you may as well give me the small instalment now if it shall seem right unto thee, sister. I thank you in the name of the Lord! Humph—only three pounds eleven-and-sixpence. Well, well, we shall do better another time, perhaps, sister. Rest in peace, and I will from time to time come in and awaken thee to prayer. Truly and verily I have a hard time of it always."

It was on the second night that fatigue had had a great effect upon Mrs. Oakley, and upon the reverend gent likewise that he brought her a tumbler of hot brandy-and-water, saying as he placed it by her—

"Truly I have had a dream, and the Lord told me to give you this. I pray you take it, Mrs. O., and may it put you in mind of the glory of the world that is to come—Amen!"

Mr. Lupin retired, and as the stimulant was not at all an ungrateful thing to Mrs. Oakley, she was about to raise it to her lips, when a stunning knock at the chapel door made her give such a start, that she dropped glass, and spirit, and spoon to the ground. No doubt, a repetition of the knock at the moment, prevented Lupin from hearing the crash, which the fall in spirits produced. Mrs. Oakley heard him open the window of his room, and in a voice of stifled anger cry—

"Who is there? Who is there?"

"It's me, Groggs, and you know it," said a female voice. "Come down and open the door, or I will rouse the whole neighbourhood."

"Come, you be off. I have some one here."

"What, another idiot? Ho!—ho!—ho! Why, Groggs, they will find you out some day, and limb you. If they only knew that you were Groggs the returned transport, how they would mob you to be sure. But I have come for money, old fellow, and I will have it. I ain't drunk, but I have had enough—just enough, mark me old boy, and you know what I am capable of when that's the case. I am your wife and you know it. Ho! ho!"

Dab came the knocker again upon the chapel door.

"Do you want to be my ruin?" said Lupin. "Stay a moment and I will throw you out five shillings; but if you make any noise you shall not have one farthing from me."

"Shall I not? Ha!—ha! Shall I not? Five shillings indeed!"

The lady upon this, feeling no doubt that both her wants and his powers of persuasion were made very light of, commenced such a tremendous knocking at the door, that the terrified Lupin at once descended to let her in, uttering such terrible curses as he went that Mrs. Oakley was petrified with dismay.

Foolish woman! Did she expect that her idol would turn out to be anything but a common brazen image?

In the course of a few moments she heard the couple coming up stairs again, and when they reached the top, she heard Lupin say, "Confound you, you always will come with your infernal demands at the very worst and most awkward times and seasons to me. Did you not take ten pounds some time ago, and promise to come near me no more?"

"Ha!—ha! Yes, I did. But I am here again you see. You thought I would drink myself to death with that amount of money, and that you would get rid of me, but it did me good. Ho!—ho!—ho! The good stuff did me good."

"You are a fool," said Lupin. "I tell you, woman, you will be my ruin, my absolute ruin; and then where will your supplies come from I should like to know? Why I have an idiot only in the next room, of whom I hope to make a good thing; and if you had only come in five minutes sooner you would have been heard by her, and I should have been done up here."

"And why don't she hear you now? Have you cut her throat like you did the woman's by Wapping?"

"Hush!—hush! you devil! Why do you allude to that?"

"Because I like, my beauty. Because I know you did it. And whenever I do mention it, the gallows shines out in your face as plain—ay, as plain as this hand; and I like to see you quake and change colour, and be ready almost to fall down with your fears. Ho!—ho! I like that. Yes, it's as good to me as a drop of drink, that it is."

"I only wish your throat was cut, that is all."

"I know you do. But you won't try that on upon me. No—no. You won't try that on. Look at this, my beauty. Do you think I would step into a place of yours without something in the shape of a friend with me? Oh—no—no—"

The lady exhibited the handle and point of the blade of a knife, as she spoke, at which Mr. Lupin staggered back, and then in a faltering voice he said—

"I will go and see how my portion has worked with the idiot I mentioned. I gave her a good dose of laudanum in a glass of brandy and water."

It may be imagined with what feelings Mrs. Oakley heard this interesting little dialogue. It may be imagined, if she had at the bottom of her heart any lingering feelings of right or wrong, how they were likely to be roused up by all this—how her thoughts were likely to fly back to the house she had made wretched, and virtually deserted for so long a period of time. And now what was to become of her? Had she not heard Lupin denounced by one who knew him well as a murderer—an allegation which he had not even in the faintest manner denied?

Mrs. Oakley went down upon her knees in earnest, and wringing her hands, she cried—

"God save me for my poor husband and my child's sake!"

We will suppose that if any appeals at all reach Heaven, that this was one of those that would be sure to get there. Hastily pushing aside with her hands the fragments of the broken glass, Mrs. Oakley flung herself upon the floor, at the moment that Lupin with a light in his hand entered the room.

"Hilloa!" he said.

All was still. Mrs. Oakley did not move hand nor foot. She scarcely dared to breathe, for she felt that upon his belief that she had swallowed the narcotic her life rested. When he saw her lying upon the floor, he gave a short laugh, as he said—

"I thought she could not resist the brandy and water. The laudanum has done its work quickly indeed. It's well that it has, for if it had not— Well, well! If I only now had the courage to take a knife to my wife, and get rid of her once and for all, I should do well. Sister Oakley, you will not awaken for many hours, and when you do, you will be by far too much confused to know if you have said all your prayers or not. I shall make a fortune out of these women."

Mrs. Oakley felt upon the point of fainting, and if he had but touched her, she was certain that she must have gone off; but he felt so satisfied with the powerful dose of laudanum that he had given her in the brandy and water, that he did not think it worth while in any way further to interfere with her.

"Old and ugly too!" he muttered, as he left the room.

Perhaps these last words cut Mrs. Oakley to the soul more quickly than all he had previously said. If she was not from that moment cured of what might in her case be called Lupinism, it was a very odd thing indeed.

The Rev. gent had been gone more than ten minutes before Mrs. Oakley gathered courage to look up, and to listen to what was taking place in the next room. Then she found that Lupin was speaking. She was still too much overcome by terror to rise, but she managed to crawl along the floor, until she reached the wall between the two rooms.

It was a flimsy wall that, composed only of canvas, for the rooms above the chapel had been got up in a very extemporaneous kind of way.

Nothing could take place in the way of conversation in the next room, that might be distinctly enough heard in the one that Mrs. Oakley was in. As we have said, Lupin was speaking. Mrs. Oakley placed her ear close to the canvas, and heard every word that he uttered.

"Listen to reason," he said, "listen to reason, Jane. Of course, I will give you as much money as I can. I do not attempt to deny your claim upon me, and what is to hinder us working together, and making a good thing of it? Ah, if I could only persuade you to be a religious woman."

"Gammon!" said Jane.

"I know that very well," said Lupin. "That's the very thing. I know it is gammon as well as you do. What's that?"

Mrs. Oakley had made a slight noise in the next room.

CHAPTER CIV.
MRS. OAKLEY SEES A STRANGE SIGHT, AND THINKS THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

"What's that, eh?" added Lupin.

Mrs. Oakley sank flat upon the floor in a moment; she thought that now surely her last hour was come.

"I thought I heard a noise. Did you, Jane?" added Lupin.

"I didn't hear anything," said the woman. "It's your conscience, old boy, that makes you hear all sorts of things. You know you are a hard one, and no mistake. You know, there ain't exactly your equal in London for a vagabond. But come, hand out the cash, for I ain't particularly fond of your company, nor you of mine, I take it."

"It must have been imagination," muttered Lupin, still alluding to the noise he had heard or fancied he had heard. "It must have been imagination, and the wind at night does certainly make odd noises in the chapel at times, know."

"Bother the noises. Give me the money, and let me go, I say. Come, be quick about it, or else I shall think of some way of helping myself, and you know when I begin, that I am apt to be rather troublesome."

"A little," said Lupin. "Just a little. But as I was saying, Jane—you and I together might make a fortune quite easily. You are a clever woman."

"Am I really? When did you find that out, you old rogue?"

"Really, Jane, it is difficult to talk with you while you are in such a humour. Come, will you take something to drink? Say you will, and you shall have the very best I can get you. Only you must promise to take it in moderation, and not get much the worse for it, Jane."

"Do you think now that I am such an idiot as to take a drain of anything in your place? No! I am not quite so green as that. Give me some money and I'll fetch something, and as long as I have got my hand on the bottle, where I will take good care to keep it, I shall know that I am safe from you, but not otherwise. You would like to give me a drop of the same stuff you have set the woman in the next room to sleep with, wouldn't you now, my beauty?"

"No, Jane. Not you. You are not such a fool as to be taken in as she is. Such poor tricks won't do for you, I know well. There is money, and there is an empty bottle. Go and get what you like for yourself, as you wish not what I may happen to have in the place. I will let you in again, so you need not be afraid of that, Jane."

"Afraid? Afraid? That's a likely thing, indeed. I afraid of being kept out by you? No, old boy, if you did keep me out one minute longer than my patience lasted, and that would not be very long I think, I would raise such a racket about your ears, that you would wish yourself anywhere but where you are. How did I get in before, when you would have given one of your ears to keep me out? Why, by frightening you, of course, and I'll do it again. Give me hold of the bottle. I afraid of you, indeed? A likely thing."

The lady left the room with the bottle and half a guinea in her hand, while Lupin, with affected solicitude, lighted her to the door of the chapel, and lingered until he heard her footsteps die away right up the dismal dingy-looking court.

While Lupin was lighting his wife down the stairs, Mrs. Oakley found a small slit in the canvas that the division between the two rooms, and she industriously widened it, so that she was enabled to see into the

adjoining apartment. She then waited in fear and in trembling the return of Lupin.

The arch hypocrite was not many minutes in making his appearance. He set the candlestick down upon the table with a force that nearly started the candle out of it, and then in a fierce voice he cried—

"Done—she is done at last! Ha! ha! Jane, you are done at last! I kept that bottle for an emergency. It seemed empty, but smeared all around its inner side is a sufficient quantity of a powerful narcotic to affect the very devil himself if he were to drink anything that had been poured into it. You think yourself mighty clever, Jane; but you are done at last. Now what a capital thing it is that I have sent that old fool, Mrs. Oakley, to sleep, for otherwise I should certainly be under the necessity of cutting her throat."

Mrs. Oakley could hardly suppress a groan at this intelligence; but the exigences of her situation pressed strongly upon her, and she did succeed in smothering her feelings and keeping herself quiet.

Lupin paced the room anxiously waiting for his wife's return; and in the course of about five minutes, a heavy dab of a single knock upon the chapel door announced that fact. He immediately snatched up the candle and ran down stairs to let her in, lest according to her threat she should get to the end of her very limited stock of patience. They came up the stairs together—Jane was speaking—

"Brandy!" she said; "I have got brandy, and I mean to keep my hand on the bottle, I tell you. Ah, I know you—no one knows you better than I do. You may impose upon everybody but me. You won't find it so very easy a thing to get the better of me; I'll keep my hand on the bottle."

"How very suspicious you are," said Lupin, "It's quite distressing."

"Is it? Ho! ho! Well, I'll have my drop and then I will go. If you are civil to me whenever I choose to come it will be better for you; but I am not the sort of person to stand any nonsense, I can assure you."

"No, Jane, I never said you were," replied Lupin; "and I hope that to-night will see the beginning as it were of a kind of reconciliation and better feeling between us. I am sure I always thought of you with kindness."

By this time they were in the room, and the lady half drew the knife she had before exhibited from the bosom of her dress, as she said—

"Look at this—look at this! I distrust you all the more when you talk as you do now, and I tell you that if I have any of your nonsense, I will pretty soon settle you. You mean something, I know, by the twinkle of your eye. I have watched you before, and I know you."

"Now, really, this is too bad," said Lupin, as he wiped his face with a remarkably old handkerchief; "this is too bad, Jane. If I am kind and civil to you, that don't suit; and if I am rough and rather stern, you fly out at that too. What am I to do? Will nothing please you?"

"Bah!" said Jane. "Hold your nonsence. How much money am I to have when I have finished the brandy? That is the question now."

"Will three guineas be enough, Jane, just for the present occasion?"

"No, I must have five, or if you don't produce them, I'll make you."

"You shall have them, Jane. You see how complying I am to you. But won't you give me a drop of the brandy? You don't mean to take it all?"

"Yes I do. It's only half a pint, and what's that? You can drink some of what you said you had in the place. I didn't go out to buy for you. Besides, I won't trust it a moment out of my hands. You would put something in it before I could wink."

"Really, really! What a strange woman. But won't you have a glass, Jane, to drink it out of? Let me get you a glass now?"

"No, you would put something in that too. Oh, I am up to your tricks, I am, old boy. You won't get the better of me. Very good brandy it is, too. Ah! strong rather."

Jane took a hearty pull at the bottle, so hearty a one that two thirds of the mixture vanished, and then with her hand on the neck of it, she sat glaring at Lupin, who was on the opposite side of the table, with an awfully satanic grin upon his ugly features.

"It has an odd taste."

"An odd taste?" cried Lupin. "It's a capital thing that you bought it yourself, and kept your hand over the bottle. I'm very glad of that, old woman."

"But I feel odd—I—I—ain't the thing. I don't feel very well, Lupin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I feel as if I were dying. I—I don't see things very clearly. I am ill—ill. Oh, what is this? Something is amiss. Mercy, mercy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—shall fall. Help! The room swims round with me. I am poisoned. I know I am. Mercy! help! murder! Oh, spare me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lupin rose and went round the table. He caught hold of the wretched woman by the head, and applying his mouth close to her ear, he said—

"Jane! There was something in the bottle, and I intend to cut your throat. I hope the knife you have got with you has a good edge to it?"

She tried to scream, but an indistinct, strange, stifled cry only came from her lips. She tried to get up, but her limbs refused their office. The powerful narcotic had taken effect, and she fell forward, her head striking the table heavily, and upsetting the bottle with the remainder of the drugged brandy in it as she did so.

"Done!" said Lupin. "Done at last. Oh, how I have watched for such an opportunity as this. How often I have pleased myself with the idea of meeting her in some lonely place when she was off her guard, and killing her, but I never thought that anything could happen half so lucky as this. Let me think. I am quite alone in this building, or as good as alone, for

Mrs. Oakley sleeps soundly. I can easily drag the dead body down stairs, and place it in one of the vaults underneath the chapel, to which I have the key. I will wrench open some coffin if that be all, and cram her in on the top of the dead there previously. Ah, that will do, and then I defy any circumstances to find me out. How safe a—mur—I mean a death this will be to be sure. How very—very safe."

Mrs. Oakley shook in every limb, but she kept her eyes steadfastly fixed at the small hole in the canvas, through which she could see into the room, and by a horrible species of fascination, she felt that if she had ever so much wished to do so, she could not then have withdrawn it. No! she was as it were condemned as a fiat of destiny, as a punishment for her weak and criminal credulity regarding that man, to be a witness to the dreadful deed he proposed committing, within the sphere of her observation.

It was dreadful. It was truly horrible. But it was not now by any means to be avoided.

Lupin disappeared for a few seconds into a room where he usually himself slept. From thence he returned with a wash-hand basin in his hand, which he placed upon the floor. He then fumbled about the clothing of his wife until he found the knife that she had twice so threateningly exhibited to him. He held it up to the light and narrowly scrutinised it.

"It will do I think," he said.

He tried its keenness upon the edge of the sole of his shoe, and he was satisfied that it had been well prepared for mischief.

"It will do well," he said. "Well, nothing can be better. From this night I shall be free from the fears that have haunted me night and day for so long. This woman is the only person in all London who really knows me, and who has it in her power to destroy all my prospects. When she is gone, I shall be perfectly easy and safe, and surely never was such a deed as this done with so much positive safety."

Mrs. Oakley felt sickened at what she saw, but still she looked upon it with that same species of horrible fascination which it is said—and said truly, too—prevents the victim of a serpent's glittering eye from escaping the jaws of the destroyer. She saw it all. She did not move—she did not scream—she did not weep—but as if frozen to the spot, she, with a statuesque calmness, looked upon that most horrible scene of blood. She was the witness appointed by Heaven to see it done, and she could not escape her mission.

Lupin twined his left hand in the hair at the back of the head of the wretched woman, and then he held her head over the wash-hand basin. There was a bright flash of the knife, and then a gushing, gurgling sound, and blood poured into the basin, hot, hissing and frothing. The light fell upon the face of Lupin, and at that time so changed was it, that Mrs. Oakley could not have recognised it, and, but that she knew from the antecedents that it was no other than he, she might have doubted if some devil had not risen up through the floor to do the deed of blood.

He dropped the knife to the floor.

Lupin Drugs His Wife, And Then Cuts Her Throat.

Lupin Drugs His Wife, And Then Cuts Her Throat.

The murdered woman made a faint movement with her arms, and then all was over. The blood still rolled forth and filled the wash-hand basin. Lupin caught the cover from the table, throwing everything that was upon it to the floor, and wrapped it many times round the head, face, and neck of his victim.

"It is done!" he said. "It is done!"

He still held the body by the hair of the head, and dragging it along the floor, he dropped it near the door opening on to the staircase. He then went to a cupboard in the room, and finding a bottle, he plunged the neck of it into his mouth, and drank deeply. The draught was ardent

spirit, but it had no more effect upon him at that moment than as though it had been so much water from a spring. That is to say, it had no intoxicating effect. It may have stilled some of the emotions of dread and horror which his own crime must have called up from the bottom even of such a heart as his. He was human, and he could not be utterly callous.

Leaning against the cupboard-door for a few seconds he gasped out—

"Yes, it is done. It is quite done, and now for the worst. Now for the body, and the vaults, and the dead. Can I do it? can I do it? I must. Yes, I must. There is no safety for me if I do not. I shall come else to the scaffold. I think already that I see the hooting crowd—the rope and the cross-beam. Now they hold my arms. Now they tell me to call upon God for mercy to my wretched blood-stained soul. Now the mob shouts. The hangman touches me—I feel the rope about my neck. They draw the cap over my face, and so shut out the world from me for ever. I die—I struggle—I writhe—I faint—God—God—God help me!"

He fell heavily to the floor of the room.

CHAPTER CV.
MRS. OAKLEY ESCAPES, AND TAKES A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THINGS IN GENERAL.

Mrs. Oakley nearly fainted herself at this juncture, but she felt that her life was in jeopardy, and by a strong mental effort, such as she could hardly have supposed herself capable of making, she sustained herself, and preserved her senses.

Lupin lay for some minutes quite insensible upon the floor, but he did not lie long enough for Mrs. Oakley to take advantage of his temporary swoon and leave the place. Had she perhaps been very prompt and resolute, and self-possessed, she might have done so, but under the whole of the circumstances, it was not to be supposed that such could be her state of mind; so the slight opportunity, for, after all, it was only a slight one, if one at all, was let slip by her.

She was just beginning to ask herself if there was a chance of getting away before Lupin should recover, when he uttered a hideous groan, and moved slightly.

After these indications of recovery, Mrs. Oakley was afraid to move; and certainly, the slightest indication of her being otherwise than in the state of insensibility which Lupin believed to be her condition, there is very little doubt it would have been the signal for her death.

The man who commits a murder for the attainment of any object of importance to him, will not scruple to commit another to hide the first deed from the eyes of the world.

And now Lupin slowly rose to a sitting posture, and glared around him for a few moments in silence. Then he spoke.

"What is this?" he said. "What is all this? What is the meaning of all this? Blood!—blood! Is this blood upon my hands? No—no—yes, it is—it is. Ah! I recollect."

He held his blood-stained hands to his eyes for a few moments, and then as he withdrew them, he slowly turned his eyes to where the body lay. With a shudder he dragged himself along the floor further off from it, gasping out as he did so—

"Off—off, horrible object!—off—off!"

His distempered imagination, no doubt, pictured the body as following him. Is there not, indeed, a prompt retribution in this world?

"Off—off, I say! No further!—Not dead?—not dead yet? How much blood have you in you now to shed? Off—off!"

He reached the wall. He could get no further, and thus pursued still by the same wild insane idea, he sprung to his feet, and uttering a loud cry, he caught up a chair and held it out at arm's length before him, shouting —

"Keep away—keep away! Keep off, I say—I—I did not do it. Who shall say I did it? Who saw me do it?"

He slowly dropped the chair, and then in a more composed voice he said —

"Hush! hush! I am mad to raise these cries. They will alarm the court. I am mad—mad!"

Mrs. Oakley had hoped that his ravings would reach some other ears then hers, and that his apprehension, with the bleeding witness of his crime close at hand, would follow as a thing of course, and then how

gladly would she have flown from her place of concealment, and cried out—

"He did it! I saw him! That is the man!"

But such was not the case. Either he really did not call out loud enough to make himself heard, or the inhabitants of the court were too much accustomed to all sorts of sounds to pay any attention even to the ravings of a murderer!

No one came. No one even knocked at the chapel-door to know if anything was amiss, and when she saw him calm, and in a measure self-possessed again, her heart died within her.

"Murder! murder!" he said; "I have done murder! Yes, I have steeped my hands in blood—again—again! It is not the first time, but one does not become familiar with murder. I did not feel as I feel now when I took a life before. Oh, horror! horror!"

He shook, but soon again recovered himself.

"The vaults! The vaults!" he said. "They will hide the dead. Who will look for this woman? What friends has she? Is there one in all the world who cares if she be alive or dead? Not one. Is there one who will stir six steps to find out what has become of her? Not one."

Again he solaced himself with a draught of brandy, and then he set about making his preparations for disposing of the dead body of his slaughtered victim.

From a drawer in the room he took a large sheet, and spread it upon the floor. Then he kicked and pushed the dead body with his feet on to it, and then he deliberately rolled it up round and round in the sheet, and at each fold feeling that it was further removed from his sight, he seemed to breathe more and more freely.

He spoke in something like his old tones.

"That will do—that will do. The vaults will be the place. Was there ever such a cunning place for murder to be done in as a chapel, with its ready receptacles of the dead beneath it? There let her rot. She will never come up in judgment against me from there. It is done now. The deed that I often thought of doing, and yet never had the courage, nor the opportunity at the same time, to accomplish until to-night. The vaults—the vaults. Ay, the vaults!"

He lit a lantern that he took from the cupboard, and then he opened the door that communicated with the staircase terminating in the chapel. He listened as though he fancied that some one might be below listening to the deed of blood above.

"All is still," he muttered, "so very still. It is providential. It is the will of Heaven that this woman should die to night, and after all I am but the instrument of its decrees—nothing more. That is comforting."

He now dragged the body to the door he had opened, but he did not carry it. When he got it there he overbalanced it, and let it fall down. Mrs. Oakley, even from where she was, heard the horrible smash with which it reached the bottom of the stairs.

Lupin followed with the lantern.

And now it would seem as if another opportunity had presented itself to Mrs. Oakley to escape. The staircase down which Lupin had gone communicated with the chapel. It was another flight that led to the ordinary door through which any one passed who might be coming to the private part of the house. That staircase of course she expected to reach without going through the room in which the murder was committed, as her room and the adjoining one both opened upon its landing as well as into each other.

Mrs. Oakley slowly rose from her knees.

"God help us," she said, "and give me strength to make an attempt to leave this frightful place. There will surely be time while Lupin is in the vaults. Oh, yes, there will surely be time."

She tottered along with as little strength as though she had been lying for weeks upon a bed of sickness, so completely had she been unnerved by what she had seen.

She touched the handle of the door. Even that was support. And then, she turned it. The door did not open. It was locked!

Mrs. Oakley felt as if at that moment all her chance of escape was gone. She felt as though she were given over by providence to Lupin to be murdered. Why had he locked the door, but that if by any rare chance she should awaken from the lethargic sleep into which he supposed her to be plunged, she should have no outlet but through the room in which he would be? But he was not there now, and the door of communication between her room and that in which the murder had been done might not be fast.

To try it was the work now of a moment; Mrs. Oakley felt a little more self-possessed with the knowledge that Lupin was not close at hand, and she opened the door. It yielded readily enough to her touch.

She was in the room of murder—in the very atmosphere of blood. She glanced around her, and, although she had seen all through the opening in the canvas partition, yet she was horrified to find herself closer to the spot upon which the fearful deed had been done. Lupin, when he had lit his lantern with which to go to the vaults, had not extinguished the ordinary light that burnt in his room. That had a long spectral-looking wick; but it gave sufficient light to enable Mrs. Oakley to see the blood upon the floor.

She sickened at the sight.

But if she were to escape, it must be done at once. Lupin would not be likely to linger longer by one brief moment in the vaults than was absolutely necessary; and he might return before she had effected her purpose yet.

She flew to the door of his room, which opened on to the landing. She made an effort to open it. Alas! it was in vain; it, too, was locked, and the key was gone!

"I am a prisoner!" said Mrs. Oakley, as she clasped her hands; "I am a prisoner to this dreadful man!"

For some few moments now she felt completely overwhelmed by this misfortune. The only outlet from the room that was not fast, was that which Lupin himself had taken, and which led to the chapel. Should she venture that way or not?—that was the question. Could she resolve upon staying where she was, and trusting to an escape in the morning? No, no; she told herself that would be too horrible. She would have, then, to look at Lupin in the face, and to talk to him.

"No—no—no! I cannot do that," she said. "I will go down the staircase that he has gone down—I will pass through the chapel—I will try to open the chapel door, and then I will rush out with the cry of murder upon my lips."

It was a trembling anxious thing to follow the murderer and his victim down that staircase; but having found all other mode of egress denied to her, Mrs. Oakley attempted it.

Slowly she went, step by step; and ever and anon she paused to listen for any sound that should be indicative of Lupin's whereabouts—but she heard nothing.

"He must be deep beneath the chapel," she said, "among the vaults—that is where he must be. I shall be safe if I hasten now. Oh, so safe—quite safe!"

She did hasten, and another moment brought her to the foot of the stairs. A door in the chapel-wall terminated them. That was the door against which Mrs. Oakley had heard the dead body strike with such a frightful crash when Lupin had cast it down the stairs. It was swinging open now.

Another moment and she was in the chapel.

From out of the aperture, occasioned by the lifting up of a large square trap-door in the centre of the chapel floor, there came a faint stream of light. Mrs. Oakley knew that that trap-door led to the vaults. She knew that a flight of steps was immediately beneath it which lead to the loathsome receptacles of the dead, where the pious members of Mr. Lupin's flock were laid when they and this world had bidden each other adieu. She knew that he derived no despicable revenue from letting such lodgings to the dead.

And he was down there with his victim—the first person that he ever permitted to lie there without a fee!

Mrs. Oakley, to reach the chapel door, must needs pass quite close to the open trap-door; and as she neared it, a terrible curiosity took possession of her—it was to see what Lupin was doing below—it was to ascertain in what way he disposed of his victim's body. She thought that she ought to see that. She thought, then, that she could tell all, and bring the hounds of justice to the very spot where the murdered woman lay.

She paused for a moment upon the brink of the trap, and then, by an impulse that at the moment seemed, and was, irresistible, she began the descent among the vaults.

These vaults were quite dignified by being so called. They were nothing but cellars—nothing in the world but damp gloomy cellars—and Lupin made as much of them as he did of the chapel overhead. The corpses lay there thick and three-fold. A ghostly company! and yet Lupin had many underground lodgings to let.

What cared he if the fumes from the dead came up, and made havoc upon hot Sundays among the living? What cared he what mischief the charnel-house beneath the planks did to the old and to the young? His own constitution, he had a strong impression, could be fortified by copious libations of brandy. Probably he was wrong in his practice, but he had faith in his remedy, and that was a great thing—a very great thing, indeed.

Mrs. Oakley slowly crept down the steps leading to the vaults. She was guided by the faint light of Lupin's lantern, which was she knew not where. Twice she paused to listen if he were coming, as in such a case she would have flown back upon the wings of terror, but she heard nothing, and she passed onward.

Twelve steps led to the lowest depth upon which the vaults were situated. Then there was a kind of passage, upon which were flag stones very roughly and clumsily laid down. Right and left of this passage the vaults were. It wound completely round the chapel, but she had not to go very far to ascertain where Lupin was at work. The light of the lantern guided her to the half-open door of the vault, within which he was at work.

CHAPTER CVI.
MR. LUPIN FINDS HIMSELF IN AN AWKWARD PREDICAMENT.

Mrs. Oakley peeped into the vault, but she held herself in readiness to fly at a moment's notice, and then she thought she could easily hide among the pews in the chapel. Nothing, she thought, could be very well easier than such a course. Could she not hide in the very pew that she had for a long time called her own? And then by watching Lupin, she should have the advantage of seeing in a moment when he had done his work, and there would then be little trouble in eluding him.

On tip-toe, Mrs. Oakley advanced to the half-opened door of the vault, and peeped in upon the man, who thought himself so very safe. The eye of heaven, he must have thought, saw him; but he would have staked his life forthwith upon the fact, that no human observation was bent upon his actions; and yet there was some one for whom he entertained the greatest contempt—one whom he would have defied to injure him, gathering up evidence to hang him.

Go on, Lupin. Bury your victim. But don't think yourself so very safe just yet. It is an old saying, that "Murder will out." Do you think that yours will prove the exception?

From a recess in the wall Lupin had dragged a coffin. It was an old one and rather rotten, so that by the aid of a small crowbar that he had there —what use did Lupin find for a crowbar in the vaults beneath his chapel? Was it to rip open the coffins and rob even the dead? Well, well—by the aid of this crowbar, he soon forced open the lid of the coffin.

He stood in it then, and stamped down the remains with his feet to make room for the murdered body.

Mr. Lupin Crushes The Corpse To Make Room For His Murdered Wife.

Mr. Lupin Crushes The Corpse To Make Room For His Murdered Wife.

Mrs. Oakley sickened at this; she had not quite expected to see such a horror as that. It appeared to her at the moment, to be worse than the murder above stairs. She really felt quite faint as she saw him.

When he had flattened the nearly decayed body in the coffin as much as he could, he lifted the corpse of his victim from the floor of the vault. It was still closely enveloped in the large sheet, although at one part the blood had begun to make its way through all the folds upon folds of that wrapper, and he threw it into the coffin. It more than filled it.

Poor Mrs. Oakley shut her eyes; she knew what he was going to do. She knew it from what he had done, and she saw it in his eyes. He was of course going to tread down the dead body of her he had murdered, in the same way that he had already trodden down the half-decomposed one in the coffin.

Strange companionship! How little the very respectable defunct, who had been expensively placed in one of the vaults, could have imagined that she—it was a female—that she should be trodden down as flat as any pancake, to make room for the Reverend Josiah Lupin's murdered wife!

"To what base uses may we come as last."

Mrs. Oakley heard him treading and stamping, and then she opened her eyes, and she saw him fitting on the lid of the coffin again. He had made it hold its double burthen.

And now she had surely seen all that she came to see, and yet with a frightful fascination she lingered as though spell-bound to the spot. She thought that she had plenty of time. Of course Lupin would put the coffin into its recess again, and that would take him some time. It would, with its additional weight, certainly be no easy task, but he set about it, and it is astonishing what herculean labours people will perform, when their necks are to answer for any delay or dereliction of the duty. Lupin dragged the coffin to its receptacle on a low shelf, and fairly hitched one end of it in the aperture made for its reception.

By the assistance of the lever he pushed it fairly in, and then he paused and wiped his brow.

"It is done," he said.

He leaned heavily against the damp wall.

"It is done—it is done. This will be one of the undiscovered murders that are done in London. I am safe now. Nobody will miss her—nobody will look for her—nobody will dream that this vault can possibly conceal such a crime; and now that the terror of it, and the horror of doing it, is all over, I feel like a new man, and am much rejoiced."

"Rejoiced," thought Mrs. Oakley with a shudder.

"She was the torment of my life," added Lupin. "I knew no peace while she lived. Success had no charm for me. Go where I would, think of what I would, do what I would, I always had the dread of that woman before my eyes; but now—now I am rid of her."

He took up his lantern from the floor of the vault.

Now it was time for Mrs. Oakley to fly. She turned and hastily ran up the staircase of the vault. The idea took possession, and it was after all only a fancy, that Lupin was pursuing her with the crow-bar in his hand. But how it urged her on. What wings it gave her, but confused her the while, so that instead of hurrying to the chapel door, and making a bold effort

to open it as she had meant to do, she only sought the door in the wall, and the staircase down which she had come to the chapel, nor did she pause until she found herself in the murder room.

Then with a heart beating so wildly, that she was fain to lay her hands upon it in the hope of stopping its maddening pulsation, she stopped to listen.

It was only fancy. It was a delusion. No Lupin was pursuing her from the vaults.

"Thank Heaven!" she said. "Thank Heaven! but oh, why am I here? Why have I come here again, instead of making my escape by the chapel door? This is a fatal error. Oh, Heaven save me! Is there yet time? Does he linger yet sufficiently long in the vaults, to enable me to take refuge among the pews?"

These were questions which the stillness in the chapel below seemed to answer in the affirmative, and once more Mrs. Oakley approached the staircase to descend it. She got three steps down the stairs, and then she heard a footstep below. It was too late. Lupin was coming up. Yes, it was too late!

He approached with a heavy and regular footfall. That heaviness and regularity were sufficient evidences that he had not heard her, and had no suspicion that she nor any one else had been a witness to his crime. So far she was comparatively safe, but the blessed chance of escape without any meeting with him was gone.

Up—up, he came! Mrs. Oakley retreated step by step as he advanced. She passed into the chamber, which may for distinction's sake be called her own room, and there she cast herself upon the couch, and closed her eyes shudderingly.

She had a presentiment that Lupin would come to look at her to see that she still slumbered. She was right.

He had not been in the room where the deed of blood had been committed many minutes, when he opened the door of communication between the two apartments, and came in not with the lantern, but with the candle he had left burning upon the table. He did not come above three steps into the room, and then he spoke—

"Sister Oakley it is time to pray."

Mrs. Oakley moved not—spoke not.

"Sister Oakley, will you be so good as to rise, and go to the corner of the next street on a little errand for me?"

How tempting this was! but Mrs. Oakley had the discretion to imagine the wolf in the sheep's clothing now; she saw in all this only a clear mode of ascertaining if she were awake or not, and she would not speak nor move.

This was, in truth, a wise policy upon the part of Mrs. Oakley. That it was so, became abundantly apparent when Lupin spoke again.

"All is right," he said. "The opiate has done its work bravely, I feel easy now, and yet I don't know how I came for a moment to feel otherwise, or to imagine for a moment there was danger from this woman. If I only had any proof that there was, I would soon put it beyond her power to be mischievous. But, no—no, she has slept soundly and knows nothing."

It required, indeed, no ordinary nerve during this speech of Lupin's, for Mrs. Oakley to preserve the stillness of apparent deep sleep; but we none of us know what we can do until we are put to it; after all, what a just punishment to Mrs. Oakley was all that she was now going through. She had had more faith in that bold, bad, mountebank of a parson than in Heaven itself, and she was justly punished.

Having then made this trial of her sleeping state, Mr. Lupin retired with the candle again, quite satisfied—at least one would have thought so; and as he had talked of the amazing ease of mind he felt now that he had, murdered his wife, it was rather surprising that he did not go to bed

and sleep serenely instead of pacing his room to and fro for more than four hours mumbling disjointed words and sentences to himself as he did so, for Mrs. Oakley heard him, but she did not dare to move.

Suddenly he flung open the door between the two rooms, and in a startling voice he cried—

"Fire! fire!"

It was truly a wonder that upon this Mrs. Oakley did not jump up, it sounded so very alarming; but it was not to be, and with a presence of mind that surely was not all her own, she yet remained profoundly still.

"Fool that I am," muttered Lupin, "to be continually assailed by dread of this woman, when everything assures me that she has been in a sound sleep caused by a powerful narcotic, during the whole night; but the morning is now near at hand, and she will soon awaken. I have already got what money I can, from her, and I must give her breakfast and then send her off. It would be useless to kill her."

The manner in which Lupin pronounced these last words was very alarming for it implied rather that he was asking himself the question whether it would be useless to kill her or not, than the expression of a decided opinion; but still Mrs. Oakley moved not.

Lupin, suddenly, as though he had quite made up his mind not to trouble himself about her any more, slammed to the door of communication between the two rooms.

Mrs. Oakley breathed freely again—that is, comparatively freely; and yet what a shocking agonizing idea it was that she might have to breakfast with that dreadful man. What should she say to him?—how should she look at him?

The dawn was coming, and she shook with apprehension to find that such was the fact, and Lupin had said that she would soon awaken; so, effect to awaken she must, in order to keep up the delusion; but how should she manage then to deceive the suspicious vigilance of such a man?

But all this had to be encountered. How was it to be avoided? She could do nothing but arm herself with such fortitude as she could call to her aid.

Oh, how she wished herself in her own parlour behind the shop, and upon her knees asking the pardon of her husband for all that she had done, and for all that she had not done! What would she have not given even to have seen the honest face of big Ben, the beef-eater!

The light of the coming day grew each moment stronger, and at length Mrs. Oakley thought it would be prudent to seem to wake up, and calling out "Mr. Lupin! Mr. Lupin!" she rose from the couch.

Lupin opened the door of communication between the two rooms, and glared at her.

"Did you call, sister Oakley?"

"Yes, reverend sir, surely I have been sleeping, and have forgotten some of the prayers."

"No; truly, sister Oakley, I have watched for you, and I can assure you that you will enter into the kingdom always, provided that you are regular in your contributions to the chapel, for at the last that of a surety will be demanded to be known of you, sister Oakley."

"I have been thinking of that, brother Lupin," said Mrs. Oakley, "and this day week I will manage to bring two pounds."

"Only two?"

"I will make it three, if I can, brother Oakley; but my head feels quite confused and giddy. It is very strange."

"Ah," whispered Lupin to himself. "That is the natural effect of the narcotic. It has worked well. Then," he said aloud, "sister Oakley, I pray you to walk in to this room, and I will provide for you what the profane world call the breakfast, for although food for the soul is in alway preferable to food for the body, yet we must not always neglect our earthly tabernacle."

"I am much obliged to you," said Mrs. Oakley. "You may depend upon my regular offerings to the chapel."

CHAPTER CVII.
MRS. OAKLEY DISSEMBLES.

With trembling steps, Mrs. Oakley followed Lupin, the murderer, into his own room. Of course she was resolved to see nothing, and to make no remark that could in any way direct the attention of Lupin more closely to her, and, oh, how she panted for some opportunity of rushing into the street and crying aloud to the passers by, that the pious hypocrite was a murderer. But as yet she felt that her life depended upon the manner in which she played her part.

"Truly, sister Oakley," said Lupin, "I hope you passed a quiet and peaceful night. Amen!"

"Very," replied Mrs. Oakley.

"Ah, I wish I could say as much, sister Oakley."

"And can you not?"

"Alas! no, I had some dreams—some very bad dreams; but Satan always will be doing something, you know, sister. Do you know I dreamt of a murder!"

As he uttered these words, no Grand Inquisitor could have looked more keenly into the eyes of a victim, than did Mr. Lupin into the face of Mrs. Oakley; but she divined his motive, she felt that he was trying her, but she had even in such a moment sufficient presence of mind to keep her eyes steadily upon his face, and to say with seeming unconcern,

"Murder, did you say, Mr. Lupin?"

"Yes, I did say murder, and you—." He pointed at her with his finger, but finding that she only looked surprised, rather, he added—"and you are one of the elect, I rejoice to say, sister Oakley. Amen! It is a capital thing to be saved!"

"It is, indeed, Mr. Lupin."

"Well—well. Let us have the carnal meal, called breakfast. I will proceed, God willing, to the corner of the court, and purchase two eggs, Mrs. Oakley, if it be pleasing to you."

"Anything you like, Mr. Lupin; I have but a poor appetite in the morning, always."

Mr. Lupin put on his hat, and after slowly turning round and casting an anxious glance upon the room and every object within, to assure himself that he had left no evidences of his crime behind him, he slowly left to get the eggs.

Mrs. Oakley heard him descend the stairs, and she heard the door close behind him. Then she asked herself if that were really and truly an opportunity of escape that she dared attempt to avail herself of, or if it were only one in seeming, and that if she were upon its provocation to attempt to leave the place, she would only be confirming the slight suspicions that might be in the mind of Lupin, concerning her privity to his deed of blood.

He had talked of only going to the corner of the court, and how did she know that he had even gone so far? Might not the message about the eggs be merely a pretended one, to see what she would do? This was a consideration that kept her, tremblingly, where she was.

About five minutes elapsed, and then she heard a knock at the door below. Who could that be? Mr. Lupin had a key with which he always let himself in, so it could not be he. What was she to think? what was she to do? Suddenly then she heard the door opened, and then after a few moments delay some footstep sounded upon the stairs, but it was very unlike that of Lupin, the murderer.

The delightful thought came over the imagination of Mrs. Oakley, that some one was coming to whom she might at once make an avowal of all she knew of Lupin's guilt, and who might be able to protect her from the vengeance of the murderer. She rose, and peeped through the key-hole.

She saw Lupin coming up the stairs. He was making quite a laborious effort to tread differently to what was usual with him, and from that moment Mrs. Oakley felt that she was to be subjected to some extraordinary trial of her self-possession. She crept back to her seat, and waited in terror.

In the course of a few moments, Lupin, after treading with a heavy thump upon every stair, instead of gliding up in his usual manner, reaching the door at which he tapped, and then in an assumed voice, which if she, Mrs. Oakley, had not known he was there, would have deceived her, he said—

"Hilloa! who's at home?"

"Who's there?" said Mrs. Oakley.

"It's John Smith," cried Lupin. "I am an officer of the police. Has anybody anything to say to me here? They tell me in the court that some odd noises were heard in the night."

"I don't know anything about it," said Mrs. Oakley, "but if you will come in and wait until Mr. Lupin comes in, he may like to see you."

"Oh, no, no, no! It's no matter. Good morning, ma'am."

Down stairs went Lupin, thinking he had acted the officer to perfection, and making no doubt in the world but that he had thoroughly deceived Mrs. Oakley, who he was now quite satisfied knew absolutely nothing about the murder.

In the course of a couple of minutes, Mr. Lupin in his own character came gliding in.

"I am afraid I have kept you waiting, sister Oakley."

"Oh, not at all, but there has been a man there who says his name is Smith, and he—"

"I met him! I met him! It is all right. He heard something going on in the next house, I suppose, and mistook it for this. Pray cook the eggs to your liking, sister Oakley, and help yourself to anything. Don't be particular, sister Oakley, but make yourself at home."

"I will, reverend sir, I will."

Mrs. Oakley was really playing her part very well, but she fancied each moment that the murderer would see something in her manner to give him a suspicion that she knew too much for his safety.

She was wrong though, for upon the contrary, Mr. Lupin felt quite satisfied that the secret of his guilt was confined to his own breast.

"I pray you, sister Oakley," he said, "to eat freely of my humble fare, and after breakfast we will have a prayer."

It seemed to Mrs. Oakley, now that she had awakened to a sense of the awful hypocrisy of Mr. Lupin, something very horrible for him to talk of having a prayer; but she took care not to show what she felt in that particular.

"How kind and good of you," she said.

"Ay, truly, sister Oakley, I am kind and good, and yet there are envious folks in the world, who I dare say would not hesitate to give even me a bad name."

"Impossible, surely."

"I would it were, I would it were, my dear sister Oakley, I would it were impossible."

"It seems to me, reverend sir, as though it would not be in the power of poor human nature to praise you too much; but it is time that I should think of going home now, if you please."

"Well, sister, if you must go home among the heathens and the Philistines, I will not hinder you; but with the hope of seeing you soon again, I will now offer up a prayer."

It was truly sickening even to Mrs. Oakley, whose feelings the reader will think could not be very fine, to see such an arch hypocrite offering up a prayer to that Deity whom he must so bitterly have offended by his awful crimes.

But Mr. Lupin cut the prayer tolerably short, and then giving to Mrs. Oakley what he called the kiss of peace, and to which, loathsome as it was from him, she felt herself forced to submit, he bade her good day.

And now, indeed, she began to entertain a sanguine hope, that she would be released from his company, and she should soon be in a condition to denounce him to justice for the awful crime which she had seen him commit. She could not possibly avoid a slight feeling of satisfaction to appear upon her face.

"You seem pleased," said Lupin.

"I am, reverend sir."

"May I ask what at?"

"Ah, how can I be otherwise than delighted, when I am assured by such a saint upon earth as yourself that I am one of the elect?"

This was an answer with which, whether it was satisfactory or not, Mr. Lupin was, as it were, compelled to put up with; but taking up his hat, he said—

"Truly, sister Oakley, it will become me to see you a part of the way home."

Mrs. Oakley expressed her satisfaction with the holy man's company, and they both descended the stairs together. She felt, however, an exquisite pang of alarm upon finding that Lupin led her down the

staircase that led to the chapel, and not down the one which would have conducted them to the ordinary door of exit from the domestic portion of the building.

But even with all the dread upon her soul that he might be meditating some awful act in the chapel, she felt that she must assume a calmness though she felt it not.

"Why this leads to the chapel," she said. She thought it would sound more natural for her to make that remark, than to say nothing about it.

"Yes, sister it does, and here is the trap-door that conducts to the vaults."

He suddenly turned upon her, and clutched her by the arm, as he spoke. Poor Mrs. Oakley then really thought that her last hour was come, and that all along in pretending to have no suspicion of her, he was only dissembling. It was a mercy she did not at that terrible moment commit herself in some way. Surely Heaven supported her, for she did not.

"Reverend sir," she said, "what mean you?"

"What mean I? I mean will you descend to the vaults with me."

"And pray? Yes, if you wish it."

"Nothing—nothing," muttered Lupin. "What a fool I am. I might have been well convinced long ago, and yet I cannot forbear new trials. All is safe, all is safe. This way, sister Oakley, this way. I will only see you to the corner of your own street."

"Many thanks."

They both emerged from the chapel. Lupin slammed the door after him, and arm in arm they walked up the court together.

Poor Mrs. Oakley felt that to be the most trying moment of all for her nerves. While she had much to do—while she was alone with Lupin in the domestic portion of the chapel, and while she knew that the least slip of the tongue, or the least want of control over her feelings might be her

death—she conducted herself gallantly; but now when she was fairly in the open air, now that she was in comparative safety, her feelings almost got the better of her.

It was only by a powerful effort that she could at all control them.

She felt that by suddenly quitting the arm of Lupin, and making a rush for it, she might escape him, but then she did not want him to escape the consequences of his crime, for Mrs. Oakley had a woman's sympathy with the fate even of the not very respectable Mrs. Lupin. Besides, with all the vindictive hate that he might be supposed to feel upon finding that his guilt was known, he might yet pursue her, and before she could find aid, kill her.

"I must still dissemble," she thought, "and speak this most monstrous villain fairly."

"Quite a charming morning, reverend sir," she said.

"Very," said Lupin.

"I really am afraid that I am sadly intruding upon your time, by letting you come with me?"

"Oh, no—no—no."

He seemed to be getting very thoughtful, and Mrs. Oakley was proportionably more and more upon her guard, for she felt convinced that if he really thought she knew anything of his guilt he would kill her.

Now they emerged from the court; but it was yet rather an early hour in the morning, and but very few passengers were in the streets. The only person that was tolerably close to them was an elderly woman, and Mrs. Oakley much as she panted for an opportunity of separating herself from Lupin, felt that the time to do so had not yet come.

On they went, in the direction of Mrs. Oakley's house, that house that she now began to feel she had so much neglected, to look after what, in the language of scripture, might truly have been termed "Strange

Idols"—that home which she now looked to as a haven of safety from the terror of death itself.

"How silent you are, sister," said Lupin.

"Yes, I was thinking."

"Of what?" he said, fiercely.

"Of how much I should be able to take from Mr. Oakley's till, to bring to you, this day week."

"Oh! oh!"

"You may depend, reverend sir, it shall be as much as possible. Of course I must be cautious, though."

"Oh, yes—yes."

They had now reached within a few paces of the corner of the street, and yet Mrs. Oakley had seen no one upon whom, from their appearance, she thought she could rely to call to for aid against the murderer. Suddenly then round the corner, there came a bulky form. The heavy tread of some one of unusual weight sounded upon the street pavement.

Big Ben, the beef-eater, with his arms behind him, and in a very thoughtful mood, came pacing slowly along.

As Mrs. Oakley said afterwards, her heart, at that moment, was in her mouth.

She could not dissemble an instant longer with Lupin, but with a loud shriek that echoed far and wide in the streets, she suddenly sprang from him, crying—

"Ben, Ben, dear strong Ben, seize this man! He is a murderer!"

"D—n! Done at last!" cried Lupin.

He turned to fly, but treading upon a piece of cabbage-leaf that was upon the pavement, down he fell.

"Easy does it," said Ben, and he flung himself upon the top of Lupin, spreading out his arms and legs, and holding him by sheer weight as firmly to the pavement as though he had been nailed there.

"Help, help, help! Murder! help!" shouted Mrs. Oakley. "Murder, murder, murder!"

People began to flock to them from all parts. Lupin succeeded in getting a knife from his pocket, but Mrs. Oakley held him by the wrist with both hands, and in a minute more he was in the grasp of two strong men, one of whom was a police-officer, and who gloried in the job.

CHAPTER CVIII.
RETURNS TO MRS. LOVETT, AND SHOWS HOW SHE GOT OUT OF THE RIVER.

Our readers have been aware for a long time past that Mrs. Lovett was no common, everyday, sort of woman, and what we are about to relate concerning her, will be further proof that way tending, if it should be by any sceptical person in any way required.

To all appearance, Todd had seen the last of her on the river. But Todd was born to be deceived, and at the time he should have recollected an old adage, to the effect that, folks who are born to be hanged are very seldom drowned.

We shall see.

Mrs. Lovett did go down, but as fortune and the amazingly strong current of the river would have it, she came up again, with a barge between her and Todd, and involuntarily laying hold of the side of the barge, there she remained, too exhausted to cry out, until Todd was far off.

She was seen at last by a man who was at the window of a public-house, and in the course of ten minutes after Todd had began to congratulate himself upon the demise of Mrs. Lovett, she was in a warm bed at the public-house, and her clothes drying at the kitchen-fire.

She had scarcely been for a moment at all insensible; and as she lay in bed she had a most accurate perception of all that happened. The reader may suppose that the feelings of Mrs. Lovett towards Sweeney Todd, were by no means ameliorated by the morning's proceedings.

And yet how calculating she was in her rage!

As the effects of her submersion wore off, and her ordinary strength came back to her, her mind became intently fixed upon but one object, and that was how to be completely and bitterly revenged upon Todd.

"He shall hang," she said. "He shall hang, but I must think of the means, while I likewise take care to avoid the gallows myself; but he shall hang, let the consequences be what they may."

The landlady of the public-house was very assiduous in her attention to Mrs. Lovett, and while she was thus thinking of her revenge upon Todd, she (the landlady) made her appearance in the room with a steaming glass of mulled and spiced wine.

"I hope you are better," she said; "and if you will give me the name and address of your friends, I will send to them at once."

"Friends!" said Mrs. Lovett. "How came you to think that I had any friends?"

"Well, I hardly thought you were without. Don't most folks have friends of some sort or another?"

"Ah, I had forgotten. I have a friend with me—a very dear friend, who will not forsake me. I have more of them at home—for I have a home."

"Oh," thought the landlady, "she is raving."

"Bring me my stays," said Mrs. Lovett.

The stays, which, together with the rest of her apparel, now had got quite dry, was brought to her, and in a little secret pocket in them, Mrs. Lovett dived with her two fingers, and found a damp five pound note.

"Take that," she said, "for your trouble. I do not want any change. Only be so good now as to help me to dress, and tell me what the time is."

"Three o'clock," said the landlady, "and I'm sure you can't think how pleased I am that you are better. Do you really think you are strong enough to go home yet?"

"Yes. What I have to do at home will lend me strength, if I wanted it."

Mrs. Lovett was soon dressed, and at her request a coach was sent for; and in the course of half-an-hour from the time that the landlady had asked her if she should send for her friends, she, Mrs. Lovett, was bowling along the dense thoroughfares of the city to her home.

What pen could describe the dark and malignant thoughts that filled her brain as she proceeded? What language would be strong enough to depict the storm of passion that raged in the bosom of that imperious woman?

It must suffice, that she made herself a solemn promise of vengeance against Todd, let the risk or the actual consequences to herself be what they might. If with perfect safety to herself she could be revenged upon him—of course she would; but she resolved not to hesitate, even if it involved a self-sacrifice, so full of the very agony of rage was she.

"He shall hang—he shall hang!"

Such were the words she uttered as the lumbering hackney-coach reached Fleet Street.

For all she knew to the contrary, Todd might be looking from his door, for that he had gone home in great triumph at the thought of having got rid of her she did not doubt; and so as it was just then a great object with her to keep him in that pleasant delusion, she got quite down among the straw at the bottom of the hackney-coach.

But she kept her eyes—those bright metallic-looking eyes, which, with a questionable taste, had been so much admired by the lawyers' clerks of the Temple and Lincoln's Inn—she kept her eyes just on the edge of the coach window, so that she might have a passing glance at Todd's shop.

Todd was at the door.

How pleased and self-satisfied he looked! He was rubbing his huge hands slowly together, and a grim smile was on his horrible features.

Mrs. Lovett clinched her hands until her nails made marks in the palms of them that did not come out for hours, and in a harsh growling voice, she said—

"Ah, grin on, grin on, fiend—your hours from now shall be numbered. You shall hang, hang, and I shall hope to see you in your last agony. If any bribe can induce the hangman, by some common bungling to protract your pain, he has but to name his price and he shall have it."

The coach rolled on.

Mrs. Lovett rose up from among the straw with a shudder. The immersion in the river had not drowned her certainly, but it had done her no good; and she could not conceal from herself, that a serious illness might very probably result from her unexpected cold bath.

"Never mind!" she said. "Never mind! What care I so that I complete my revenge against Todd? If I die after that it will not much matter. I will have my revenge."

The coach stopped at the corner of Bell-yard.

"That will do," said Mrs. Lovett as she pulled the check-string. "That will do. I will alight here."

She paid the coachman double the amount of his fare, so he only muttered a few curses between his teeth, and drove off.

With quite a staggering step, for Mrs. Lovett was anything but well, she walked to her own shop. The door was closed, and she looked through the upper half of it which was of glass, just in time to see the highly trustworthy personage whom she had left in charge of the concern, place a bottle to her lips, and slowly lift it up.

Mrs. Lovett opened the door, just as the titillating contents of the bottle were rippling over the palate of the lady, who had had such an adventure with Todd.

"Wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. Lovett.

Down fell the bottle, and smashed into many fragments on the floor of the shop. An unmistakable odour of gin filled the air.

"So," cried Mrs. Lovett, "this is the way you employ your time is it, while I am away?"

Mrs. Lovett Finds Somebody Out—At Home.

Mrs. Lovett Finds Somebody Out—At Home.

"T—T—Todd," stuttered the woman, "T—T—Todd is such a nice man."

"Todd, do you say?"

"Yes—I—I say—T—Todd is a nice man."

"Answer me, wretch, instantly. Has he been here? Speak, or I will shake your wretched life out of you."

Mrs. Lovett suited the action to the word, and the word to the action, for she clutched her substitute by the throat, and shook her vehemently.

"D—D—Don't Mrs. L.—I—will—tell all—all. I will indeed."

"Speak then. Has Todd been here?"

"In course, and quite a nice man—I—I may say—quite a gin—I mean a nice man—a cordial old Tom. No! Cream of the—Todd."

"Wretch!"

Mrs. Lovett paced the shop for a few moments in an agony of rage. Todd presuming upon her death had actually been there, no doubt upon an expedition to ransack the place. A touch to the lock of the parlour door, told her at once that it was open, and from that moment she no longer could doubt but that the whole house had been subject to the scrutiny of Sweeney Todd.

"The wretch!" she said. "He thought to find enough no doubt to reward his pains, but he has been deceived in that hope, I feel well assured. What I have here, I have too well hidden for any search of a few hours to find it. If they were to pull the house to pieces, brick by brick and timber by timber, they might find something to pay them for their labour."

The lady with the partiality for gin, now seemed to be lapsing into a state of somnolency, but Mrs. Lovett gave her rather a rough shake.

"Tell me," she said, "when did this man come, and what did he say to you?"

"Gin!"

"I ask you what Todd said to you?"

"Oh, yes. I—really—fine times. Old Tom Todd—cream of the Todd."

It was quite clear that she was too far gone in drunkenness for anything distinct or to be relied upon to be got from her, and the only thing Mrs. Lovett had to do, was to consider what to do with her. If she threw her out of the shop into the court, the probability was, that a crowd would collect round her, and that was just what Mrs. Lovett did not want. Indeed, for all she, Mrs. Lovett knew, the drunken woman might stagger round to Todd's, and let him know what of all things, she wished to keep secret from him, namely, that she had returned.

Mrs. Lovett had not yet formed her plans, and certainly until she had done so, she did not want any premature knowledge of her rescue from drowning to reach the ears of Todd.

But what to do with the drunken woman was the question. Mrs. Lovett had to think a little over that. At length, however, she made up her mind, and approaching the lady who had such a partiality for Old Tom, she said—

"Did you ever taste my cordial spirit, that I have up stairs in my bedroom?"

"Eh?"

"Come, I will give you a bottle of it, if you will walk up stairs. Only try."

By the assistance of Mrs. Lovett, the gin heroine rose and tottered to the staircase; Mrs. Lovett pushed her on, and stair by stair she managed to mount to the first floor. It was by far too great a job to get her any further, so opening the door of the back-room, Mrs. Lovett pushed her in with violence, and slammed the door upon her.

"Lie there and rot," she said, "so that you are out of my way. Lie there and rot, idiot."

Without then pausing to cast another thought or look at her victim, Mrs. Lovett walked down the staircase again to the shop.

When there, she felt a kind of faintness come over her, and she was compelled to sit down for a few minutes to recover herself.

"How much I have to think of," she said, when she had a little recovered. "How much I have to think of, and how little a time in which to think. Something must be done before midnight. Todd will fly if I do not do something."

A racking pain in her head, compelled her to rest it upon her hands.

"If I thought," she said, "that I should get very ill—if I thought that there was any chance that I should die, I would go at once to the police office and denounce him. But no—'tis only a passing pang, and I shall soon be better—shall soon be myself again."

She did not speak now for some few moments, and during that time she rocked to and fro, for the pain in her head was excessive. It did not last, however, but gradually went off, leaving only a sensation of dulness behind it, with some amount of confusion.

Then Mrs. Lovett, as well as she was able, set about thinking calmly and dispassionately, as she hoped, about the best means of satisfying her revenge against Todd. That that revenge should be complete and ample, she was resolved.

Gradually she began to work out a plan of operations, and as she did so, her eyes brightened, and something of her old expression of bold confidence came back to her.

She rose and paced the shop.

"Yes, the villain shall die," she said, "by the hands of the executioner—I swear it! And he shall know, too, that it is I who have doomed him to such a death. He shall feel that, had he kept faith with we all would have been well; but now he shall hang—hang!—and I shall look on and see his torments!"

CHAPTER CIX.
JOHANNA HAS PLENTY OF COMPANY AT TODD'S.

We return to Johanna, whom for a few hours, owing to the pressure of other circumstances, we have been compelled, with all manner of reluctance, to neglect.

Recent events, although they had by no manner of means tended to decrease the just confidence which Johanna had in her own safety, had yet much agitated her; and she at times feared that she should not be able to carry on the farce of composure before Todd much longer.

"Charley, my dear boy," said Todd, "you are a very good lad, indeed, and I like you."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, sir—very glad."

"That is right; but when I say I like any one, I do not confine myself to that mere expression of liking, and there an end. Of course, as a religious man, I love my enemies, and feel myself bound to do so—eh, Charley?"

"Of course, sir."

Poor Johanna had no resource but to seem to be deceived by this most disgusting hypocrisy.

"But although," continued Todd, waving a razor in the air; "although I may love my enemies, I need not to go out of my way, you know, Charley, to do good things to them as I would to my friends; but you I

will do all I can for; and as it may very materially help you to get an honest independence in the course of a little time, I will manage to accommodate you with sleeping here to-night and all nights henceforth."

"How kind of you, sir!"

"I am glad you appreciate it, Charley; and I feel quite sure that your slumber will be most profound."

Todd, upon this, made one of his diabolical faces, and then, taking his hat, he marched out, merely adding as he crossed the threshold of the door—

"I shall not be long gone, Charley."

The day was on the decline, and a strong impression came over Johanna's mind that something in particular would happen before it wholly passed away into darkness. She almost trembled to think what that something could be, and that she might be compelled to be a witness to violence, from which her gentle spirit revolted; and had it not been that she had determined nothing should stop her from investigating the fate of poor Mark Ingestrie, she could even then have rushed into the street in despair.

But as the soft daylight deepened into the dim shadows of evening, she grew more composed, and was better able, with a calmer spirit, to wait the progress of events.

"I am alone once more," said Johanna, "in this dreadful place. Again he leaves me with all my dark and terrible thoughts of the fate of him whom I have so fondly loved thronging around my heart; and this night, no doubt, he thinks to kill me! Oh, Mark Ingestrie! if I were only but quite sure that you had gone to that world from whence there is no return, I think I could, with scarce a sigh, let this dreadful man send me after you!"

Johanna rested her head upon her hands, and wept bitterly.

Suddenly a voice close to her said—

"St. Dunstan."

She sprang from the little low seat upon which she was, and, with a cry of alarm, was about to make a rush from the shop, when the intruder caught her by the arm, saying—

"Don't you know me, Johanna?"

"Ah, Sir Richard! my dear friend, it is, indeed, you, and I am safe again—I am safe!"

"Certainly you are safe; and permit me to say that you have all along been tolerably safe, Johanna. But how very incautious you are. Here I have come into the shop, and actually stood by you for some few moments, you knowing nothing of it! What now if Todd had so come in?"

"He would have killed me."

"He might have done so. But now all danger is quite over, for you will have protectors at your hand. Do you know where Todd has gone?"

"I do not."

"Well, it don't matter. Let me look at this largest cupboard. I wonder if it will hold two of my men? Let me see. Oh, yes, easily and comfortably. I will be back in a moment."

He went no further than the door, and when he came back, he brought with him Mr. Crotchet and another person, and pointing to the cupboard, he said—

"You will stow yourselves there, if you please, and keep quiet until I call upon you to come out."

"I believe you," said Crotchet. "Lord bless you, we shall be snug enough. How is you, Miss O.? I suppose by this time you feels quite at home in your breech—"

"Silence!" said Sir Richard. "Go to your duty at once, Crotchet. Miss Oakley is in no humour to attend to you just now."

Upon this, Mr. Crotchet and the other man got into the cupboard, and a chair was placed against it; and then Sir Richard said to Johanna—

"I will come in to be shaved when I know that Todd is here, and your trials will soon be over."

"To be shaved?—By him?"

"Yes. But believe me there is no danger. Any one may come here now to be shaved with perfect safety. I have made such arrangements that Todd cannot take another life."

"Thank Heaven!"

"Here is a letter from your friend, Miss Wilmot, which I promised her I would deliver to you. Be careful how you let Todd see it. Read it at once, and then you had better destroy it at once. I must go now; but, of course, if you should be in any danger, call upon my men in the cupboard to assist you, and they will do so at once, although it may spoil my plot a little."

"Oh! how much I owe you."

"Nay, nay, no more upon that head. Farewell now, for a brief space. We shall very soon meet again. Keep a fair and agreeable face to Todd, if you can, for I do not wish, if it can possibly be helped, anything to mar the plot I have got up for his absolute conviction upon abundant testimony."

Sir Richard shook hands with Johanna, and then hastily left the shop, for he did not wish just then to be found there by Todd, who might return at any moment.

The moment he was gone Johanna eagerly opened the letter that had been brought to her, and found it to contain the following words:—

> "My Dear Johanna,—This is a selfish letter; for as I cannot see you, I think I should go mad if I did not write to you; so I do so for the ease of my own heart and brain. For the love of Heaven, and for the love of all you hold dear in this world, get away from Todd as quickly as you can; and when I see you again, I shall have something to say to you which will give you more pleasure than ever, with my bad advice, I have given you pain.

"Sir Richard Blunt has kindly promised to give this to you, and you know that I am—Your ever affectionate

ARABELLA."

"Yes," said Johanna, when she had finished the epistle. "In truth I know you are ever my affectionate Arabella, and I am most happy in such a friend. But this must not meet Todd's eye. Ah! that footstep, I know it too well. He comes—he comes."

She had just hidden the letter, when Sweeney Todd made his appearance.

"Anybody been?" he asked.

"Yes, one man, but he would not wait."

"Ah, wanted to be shaved, I suppose; but no matter—no matter; and I hope you have been quiet, and not been attempting to indulge your curiosity in any way, since I have been gone. Hush! here's somebody coming. Why, it's old Mr. Wrankley, the tobacconist, I declare. Good-day to you, sir—shaved, I suppose? I'm glad you have come, sir, for I have been out till this moment. Hot water, Charley, directly, and hand me that razor."

Johanna, in handing Todd the razor, knocked the edge of it against the chair, and it being uncommonly sharp, cut a great slice of the wood off one of the arms of it.

"What shameful carelessness," said Todd; "I have half a mind to lay the strop over your back, sir; here you have spoilt a capital razor—not a bit of edge left upon it."

"Oh, excuse him, Mr. Todd—excuse him," said the old gentleman; "he's only a little lad, after all. Let me intercede for him."

"Very good, sir; if you wish me to look over it, of course I will; and, thank God, we have a stock of razors, of course, always at hand. Is there any news stirring, sir?"

"Nothing that I know of, Mr. Todd, except it's the illness of Mr. Cummings, the overseer. They say he got home about twelve to his own house, in Chancery-lane, and ever since then he has been as sick as a dog, and all they can get him to say is, 'Oh, those pies—oh, those pies!'"

"Very odd, sir."

"Very. I think Mr. Cummings must be touched in the upper story, do you know, Mr. Todd. He's a very respectable man, but, between you and I, was never over bright."

"Certainly not, sir—certainly not. But it's a very odd case. What pies can he possibly mean, sir? Did you call when you came from home?"

"No. Ha, ha! I can't help laughing; but, ha, ha! I have come away from home on the sly, you see. The fact is, my wife's cousin—hilloa!—I think you have cut me."

"No, no—we can't cut anybody for three-halfpence, sir. I think I will just give you another lather, sir, before I polish you off. And so you have the pearls with you; well, how odd things come round, to be sure."

"What do you mean?"

"This shaving-brush is just in a good state now. Always as a shaving-brush is on the point of wearing out, it's the best. Charley, you will go at once to Mr. Cummings, and ask if he is any better; you need not hurry, that's a good lad. I am not at all angry with you now. And so, sir, they think at home that you have gone after some business over the water, do they, and have not the least idea that you have come to be shaved? There, be off, Charley—shut the door, that's a good lad, bless you."

When Johanna came back, the tobacconist was gone.

"Well," said Sweeney Todd, as he sharpened a razor very leisurely, "how is Mr. Cummings?"

"I found out his house, sir, with some difficulty, and they say he is better having gone to sleep."

"Oh, very good! I am going to look over some accounts in the parlour, so don't choose to be disturbed, you understand; and for the next ten minutes, if anybody comes, you will say I am out."

Sweeney Todd walked quite coolly into the parlour, and Johanna heard him lock the door on the inside; a strange, undefined sensation of terror crept over her, she knew not why, and she shuddered, as she looked around her. The cupboard door was not close shut, and she knew not what prompted her to approach and peep in. On the first shelf was the hat of the tobacconist: it was rather a remarkable one, and recognised in a moment.

"What has happened? Good God! what can have happened?" thought Johanna, as she staggered back, until she reached the shaving-chair, into which she cast herself for support. Her eyes fell upon the arm which she had taken such a shaving off with the razor, but all was perfectly whole and correct; there was not the least mark of the cut that so recently had been given to it; and lost in wonder, Johanna, for more than a minute, continued looking for the mark of the injury she knew could not have been, by any possibility, effaced.

And yet she found it not, although there was the chair, just as usual, with its wide spreading arms and its worn, tarnished paint and gilding. No wonder that Johanna rubbed her eyes, and asked herself if she were really awake?

What could account for such a phenomenon? The chair was a fixture too, and the others in the shop were of a widely different make and construction, so it could not have been changed.

"Alas! alas!" mourned Johanna, "my mind is full of horrible surmises, and yet I can form no rational conjecture. I suspect everything, and know nothing. What can I do? What ought I to do, to relieve myself from this state of horrible suspense? Am I really in a place where, by some frightful ingenuity, murder has become bold and familiar, or can it be all a delusion?"

She covered her face with her hands for a time, and when she uncovered them, she saw that Sweeney Todd was staring at her with looks of suspicion from the inner room.

The necessity of instantly acting her part came over Johanna, and she gave a loud scream.

"What the devil is all this about?" said Todd, advancing with a sinister expression. "What's the meaning of it? I suspect—"

"Yes, sir," said Johanna, "and so do I; I must to-morrow have it out."

"Have what out?"

"My tooth, sir—it's been aching for some hours; did you ever have the toothache? If you did, you can feel for me, and not wonder that I lean my head upon my hands and groan."

Todd looked about half satisfied at this excuse of Johanna's, and for a few moments as he looked at her, she thought that after all she should have to call upon her friends in the cupboard to save her from the danger that his eyes, in their flashing ghastliness, threatened. Another moment, and her lips would have parted with the shrill cry of "Murder!" upon them, and then Heaven only knows what might have been the result; but he turned suddenly, and went into the parlour, muttering to himself—

"It is not worth while now, and this night ends it all—yes, this night ends it all."

He slammed the door violently behind him, and Johanna was relieved from the horror which his gaze had awakened, in her heart. She stood still, but gradually she recovered her former calmness—if calmness it could at all be called, seeing that it was only a stiller species of agitation.

But she now began to recall the words of Sir Richard Blunt to the effect that measures had been taken that no more murders could be committed by Todd, and she began to feel comforted.

"There is something that I do not know yet," she said; "Sir Richard should have told me how there could be no more murders done here, and then I should not have suffered what I did, and what I still suffer with the thought that almost before my eyes a fellow creature has been hurried into eternity; and yet I ought to have faith, and in defiance of all the seeming evidences of a horrible deed about me, I ought, I suppose, to believe that it has been prevented in some most strange and miraculous way."

The more Johanna thought over this promise of Sir Richard Blunt's the more she became convinced that he would never have given utterance to it if he had not felt perfectly sure it would be fulfilled, and so she got comforted, and once again resolved to play her part in that dreadful drama of real life, in the vortex of which, with the purest and the holiest of motives, she had plunged recklessly, we will admit, but yet from motives entitling her to sympathy on earth, and protection in heaven.

Todd remained for a considerable time in the parlour; and when he came out, Johanna saw that he had made some alteration in his apparel. The first words he uttered were—

"Keep a good fire, Charley."

"Yes, sir."

"Did you ever see a house on fire, my boy?"

"I never did, sir."

"Ah! It must be an amusing sight—a very amusing sight, especially if the conflagration spreads, and one has an opportunity of viewing it from the water. Talking of water, the lady who was here this morning—Mrs. Lovett—was very fond of water, and now she has got plenty of it. Ah!"

"Really, sir? Has she gone to the sea-side?"

Johanna looked Todd rather hard in the face as she spoke these words, and the close observation seemed to anger him, for he spoke hastily and sharply—

"What is it to you? Get out of my way, will you? and you may begin to think of shutting up, I think, for we shall have no more customers to-night. I am tired and weary. You are to sleep under the counter, you know."

"Yes, sir, you told me so. I daresay I shall be very comfortable there."

"And you have not been peeping and prying about, have you?"

"Not at all."

"Not looking even into that cupboard, I suppose, eh? It's not locked, but that's no reason why you should look into it—not that there is any secrets in it; but I object to peeping and prying upon principle."

Todd, as he spoke, advanced towards the cupboard, and Johanna thought that in another moment a discovery would undoubtedly take place of the two officers who were there concealed; and probably that would have been the case, had not the handle of the shop door been turned at that moment, and a man presented himself, when Todd turned quickly, and saw that he was a substantial-looking farmer, with dirty top-boots, as if he had just come off a journey.

"Well, master," said the visitor, "I wants a clean shave."

"Oh," said Todd, not in the best of humours, "it's rather late; but I suppose you would not like to wait till morning, for I don't know if I have any hot water."

"Oh, cold will do."

"Cold? Oh, dear no; we never shave in cold water; and if you must, you must; so sit down, sir, and we will soon settle the business."

"Thank you, thank you. I can't go to bed comfortable without a clean shave, do you see? I have come up from Braintree with beasts on commission, and I'm staying at the Bull's Head, you see."

"Oh, indeed," said Todd, as he adjusted the shaving cloth, "the Bull's Head."

"Yes, master; why I brought up a matter o' 220 beasts, I did, do you see, and was on my *pooney*, as good a stepper as you'd wish to see; and I sold 'em all, do you see, for 550 *pun*. Ho, ho! good work that, do you see, and only forty-two on 'em was my beasts, do you see; I've got a missus at home, and a daughter; my girl's called Johanna—a-hem!"

Up to this point Johanna had not suspected that the game had begun, and that this was no other than Sir Richard himself, most admirably disguised, who had come to put an end to the mal-practices of Sweeney Todd; but his marked pronunciation of her name at once opened her eyes to that fact, and she knew that something interesting must soon happen.

"And so you sold them all?" said Todd.

"Yes, master, I did, and I've got the money in my pocket now, in bank-notes; I never leaves my money about at inns, do you see, master; safe bind, safe find, you see; I carries it about with me."

"A good plan, too," said Todd; "Charley, some hot water; that's a good lad—and—and—Charley?"

"Yes, sir."

"While I am finishing off this gentleman, you may as well just run to the Temple to Mr. Serjeant Toldrunis and ask for his wig; we shall have to do it in the morning, and may as well have it the first thing in the day to begin upon; and you need not hurry, Charley, as we shall shut up when you come back."

"Very good, sir."

Johanna walked out, but went no further than the shop window, close to which she placed her eyes, so that, between a pomatum jar and a lot of hair brushes, she could clearly see what was going on.

"A nice-looking little lad, that," said Todd's customer.

"Very, sir; an orphan boy; I took him out of charity, poor little fellow; but then, we ought to try to do all the good we can."

"Just so; I'm glad I have come to be shaved here. Mine's rather a strong beard, I think, do you see."

"Why, sir, in a manner of speaking," replied Todd, "it is a strong beard. I suppose you didn't come to London alone, sir?"

CHAPTER CX.
TODD'S HOUR HAS COME.

The hideous face that Todd made above the head of his customer at this moment, was more like that which Mephistopheles might have made, after achieving the destruction of a human soul, than anything human. Sir Richard Blunt quickly replied to Todd's question, by saying—

"Oh, yes, quite alone; except the drovers I had no company with me; why do you ask?"

"Why, sir, I thought if you had any gentleman with you who might be waiting at the Bull's Head, you would recommend him to me if anything was wanting in my way, you know, sir; you might have just left him, saying you were going to Todd the barber's, to have a clean shave, sir."

"No, not at all; the fact is, I did not come out to have a shave, but a walk, and it wasn't till I gave my chin a stroke, and found what a beard I had, that I thought of it; and then passing your shop, in I popped, do you see."

"Exactly, sir, I comprehend; you are quite alone in London?"

"Oh, quite; but when I come again, I'll come to you to be shaved, you may depend, and I'll recommend you, too."

"I'm very much obliged to you," said Todd, as he passed his hand over the chin of his customer, "I'm very much obliged; I find I must give you another lather, sir, and I'll get another razor with a keener edge, now that I have taken off all the rough, as one may say, in a manner of speaking."

"Oh, I shall do."

"No, no, don't move, sir, I shall not detain you a moment; I have my other razors in the next room, and will polish you off now, sir, before you will know where you are; you know, sir, you have promised to recommend me, so I must do the best I can with you."

"Well, well, a clean shave is a comfort, but don't be long, for I want to get back, do you see."

"Not a moment, not a moment."

Sweeney Todd walked into his back-parlour, conveying with him the only light that was in the shop, so that the dim glimpse that, up to this time, Johanna from the outside had contrived to get of what was going on, was denied to her; and all that met her eyes was impenetrable darkness.

Oh, what a world of anxious agonising sensations crossed the mind of the young and beautiful girl at that moment. She felt as if some great crisis in her history had arrived, and that she was condemned to look in vain into darkness to see of what it consisted.

We must not, however, allow the reader to remain in the same state of mystification, which came over the perceptive faculties of Johanna Oakley; but we shall proceed to state clearly and distinctly what did happen in the barber's shop while he went to get an uncommonly keen razor in his back-parlour.

The moment his back was turned, the seeming farmer who had made such a good thing of his beasts, sprang from the shaving chair, as if he had been electrified; and yet he did not do it with any appearance of fright, nor did he make any noise. It was only astonishingly quick, and then he placed himself close to the window, and waited patiently with his eyes fixed upon the chair, to see what would happen next.

In the space of about a quarter of a minute, there came from the next room a sound like the rapid drawing back of a heavy bolt, and then in an instant, the shaving chair disappeared beneath the floor; and the

circumstances by which Sweeney Todd's customers disappeared was evident.

There was a piece of the flooring turning upon a centre, and the weight of the chair when a bolt was withdrawn by means of simple leverage from the inner room, weighed down one end of the top, which, by a little apparatus, was to swing completely round, there being another chair on the under surface, which thus became the upper, exactly resembling the one in which the unhappy customer was supposed to be 'polished off.'

Hence was it that in one moment, as if by magic, Sweeney Todd's visitors disappeared, and there was the empty chair. No doubt, he trusted to a fall of about twenty feet below, on to a stone floor, to be the death of them, or, at all events, to stun them until he could go down to finish the murder, and—*to cut them up for Mrs. Lovett's pies!* after robbing them of all the money and valuables they might have about them.

In another moment, the sound as of a bolt was again heard, and Sir Richard Blunt, who had played the part of the wealthy farmer, feeling that the trap was closed again, seated himself in the new chair that had made its appearance with all the nonchalance in life, as if nothing had happened.

It was a full minute before Todd ventured to look from the parlour into the darkened shop, and then he shook so that he had to hold by the door to steady himself.

"That's done," he said. "That's the last, I hope. It is time I finished; I never felt so nervous since the first time. Then I did quake a little. How quiet he went: I have sometimes had a shriek ringing in my ears for a whole week."

It was a large high-backed piece of furniture that shaving chair, so that, when Todd crept into the shop with the light in his hand, he had not the remotest idea it was tenanted; but when he got round it, and saw his customer calmly waiting with the lather upon his face, the cry of horror that came gurgling and gushing from his throat was horrible to hear.

"Why, what's the matter," said Sir Richard.

"O God, the dead! the dead! O God!" cried Todd, "this is the beginning of my punishment. Have mercy, Heaven! oh, do not look upon me with those dead eyes."

"Murderer!" shouted Sir Richard, in a voice that rung like the blast of a trumpet through the house.

In an instant he sprang upon Sweeney Todd, and grappled him by the throat. There was a short struggle, and they were down upon the floor together, but Todd's wrists were suddenly laid hold of, and a pair of handcuffs most scientifically put upon him by the officers who, at the word 'murderer,' that being a preconcerted signal, came from the cupboard where they had been concealed.

"Secure him well, my men," said the magistrate, "and don't let him lay violent hands upon himself."

Sweeney Todd's Hour Has Come.

Sweeney Todd's Hour Has Come.

Johanna rushed into the shop, and clung to the arm of Sir Richard, crying—

"Is it all over! Is it indeed all done now?"

"It is, Miss Oakley."

The moment Todd heard these few words addressed to Charley Green as he thought him, he turned his glassy blood-shot eyes upon Johanna, and glared at her for the space of about half a minute in silence. He then, although handcuffed, made a sudden and violent effort to reach her, but he was in too experienced hands, and he was held back most effectually.

He struck his forehead with his fettered hands, making a gash in it from which the blood flowed freely, as in infuriated accents, he said—

"Oh fool—fool, to be cheated by a girl! I had my suspicions that the boy was a spy, but I never thought for one moment there was a disguise of sex. Oh, idiot! idiot! And who are you, sir?"

"I am Sir Richard Blunt."

Todd groaned and staggered. The officers would have let him sit down in the shaving chair for a moment or two to recover from the shock his mind had sustained by his capture, but when he found that it was the shaving chair he was led to, he shuddered, and in a wailing voice, said—

"No—no! not there—not there! Anywhere but there. I dare not sit there!"

"It isn't worth while sitting at all," said Crotchet. "I'm blowed if I ain't all crumpled up in a blessed mummy by being in that cupboard so jolly long. All my joints is a-going crinkley-crankley."

Todd looked in the face of Sir Richard Blunt, and in a faint voice spoke—

"I—I don't feel very well. There's a little drop of cordial medicine that I often take in my coat pocket. You see I can't get at it, my hands being manacled. I only want to take a drop to comfort me."

"Get it out, Crotchet," said Sir Richard.

"Here ye is," said Crotchet, as he produced a little bottle, with a pale straw-coloured liquid in, from Todd's pocket.

"Give it to me. Oh, give it to me," said Todd. "I will thank you much. It will recover me. Give it to me!"

"No, Todd," said Sir Richard, as he took the little bottle and put it in his own pocket. "I do not intend, if I can help it, to permit you to evade the law by poisoning yourself."

Finding himself thus defeated in his insidious attempt upon his own life, Todd got quite frantic with rage, and had a grand struggle with the officers, in his endeavours to get at some of the razors that were near at hand in the shop; but they effectually prevented him from doing so, and finally he became too much exhausted to make any further efforts.

"My curses be upon you all!" he said. "May you, and all who belong to you—"

But we cannot transcribe the horrible denunciations of Todd. They were too horrible even for the officers to listen to with patience, and Sir Richard Blunt, turning to Johanna, said—

"Run over the way to your friends at the fruiterer's. All is over now, and your disguise is no longer needed."

Johanna did not pause another moment, but ran over the way, and in the course of a few moments she was in the arms of the fruiterer's daughter, where she relieved her overcharged heart by weeping bitterly.

"Shut up the shop, Crotchet," said Sir Richard Blunt, "and then get a coach. I will lodge this man at once in Newgate, and then we will see to Mrs. Lovett."

At this name Todd looked up.

"She has escaped you," he said.

"I don't think so," responded Sir Richard.

"But I say she has—she is dead: she fell into the Thames this morning and was drowned."

"Oh, you allude to your pushing her into the river this morning near London-bridge?" said Sir Richard. "I saw that affair myself."

Todd glared at him.

"But it was not of much consequence. We got her out, and she is all right again now at her shop in Bell-yard."

Todd held his hands over his eyes for some moments, and then he said in a low voice—

"It is all a dream, or I am mad."

Crotchet, in obedience to the orders he had received, put up the shutters of Todd's shop, and then fetched a coach, during the whole of which time, Sir Richard Blunt himself kept his hand upon Todd's collar, so that

he could control him if he should again become so violent as he had been.

The spirit to struggle was, however, gone from Todd for the time being. Indeed, he seemed to be completely stunned by his capture, and to be able only to see things darkly. He was yet to awaken to a full consciousness of his situation, and let that awakening be when it would, it was sure to be awful.

"All's right," said Crotchet. "Here's the vehicle, and the crib is shut up."

"Crotchet!"

"Yes, your worship. What is it? Why, you never looked at a feller in that sort of way before."

"I never did have anything so important to say to you, Crotchet, nor did I ever place in your hands so important a trust. It is one that will make you or mar you, Crotchet. I have myself important business here, or I would myself take this man to Newgate. As it is, Crotchet, I wish to entrust you with that important piece of duty, and I rely upon you, Crotchet, for keeping an eye upon him, and delivering him in safety."

"It's as good as done," said Crotchet. "If he gets away from me, he has only another individual to do, and that's the old gent as is down below, with the long tail. Lor' bless you, sir, didn't I say from the first, as Todd smugged the people as comed to him to be shaved?"

"You did, Crotchet."

"Werry good. Then does yer think as I'm the feller all for to let him go when once I've got a hold of him? Rather not!"

"I entrust you with him then, Crotchet. Take him away. I give him entirely into your hands."

Upon this, Crotchet slid his arm beneath that of Sweeney Todd, and looking in his face with a most grotesque air of satisfaction, he said, "kim up—kim up!"

He then, by an immense exertion of strength, hoisted Todd completely over the door step, after which, catching him with both hands about the small of his back, he pitched him into the coach.

"My eye," said the coachman, "has the gemman had a drop too much?"

"He will have," said Crotchet, "some o' these odd days. To Newgate—to Newgate."

Crotchet rode inside along with Todd "for fear he should be dull," he said, and the other officer got up outside the coach, and then off it went to that dreadful building that Todd had often grimly smiled at as he passed, but into which as a resident he had never expected to enter.

Sir Richard Blunt remained in the shop of Sweeney Todd. The oil lamp that hung by a chain from the ceiling shed a tolerable light over all objects, and no sooner had the magistrate fastened the outer door after the departure of Crotchet with Todd, than he stamped three times heavily upon the floor of the shop.

This signal was immediately answered by three distinct taps from underneath the floor, and then the magistrate stamped again in the same manner.

The effect of all this stamping and counter-signals was immediately very apparent. The great chair which has played so prominent a part in he atrocities of Sweeney Todd slowly sunk, and the revolving plank hung suspended by its axle, while a voice from below called out—

"Is all right, sir?"

"Yes, Crotchet has taken him to Newgate. I am now alone. Come up."

"We are coming, sir. We all heard a little disturbance, but the floor is very thick you know, sir. So we could not take upon ourselves to say exactly what was happening."

"Oh, it's all right. He resisted, but by this time he is within the stone walls of Newgate. Let me lend you a hand."

Sir Richard Blunt stooped over the aperture in the floor, and the first person that got up was no other than Mr. Wrankley the Tobacconist.

"How do you feel after your tumble?" said Sir Richard.

"Oh, very well. The fact is they caught me so capitally below that it was quite easy. Todd did not think it worth his while to come down to see if I were alive or dead."

"Ah, that was the only chance; but of course if he had done so he must have been taken at once into custody—that would have been all. Come on, my friends, come on. Our trouble with regard to Todd is over now, I think."

The two churchwardens of St. Dunstan's and the beadle, and four of Sir Richard Blunt's officers, and the fruiterer from opposite, now came up from below the shop of Sweeney Todd, where they had been all waiting to catch Mr. Wrankley when the chair should descend with him.

"Conwulsions!" said the beadle, "I runned agin everybody when I seed him a-coming. I thought to myself, if a parochial authority had been served in that 'ere way, there would have been an end of the world at once."

"I had some idea of asking you at one time to play that little part for me," said Sir Richard.

"Conwulsions! had you, sir?"

"Yes. But now, my friends, let us make a careful search of this house; and among the first things we have to do is, to remove all the combustible materials that Todd has stowed in various parts of it, for unless I am much deceived, the premises are in such a state that the merest accident would set them in a blaze."

"Conwulsions!" then cried the beadle. "I ain't declared out of danger yet then!"

CHAPTER CXI.
MRS. LOVETT PLANS.

We hasten to Bell Yard again.

Mrs. Lovett's immersion in the Thames had really not done her much harm. Perhaps the river was a little purer than we now find it, and probably it had not entirely got rid of its name of the "Silver Thames"—an appellation that now would be really out of place, unless we can imagine some silver of a much more dingy hue than silver ordinarily presents to the eye of the observer.

She soon, we find, settled in her own mind a plan of action, notwithstanding the rather complicated and embarrassing circumstances in which she found herself placed. That plan of action had for its basis the impeachment of Todd as a murderer, at the same time that it looked forward to her own escape from the hands of justice. Her first action was to quiet the cook in the regions below, for if she did not take some such step, she was very much afraid her establishment might come to a stand-still some few hours before she intended that it should do so.

With this object, she wrote upon a little slip of paper the following words, and passed it into the cellar through an almost imperceptible crevice in the flooring of the shop—

"Early to-morrow morning you shall have your liberty, together with gold to take you where you please. All I require of you is, that you do your ordinary duty to-night, and send up the nine o'clock batch of pies."

This, she considered, could not but have its due effect upon the discontented cook; and having transmitted it to him in the manner we have described, she sat down at her desk to write the impeachment of Todd. In the course of an hour, Mrs. Lovett had filled two pages of writing paper with a full account of how persons met their death in the barber's shop. She sealed the letter, and directed it to Sir Richard Blunt in a bold free hand.

"It is done," she said. "When I am far from London, as I can easily find the means of being, this will reach the hands of the magistrate to whom it is addressed, and who has the character of being sharp and active." (Mrs. Lovett did not know how sharp and active Sir Richard had already been in her affairs!) "He will act upon it. Todd, in the midst of his guilt, with many evidences of it about him, will be taken, and I shall escape! Yes, I shall escape, with about a tithe of what I ought to have—but I shall have revenge!"

On one of the shelves of the shop—certainly out of reach, but only just so—stood an old dirty-looking tin jar, such as fancy biscuits might be kept in. No one for a moment would have thought of looking for anything valuable in such a place; and yet, keeping the shop door locked the while, lest any intruder should at unawares pop in and see what she was about, it was to this tin can upon its dirty shelf that Mrs. Lovett cautiously went.

"Those who hide can find," she muttered. "I warrant now that Todd had searched in every seemingly cunning and intricate hiding-place in this whole house, and he has gone away disappointed. The secret of hiding anything is not to try to find some place where people may be baffled when they look, but to light upon some place into which they will not look at all."

With these words, Mrs. Lovett took down the tin can, and having from the upper portion of it removed some dusty, mouldy small biscuits, she dived her hand into it, and fished up a leathern bag. The tape that held

its mouth together was sealed, and a glance sufficed to convince Mrs. Lovett that it had not been touched.

"Safe, safe!" she muttered. "It is but a thousand pounds, but it is safe, and it will enable me to fly from this place—it will enable me to have vengeance upon Todd; and small as the sum is, in some country, where money is worth more than it is in pampered England, I shall yet be able to live upon it. I will not complain if I have but the joy of reading an account of the execution of Todd. I fear I must deny myself the pleasure of seeing that sight."

The little leathern bag she hid about her, and then she carefully replaced the tin case upon the shelf whence she had taken it, to disburthen it of its costly contents.

After this Mrs. Lovett got much calmer. She had not the least apprehension now of a visit from Todd. She saw by the state of the house that his search had been a prolonged one, and until he shut up his own shop, she did not expect that he would again think of coming to Bell Yard, and as that would be ten o'clock, she fully believed that before then she would be far away.

And then she sat behind her counter, looking only a shade or so paler than was her wont, and moving her lips slightly now and then as she settled in her own mind the course that she would take so as to baffle all pursuit.

"With no luggage but my gold and notes," she muttered, "I will leave this place at half past nine, by which time the last batch of pies will have been up and sold, and all will be quiet. That will be a little more money to me. Then on foot I will take my way to Highgate—yes, to Highgate, and I will trust no conveyance, for that might be a ready means of tracing me. I will go on foot. Then passing Highgate, I will go on foot upon the Great North Road until some coach overtakes me. It will not matter whither it be going, so that it takes me on that road; and by one conveyance and

another, I shall at length reach Liverpool, from which port I shall find some vessel starting to some place abroad, where I can live free from the chance of detection. Yes, that is the plan! That is the plan!"

Mrs. Lovett was a woman of some tact, and the plan of operations she had chalked out was all very well, provided such very malapropos proceedings had not taken place at Sweeney Todd's in the meantime. Little did Mrs. Lovett suspect what was there transpiring.

And now we will leave her for a brief space behind her counter, ruminating, and at odd times smiling to herself in a ghastly fashion, while we pop down to the cellars, and take a glance at the impatient imprisoned cook.

About ten minutes before he received the letter—if letter the little flattering memorandum of Mrs. Lovett could be called—from his mistress, the cook had been a little alarmed by a noise in the stone pantry, where the mysterious meat used to make its appearance. Upon proceeding to the spot with a light, he found lying upon the floor a sealed paper, upon lifting which he saw was addressed to himself, and at one corner was written the following words—

"Definitive instructions for to-night from Sir Richard Blunt."

To tear open the letter and to read it with great care, was the work of a few moments only, and then drawing a long breath, the cook said—

"Thank God! I shall not stop another night in this place. I shall be free before midnight. Oh, what an oppressive—what an overpowering joy it will be to me once more to see the sky—to breathe pure fresh air, and to feel that I have bid adieu for ever to this dreadful—dreadful place."

The poor cook looked around him with a shudder, and then he had hardly placed the magistrate's letter securely in his bosom, when the little missive from Mrs. Lovett came fluttering to his feet, through the crack in the roof.

"'Tis well," he said, when he had read it. "'Tis very well. This will chime in most admirably with my instructions from Sir Richard Blunt. Mrs. Lovett I thank you. You shall have the nine o'clock batch. Oh, yes, you shall have them. I am all obedience. Alas, if she whom I loved had not been false to me, I might yet, young as I am, feel the sunshine of joy in the great world again. But I can never love another, and she is lost—lost to me for ever. Ay, for ever!"

With this the poor cook, who but a few moments before had been so elated by the thoughts of freedom, sat himself down, and in quite a disconsolate manner rested his head upon his hands, and gave himself up to bitter fancy.

"That she should be false to me," he said mournfully. "It does indeed almost transcend belief. She, so young, so gentle, so innocent, and so guileless. If an angel from Heaven had come and told me as much I should have doubted still; but I cannot mistrust the evidence of my own senses. I saw her. Yes, I saw her!"

The cook rose and paced the gloomy place to and fro in the restlessness of a blighted heart, and no one to look at him could for a moment have supposed that he was near his freedom from an imprisonment of the most painful and maddening description to one of his impatient temperament. But so it is with us all; no sooner do we to all appearance see the end of one evil, than with an activity of imagination worthy to be excited in better things, we provide ourselves with some real or unreal reason for the heartache.

"I will so contrive," said the cook, "that before I leave for ever the land of my birth, I will once more look upon her. Yes, I will once again drink in, from a contemplation of her wondrous beauty, most delicious poison; and then when I have feasted my eyes, and perchance grieved my heart, I will at once go far away, and beneath the sun of other skies than this, I will wait for death."

The more the poor cook thought of this unknown beauty of his, who surely had behaved to him very ill, or he could not have spoken of her in such terms, the more sorrow got upon his countenance, and imparted its sad sweetness to his tones. Surely the time had not been very far distant when that young man must have been in a widely different sphere of life to that limited one in which he now moved.

Suddenly, however, he was recalled to a consciousness of what he had to do, by the clock striking seven. He counted the strokes, and then pausing before one of the large ovens, he said—

"The time has now come when I must cease to be making preparations to obey the mandate of my imperious mistress. She will not now be content merely to have issued her orders, but she will keep an eye upon me to see that they are being executed, and unarmed as I am, and without the knowledge of what power of mischief she may have, I feel that it would not be safe yet to provoke her. No—no. I must seem to do her bidding."

With this, the cook set about the manufacture of the pies; and as it would really have been much more troublesome to sham making them than to make them in earnest, he really did manufacture a hundred of them.

But it was after all with a very bad grace that the poor imprisoned cook now made the pies; and probably so very indifferent a batch of those delicious pieces of pastry had never before found its way into the ovens of Mrs. Lovett. The cook was not wrong in his idea that his imperious mistress would take a peep at him before nine o'clock. At about eight, the little grating in the high-up door was tapped by something that Mrs. Lovett had in her hand, with which to attract the attention of the cook. He looked up, and saw her dimly.

"Are you busy?" she said.

"Yes, madam, as busy as the nine o'clock batch usually makes me. Do you not hear the oven?"

"I do—'tis well."

"Ah, madam," said the dissembling cook, "it will be well, indeed, if you keep your word with me, and set me to-night at freedom."

"Do you doubt it?"

"I have no particular reason to doubt it, further than that the unfortunate are always inclined to doubt too good news. That is all, madam."

"If you doubt, you will be agreeably disappointed, for I shall keep my word with you. You have done for me much better than I ever expected, and I will be grateful to you now that you are going. I have said that you shall not go without means, and you shall have a purse of twenty guineas to help you on your way wherever you wish."

"How kind you are, madam! Ah, I shall be able now to forgive you for all that I have suffered in this place—and, after all, it has been a refuge from want."

"It has. No one can be better pleased than I am to find you view things so reasonably. Send up the nine o'clock batch; and then wait patiently until I come to you."

"I will."

"Till then, good-night!"

Mrs. Lovett left the grating; and as she went up to the shop, she muttered to herself—

"They will, when they find him here, suspect he is an accomplice. Well, let them hang him, for all I care. What can it matter to me?"

CHAPTER CXII.
MRS. LOVETT FINDS THAT IT IS EASIER TO PLAN THAN TO EXECUTE.

It wants five minutes to nine, and Mrs. Lovett's shop is filling with persons anxious to devour or to carry away one or more of the nine o'clock batch of savoury, delightful, gushing gravy pies.

Many of Mrs. Lovett's customers paid her in advance for the pies, in order that they might be quite sure of getting their orders fulfilled when the first batch should make its gracious appearance from the depths below.

"Well, Jiggs," said one of the legal fraternity to another, "how are you to-day, old fellow? What do you bring it in?"

"Oh! I ain't very blooming. The fact is, the count and I, and a few others, made a night of it last evening; and somehow or another I don't think whiskey-and-water, half-and-half, and tripe, go well together."

"I should wonder if they did."

"And so I've come for a pie just to settle my stomach; you see I'm rather delicate."

"Ah! you are just like me, young man, there," said an elderly personage; "I have a delicate stomach, and the slightest thing disagrees with me. A mere idea will make me quite ill."

"Will it, really?"

"Yes; and my wife, she—"

"Oh, bother your wife! It's only five minutes to nine, don't you see? What a crowd there is, to be sure. Mrs. Lovett, you charmer, I hope you have ordered enough pies to be made to-night? You see what a lot of customers you have."

"Oh, there will be plenty."

"That's right. I say, don't push so; you'll be in time, I tell you; don't be pushing and driving in that sort of way—I've got ribs."

"And so have I. Last night I didn't get a pie at all, and my old woman is in a certain condition, you see, gentlemen, and won't fancy anything but one of Lovett's veal pies; so I've come all the way from Newington to get one for—"

"Hold your row, will you? and don't push."

"For to have the child marked with a pie on its—"

"Behind there, I say; don't be pushing a fellow as if it were half price at a theatre."

Each moment added some new comers to the throng, and at last any strangers who had known nothing of the attractions of Mrs. Lovett's pie-shop and had walked down Bell Yard, would have been astonished at the throng of persons there assembled—a throng that was each moment increasing in density, and becoming more and more urgent and clamorous.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine! Yes, it is nine at last. It strikes by old St. Dunstan's church clock, and in weaker strains the chronometical machine at the pie-shop echoes the sound. What excitement there is to get at the pies when they shall come! Mrs. Lovett lets down the square moveable platform that goes on pullies in the cellar; some machinery, which only requires a handle to be turned, brings up a hundred pies in a tray. These are eagerly seized by parties who have previously paid, and such a smacking of lips ensues as never was known.

Down goes the platform for the next hundred, and a gentlemanly man says—

"Let me work the handle, Mrs. Lovett, if you please; it's too much for you I'm sure."

"Sir, you are very kind, but I never allow anybody on this side of the counter but my own people, sir. I can turn the handle myself, sir, if you please, with the assistance of this girl. Keep your distance, sir, nobody wants your help."

"But my dear madam, only consider your delicacy. Really you ought not to be permitted to work away like a negro slave at a winch handle. Really you ought not."

The man who spoke thus obligingly to Mrs. Lovett, was tall and stout, and the lawyers clerks repressed the ire they otherwise would probably have given utterance to at thus finding any one quizzing their charming Mrs. Lovett.

"Sir, I tell you again that I don't want your help; keep your distance, sir, if you please."

"Now don't get angry, fair one," said the man. "You don't know but I might have made you an offer before I left the shop."

"Sir," said Mrs. Lovett, drawing herself up and striking terror into the hearts of the limbs of the law. "Sir! What do you want? Say what you want, and be served, sir, and then go. Do you want a pie, sir?"

"A pie? Oh, dear no, I don't want a pie. I would not eat one of the nasty things on any account. Pah!" Here the man spat on the floor. "Oh, dear, don't ask me to eat any of your pies."

"Shame, shame," said several of the lawyers clerks.

"Will any gentleman who thinks it a shame, be so good as to step forward and say so a little closer?"

Everybody shrunk back upon this, instead of accepting the challenge, and Mrs. Lovett soon saw that she must, despite all the legal chivalry by which she was surrounded, fight her battles herself. With a look of vehement anger, she cried—

"Beware, sir, I am not to be trifled with. If you carry your jokes too far, you will wish that you had not found your way, sir, into this shop."

"That, madam," said the tall stout man, "is not surely possible, when I have the beauty of a Mrs. Lovett to gaze upon, and render the place so exquisitely attractive; but if you will not permit me to have the pleasure of helping you up with the next batch of pies, which, after all, you may find heavier than you expect, I must leave you to do it yourself."

"So that I am not troubled any longer by you, sir, at all," said Mrs. Lovett, "I don't care how heavy the next batch of pies may happen to be, sir."

"Very good, madam."

"Upon my word," said a small boy, giving the side of his face a violent rub with the hope of finding the ghost of a whisker there, "it's really too bad."

"Ah, who's that? Let me get at him!"

"Oh, no, no, I—mean—that it's too bad of Mrs. Lovett, my dear sir. Oh, don't."

"Oh, very good; I am satisfied. Now, madam, you see that even your dear friends here, from Lincoln's Inn—Are you from the Inn, small boy?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Very good. As I was saying, Mrs. Lovett, you now must of necessity perceive, that even your friends from the Inn, feel that your conduct is really too bad, madam."

Mrs. Lovett was upon this so dreadfully angry, that she disdained any reply to the tall stout man, but at once she applied herself to the windlass, which worked up the little platform, upon which a whole tray

of a hundred pies was wont to come up, and began to turn it with what might be called a vengeance.

How very strange it was—surely the words of the tall stout impertinent stranger were prophetic, for never before had Mrs. Lovett found what a job it was to work that handle, as upon that night. The axle creaked, and the cords and the pullies strained and wheezed, but she was a determined woman, and she worked away at it.

"I told you so, my dear madam," said the stranger; "it is more evidently than you can do."

"Peace, sir."

"I am done; work away ma'am, only don't say afterwards that I did not offer to help you, that's all."

Indignation was swelling at the heart of Mrs. Lovett, but she felt that if she wasted her breath upon the impertinent stranger, she should have none for the windlass; so setting her teeth, she fagged at it with a strength and a will that if she had not been in a right royal passion, she could not have brought to bear upon it on any account.

There was quite an awful stillness in the shop. All eyes were bent upon Mrs. Lovett, and the cavity through which the next batch of those delicious pies were coming. Those who had had the good fortune to get one of the first lot, had only had their appetites heightened by the luxurious feast they had partaken of, while those who had had as yet none, actually licked their lips, and snuffed up the delightful aroma from the remains of the first batch.

"Two for me, Mrs. Lovett," cried a voice. "One veal for me. Three porks—one pork."

The voices grew fast and furious.

"Silence!" cried the tall stout man. "I will engage that everybody shall be fully satisfied; and no one shall leave here without a thorough conviction that his wants in pies has been more than attended to."

The platform could be made to stop at any stage of its upward progress, by means of a ratchet wheel and a catch, and now Mrs. Lovett paused to take breath. She attributed the unusual difficulty in working the machinery to her own weakness, contingent upon her recent immersion in the Thames.

"Sir," she said between her clenched teeth, addressing the man who was such an eye-sore to her in the shop. "Sir, I don't know who you are, but I hope to be able to show you when I have served these gentlemen, that even I am not to be insulted with impunity."

"Anything you please, madam," he replied, "in a small way, only don't exert yourself too much."

Mrs. Lovett flew to the windlass again, and from the manner in which she now worked at it, it was quite clear that when she had her hands free from that job, she fully intended to make good her threats against the tall stout man. The young beardless scions of the law, trembled at the idea of what might happen.

And now the tops of the pies appeared. Then they saw the rim of the large tray upon which they were, and then just as the platform itself was level with the floor of the shop, up flew tray and pies, as if something had exploded beneath them, and a tall slim man sprung upon the counter. It was the cook, who from the cellars beneath, had laid himself as flat as he could beneath the tray of pies, and so had been worked up to the shop by Mrs. Lovett!

Mrs. Lovett's Cook Astonishes Her Customers, Rather.

Mrs. Lovett's Cook Astonishes Her Customers, Rather.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I am Mrs. Lovett's cook. The pies are made of *human flesh*!"

We shrink, we tremble at the idea of attempting to describe the scene that ensued in the shop of Mrs. Lovett contingent upon this frightful apparition, and still more frightful speech of the cook; but duty—our duty to the public—requires that we should say something upon the occasion.

If we can do nothing more, we can briefly enumerate what did actually take place in some instances.

About twenty clerks rushed into Bell Yard, and there and then, to the intense surprise of the passers-by, became intensely sick. The cook, with one spring, cleared the counter, and alighted amongst the customers, and with another spring, the tall impertinent man, who had made many remarks to Mrs. Lovett of an aggravating tendency, cleared the counter likewise in the other direction, and, alighting close to Mrs. Lovett, he cried—

"Madam, you are my prisoner!"

For a moment, and only for a moment, the great—the cunning, and the redoubtable Mrs. Lovett, lost her self-possession, and, staggering back, she lurched heavily against the glass-case next to the wall, immediately behind the counter. It was only for a moment, though, that such an effect was produced upon Mrs. Lovett; and then, with a spring like an enraged tigress, she caught up a knife that was used for slipping under the pies and getting them cleanly out of the little tins, and rushed upon the tall stranger.

Yes, she rushed upon him; but for once in a way, even Mrs. Lovett had met with her match. With a dexterity, that only long practice in dealings with the more desperate portion of human nature could have taught him, the tall man closed with her, and had the knife out of her hand in a moment. He at once threw it right through the window into Bell Yard, and then, holding Mrs. Lovett in his arms, he said—

"My dear madam, you only distress yourself for nothing; all resistance is perfectly useless. Either I must take you prisoner, or you me, and I decidedly incline to the former alternative."

The knife that had been thrown through the window was not without its object, for in a moment afterwards Mr. Crotchet made his appearance in the shop.

"All right, Crotchet," said he who had captured Mrs. Lovett; "first clap the bracelets on this lady."

"Here yer is," said Crotchet. "Lor, mum! I had a eye on you months and months agone. How is you, mum, in yer *feelin's* this here nice evening?—Eh mum?"

"A knife—a knife! Oh, for a knife!" cried Mrs. Lovett.

"Ex-actly, mum," added Crotchet, as he with professional dexterity slipped the handcuffs on her wrists. "Would you like one with a hivory handle, mum? or would anything more common do, mum?"

Mrs. Lovett fell to the floor, or rather she cast herself to it, and began voluntarily beating her head against the boards. They quickly lifted her up; and then the tall stranger turned to the cook, who, after leaping over the counter, had sat down upon a chair in a state of complete exhaustion, and he said—

"Do you know the way to Sir Richard's office, in Craven Street? He expects you there, I believe?"

"Yes, yes. But now that all is over, I feel very ill."

"In that case, I will go with you, then. Crotchet, who have you got outside?"

"Only two of our pals, Muster Green; but it's all right, if so be as you leaves the lady to us."

"Very well. The warrant is at Newgate, and the governor is expecting her instant arrival. You will get a coach at the corner of the yard, and be off with her at once."

"All's right," said Crotchet. "I knowed as she'd be nabbed, and I had one all ready, you sees."

"That was right, Crotchet. How amazingly quick everybody has left the shop. Why—why, what is all this?"

As the officer spoke, about half a dozen squares of glass in the shop window of the house were broken in, and a ringing shout from a dense mob that was rapidly collecting in the yard, came upon the ears of the officer. The two men whom Crotchet had mentioned, with difficulty pressed their way into the shop, and one of them cried—

"The people that were in the shop have spread the news all over the neighbourhood, and the place is getting jammed up with a mob, every one of which is mad, I think, for they talk of nothing but of the tearing of Mrs. Lovett to pieces. They are pouring in from Fleet Street and Carey Street by hundreds at a time."

CHAPTER CXIII.
THE ROUTE TO NEWGATE—MRS. LOVETT'S DANGER FROM THE MOB.

Mrs. Lovett, upon hearing these words, turned ghastly pale, but she did not speak. The officers looked at each other with something like dismay, and then before either of them could say another word, there arose a wild prolonged shout from without.

"Out with her—out with her! Kill her! Tear her to bits and hang her on the lamp-post in the middle of Bell Yard! Out with her! Drag her out! Hang her! hang her!"

"The coach you say is waiting, Crotchet?" said the officer, who had been intrusted by Sir Richard Blunt with the conduct of the whole business connected with Mrs. Lovett's capture.

"It were," said Crotchet, "and that coachman ain't the sort of fellow to move on till I tell him. I knows him."

"Very good, then we must make a dash for it, and get her away by main force, it must be done, let the risk and the consequences be what they may, and the sooner the better, too. Come on, madam."

"Death—death!" said Mrs. Lovett. "Kill me here, some of you, kill me at once; but do not let me be torn to pieces by a savage mob. Oh, God, they yell for my blood! Save me from them, and kill me here. A knife! oh, for a knife!"

"And a fork too, mum," said Crotchet; "in course, if you wants 'em. I tells you what it is, Mr. Green, that there mob is just savage, and we have about as much chance of getting her down to Fleet Street with her head on her shoulders, as all of us have of flying over the blessed house tops."

"We must. It is our duty, and if we fail, they must kill us, which I don't think they will do. Come on."

"I will go with you," said the cook, starting up from the chair upon which he had on account of his weakness been compelled to seat himself, "I will go with you, and implore the people to let the law take its course upon this woman."

"In the cupboard, in the parlour," said Mrs. Lovett, speaking in a strange gasping tone, "there is a letter addressed by me to Sir Richard Blunt. It will be worth your while to save it from the mob. Let me show you where to lay your hands upon it, and if you have any wish to take a greater criminal than I, go to the shop of one Sweeney Todd, a barber, in Fleet Street. His number is sixty nine. Seize him, for he is the head of all the criminality you can possibly impute to me. Seize him, and I shall be content."

"The man you mention," said Mr. Green, "has been in Newgate an hour nearly."

"Newgate?"

"Yes. We took him first, and then attended to you."

"Todd—captured—in Newgate—and I in fancied security here remained wasting the previous moments upon which hung my life. Oh, fool—fool—dolt—idiot. A knife! Oh, sirs, I pray you to give me the means of instant death. What can the law do, but take my life? What have you all come here, and plotted and planned for, but to take my life? I will do it. Oh, I pray you to give me the means, and I will satisfy you and justice, and die at once."

Another loud roar from the infuriated people without, drowned whatever the officer might have said in reply to this appeal from Mrs. Lovett, and again arose the wild shouts of—

"Out with her!—Out with her!—Hang her!—Hang the murderess!—Hang her in the yard!—Out with her!"

"Forward!" cried Mr. Green. "To hesitate is only to make our situation ten times worse. Forward!"

"Hold a bit," cried Crotchet, "let me speak to the people; I knows how to humour 'em. Only you see if I don't get her along. Come, mum, just step this a-ways if yer pleases. Open the door, Mr. Cook, and let me out first."

The cook opened the door, and before the mob could rush into the place, Crotchet stepped on to the threshold of the shop, and in a tremendous voice that made itself heard above all others, he cried—

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Nothing is easier than to throw a cry into a crowd, and to get it echoed to your heart's content; and so some couple of hundred voices now immediately cried—"Hurrah!" and when the vast volume of sound had died away, Crotchet in such a voice that it must have been heard in Fleet Street quite plainly, said—

"My opinion is, that Mrs. Lovett ought to be hung outright, and at once without any more bother about it."

"Hurrah!—Hang her!—Hang her!" shouted the mob.

"And," added Crotchet, "I propose the lamp-post at the top of Fleet Market as a nice public sort of place to do the job in. She says she won't walk, but I have a coach in Fleet Street, and we will pop her into that, and so take her along quite snug."

"Yes, yes," cried the people. "Bring her along, that will do."

"Oh, will it?" muttered Crochet to himself. "What a precious set of ninnies you are. If I get her once in the coach, and she gets out again except to step into the stone jug, may I be hanged myself."

"I think you have managed it, Crotchet," whispered Mr. Green, "I think that will do."

"To be sure it will, sir. All's right. Bless your heart, mobs is the stupidest beasts as is. You may do anything you like with them if you will only let them have their own way a little, but if so be as you trys to fight 'em, they is all horns and *porkipines*, quills and stone walls, and iron rails, they is!"

"You are right enough, Crotchet; and now then let Smith stay here and mind the house, and shut it all up snug till the morning; when it can be thoroughly searched, and you and I and Simmons here will go with Mrs. Lovett."

"And I too," said the cook. "We can go to Sir Richard's afterwards."

"So we can—so we can. Come on, now."

"You will deliver me up to the mob," screamed Mrs. Lovett. "Mercy! Mercy! I shall be torn limb from limb. Oh, what a death! Are you men or fiends that you will condemn me to it? Mercy!—mercy!"

This sudden passion of Mrs. Lovett's was the very thing the officers would have desired, inasmuch as it materially helped to deceive the mob, and to prevent any idea upon the part of the infuriated people, that there was any collusion between the officers and Mrs. Lovett, for the purpose of getting her safely to prison.

They dragged her out into Bell Yard, and then the shouts that the mob set up was truly terrific.

"Lights! Links!" cried a voice. "Let's show her the way!"

In a moment an oil-shop opposite to Mrs. Lovett's was plundered of a score or two of links, and being lighted with great rapidity from the solitary oil-lamp that there stood in the middle of Bell Yard, they sent a bright lurid glare upon the sea of heads, that seemed so close they might have been walked upon all the way to Fleet Street. Another shout echoed

far and near, and then Crotchet took hold of one of Mrs. Lovett's arms, and Mr. Green hold of the other, and the cook and the other officers following, they all began slowly to make way through the mob.

"Let's get along with her," cried Crotchet. "I have her tight. She won't get away. Some of you get a good stout rope ready, and make a noose in it. We will hang her on the lamp-post at the top of the market. Bring her along. Make way a little. Only a little!"

Mrs. Lovett shrieked as she saw the sea of angry faces before, behind, and on all sides of her. She thought that surely her last hour was come, and that a far more horrible death than any she had ever calculated upon in her worst moments of depression, was about to be hers. Her eyes were blood-shot—she bit her under lip through, and the blood poured from her mouth—she each moment that she could gather breath to do so, raised a fearful shriek, and the mob shouted and yelled, and swayed to and fro, and the links were tossed from hand to hand, flashing, and throwing around them thousands of bright sparks, and people rapidly joined the mob.

CHAPTER CXIV.
THE COOK WAITS UPON SIR RICHARD BLUNT AND HEARS NEWS.

It took a quarter of an hour to reach the coach from the door of Mrs. Lovett's shop, a distance that in twenty steps any one might have traversed; and, oh! what a quarter of an hour of horrible suffering that was to the wretched woman, whose crimes had so infuriated the populace, that with one voice they called for her death!

Mrs. Lovett's Escort To The Gallows.

Mrs. Lovett's Escort To The Gallows.

The coach door was opened, and Crotchet pushed his prisoner in. Mr. Green, and the other officer and the cook followed her.

"I will go on the box," said Crotchet.

"Very well," said Green, "but be mindful of your own safety, Crotchet."

"All's right. There ain't any more o' my sort in London, and I know I am rather a valuable piece o' goods. Has anybody got the rope ready for the lady?"

"Here you are," said a man, "I have one."

"You get up behind then," said Crotchet, "for of course you know we shall soon want you."

"Yes, I will. That's right! It's all right, friends. I am to get up behind with the rope. Here's the rope!"

"Three cheers for the rope!" cried somebody, and the cheers were given with deafening violence. What will not a mob give three cheers for—ay, or any number of cheers you like to name? A piece of poor humanity in tinsel and fine linen, called a king or queen—a popular cry—a murderess—a rope—anything will suffice. Surely, Mr. Crotchet, you know something of the people!

"Now," said Crotchet to the coachman, "are you as bold as brass, and as strong as an iron file?"

The coachman looked puzzled, but Mr. Crotchet pursued his queries.

"Will these 'osses, if they is frightened a bit, cut along quick?"

"Rather," said the coachman. "The blessed fact is, that they won't cut along unless you do frighten them a bit; and as for me being an old file and having lots o' brass, I doesn't consider as I'm a bit worser nor my neighbours."

"You is as hignorant as a badger!" said Crotchet. "Make yourself easy and give me the reins. The mobs o' people thinks as we is a going to hang the woman at the corner of Fleet Market, but if I lives another ten minutes, she will be in Newgate. There may be something of a scuffle, and if anything happens to you, or to the coach or the 'osses, the county will pay handsomely, so now give me the reins. You may not like to whip through them, but I haven't the least objection."

The coachman looked scared and nervous, but he gave up the reins and the whip to Crotchet, and then leaning back on the box, he waited with no small trepidation the result of the expected disturbance, while he had only Mr. Crotchet's word that the county would pay for handsomely.

The short distance from the corner of Bell Yard to the end of Fleet Market was rapidly traversed, and when that interesting point was reached, the dense mass of people set up another shout, and began to surround the lamp-post that was there, and to fill up all the avenues.

"Get the rope up," said Crotchet.

"Yes, yes. Hurrah! hurrah! Pull her out, and hang her!"

The highly interesting process of getting the rope fixed upon the little projecting piece of iron, upon which the lamplighter was wont to rest his ladder, had the effect that Crotchet expected, namely, to attract general attention; and then, taking advantage of the moment, he seized the whip and used it with such effect upon the horses, that, terrified and half maddened, they set off with the coach at a tearing gallop.

For a moment or two—and in that moment or two Mr. Crotchet with his prisoner got to the corner of the Old Bailey—the mob were so staggered by this unexpected elopement of the hackney-coach, that not a soul followed it. The idea that the horses had of their own accord started, being probably alarmed at the links, was the first that possessed the people, and many voices called out loudly—

"Pull 'em in—pull 'em in! Saw their heads off!"

But when they saw Mr. Crotchet fairly turn into the Old Bailey, the trick that had been played upon them became apparent; and one yell of indignation and rage burst from the multitude.

The pursuit was immediate; but Mr. Crotchet had too much the start of the mob, and long before the struggling infuriated people, impeding each other as they tore along, had reached the corner of the Old Bailey, Mrs. Lovett was in the lobby of the prison, and the officers safely with her.

She looked like a corpse. The colour of her face was that of soiled white wax.

But mobs, if they cannot wreak their vengeance upon what may be, for distinction's sake, called the legitimate object of their displeasure, will do so upon something else; and upon reaching the door of Newgate, and finding there was no sort of chance of getting hold of Mrs. Lovett, they took the horses out of the hackney-coach, and started them off through

the streets to go where they liked; and then, dragging the coach to Smithfield, they then and there made a bon-fire of it, and were very much satisfied and delighted, indeed.

"Now, mum," said Crotchet to Mrs. Lovett, "didn't I say I'd bring yer to the old stone jug as safe as ninepence?"

She only looked at him vacantly; and then, glaring around her with a shudder, she said—

"And this is Newgate!"

"Just a few," said Crotchet.

The governor at this moment made his appearance, and began to give orders as to where Mrs. Lovett should be placed. A slight change of colour came over her face, as she said—

"Shall I see Todd?"

"Not at present," said the governor.

"I should like to see him to forgive him; for no doubt it is to him that I owe this situation. He has betrayed me!"

The look which she put on when she uttered the words "I should like to see him to forgive him," was so truly demoniac, that it was quite clear if she did see Todd, that whether she were armed or not, she would fly upon him, and try to take his life; and although in that she might fail, there would be very little doubt but that, in the process of failure, she would inflict upon him some very serious injury.

It was not likely, though, that the officials of Newgate would indulge her with an opportunity.

"You had better all of you wait here," said the governor to Mr. Crotchet, and the officers, and the cook, "until the mob is gone."

"The street is quite clear, sir," said a turnkey, "They have taken the coach to knock it to pieces, I suppose, sir."

"And I'm done up at last!" said the coachman, wringing his hands, for he had, in fear for his own safety, made his way into the lobby of Newgate along with Mr. Crotchet; "I'm done up at last!"

"Not at all," said the governor. "We would not have lost such a prisoner as this Mrs. Lovett, for the worth of fifty coaches. Every penny of your loss will be made good to you. There is a guinea, in the meantime—go home, and do not distress yourself upon the subject, my good fellow."

Upon this the coachman was greatly comforted, and with Mr. Crotchet and the officers, he left the lobby of Newgate at the same moment that Mrs. Lovett was led off into the interim of that gloomy and horrible abode.

The object of the officer was now to get to the private office of Sir Richard Blunt as soon as possible, and let him know of the successful capture of Mrs. Lovett. Sir Richard, too, it will be remembered, had left a special message with the cook to repair to his office as soon as he could after his release from his bondage in Bell Yard, so that the liberated cook, who felt that he owed that liberation to the advice and assistance of Sir Richard, did not scruple to obey the directions of the magistrate at once.

The private-office of Sir Richard, it will be recollected, was in Craven Street, at the bottom of the Strand.

Upon the route there, Mr. Crotchet and the cook held a long and very serious discourse about the proceedings of Mrs. Lovett, and if the cook was able to tell the active and enterprising Crotchet much that was curious regarding the underground operations at Mrs. Lovett's, he, in return, received some curious edifying information concerning the lady's business connexion with Sweeney Todd, with the particulars of which the cook had been completely ignorant.

By the time they reached Craven Street, therefore, the cook's eyes were considerably opened, and many matters that had been to him extremely obscure, became all at once quite clear, so that he was upon the whole

far from sorry for the companionship of the eccentric Crotchet on the road down the Strand to the magistrate's private office.

Sir Richard was at home, and anxiously expecting them, so that upon the first hint of their presence they were introduced to him, and he received the report of the officer with evident satisfaction.

"Thank God," he said, "two of the greatest malefactors the world ever saw are now in the hands of justice."

"Yes," said Crotchet. "They are cotched."

"You may depend all of you," added Sir Richard, "that your conduct and great skill in exertions in this affair shall be by me communicated to the Secretary of State, who will not leave you unrewarded. Pray wait for me in the outer room, I have some private business with this gentleman."

The officers were a little surprised to hear Sir Richard Blunt call Mrs. Lovett's cook, "this gentleman;" but they of course took no notice of the circumstance while in the presence of their principal, and in a few moments the magistrate was alone with the cook.

From a cupboard in his room, then Sir Richard Blunt took wine and other refreshments, and laid them before the cook, saying—

"Refresh yourself, my friend; but for your own sake, as your fare has been but indifferent for some time, I beg you to be sparing."

"I will, sir. I owe you much—very much!"

"You are free now."

"I—am—sir."

"And yet you are very unhappy."

The cook started and changed colour slightly. He filled, for himself, a glass of wine, and after drinking it he heaved a sigh, as he said—

"Sir, I am unhappy. I do not care how soon the world and I part, sir. The hope—the dream of my life has gone from me. All that I lived for—all that I cherished as the brightest expectation of joy in this world has

passed away like a vapour, and left not a rack behind. I am unhappy, and better, far better, would it have been for me if Sweeney Todd had taken my life, or if by some subtle poison, Mrs. Lovett had shuffled me out of the world—I am unhappy."

"Indeed! And you really think you have nothing in this world now to live for?"

"I do. But it is not a thought only. It is a knowledge—it is a fact that cannot be gainsaid or controverted. I tell you, sir, that I can never now hope to realise the happiness which was the day-dream of my existence, and which has passed from me like a dream, never—never to come again. It was in the despair contingent upon such thoughts and feelings, that I went to Mrs. Lovett and became her slave; but now I will be off far away from England, and on some foreign shore I will lay my bones."

"But, my good sir, you will be wanted on the trial of your old friend, Mrs. Lovett."

"Cannot you hang the woman without my help?"

"Yes, I think we might, but so material a witness to her infamy as yourself cannot be dispensed with. Of course I do not pretend to be a conjuror, or to say to any man—'You shall be happy in spite of all your prognostications to the contrary;' but from what you have told me of your story, I must confess that to my perception you take much too gloomy a view of your condition."

"Too gloomy!" exclaimed the cook, as he filled himself up another glass of wine. "Too gloomy! My dear, sir, you don't know how I loved that girl—you don't know how I—I—But it is no matter now—all that is past. Oh God! that she should be false to me—she of all persons in the great world!"

"And so you will let this little disappointment of the heart, place you in your youth quite beside all possible enjoyment? Is this wise, sir? Is it even manly?"

The poor cook was silent for a few moments, and then in a voice of deep emotion, he said—

"Sir, you don't know how much I loved her. You do not know how I pictured to myself happiness with her alone. You do not know, sir, how, even when death stared me in the face, I thought of her and her only, and how—But no matter—no matter, sir. She is false, and it is madness to speak of her. Let her go, sir. It is just possible that in the time to come, I may outlive the despair that now fills my heart."

"You surely will."

"I do not think it. But I will hope that I may."

"And have you really no hope—no innate lurking supposition in your mind, that you may be doing her an injustice in your suspicions of her faith?"

"Suspicions?"

"Ay, sir, suspicions, for even you must admit that you know nothing."

"Know nothing, sir?"

"Absolutely nothing. You will find, if you come to consider the affair, that, as I say, you know nothing, but suspect much; and so upon mere suspicion you will make your future life miserable. I would not so bend to circumstances if the whole world stood up before me, and told me I was right in my dread thoughts of one whom I had loved."

The poor cook glanced at Sir Richard Blunt, and for the space of about half a minute, not one word passed between them. Then in a low voice, the cook said—

"You have read Romeo and Juliet, sir?"

"Yes—what then?"

"There is one line there, in which we read that

> 'He jests at scars who never felt a wound.'"

"Well, how would you apply that line to the present circumstances?"

"I would say you have never loved, sir, and I have loved."

"A broad assumption that, my friend," said Sir Richard Blunt, "a very broad assertion, indeed. But come, I have to spare a short time. Will you, in recompense for what I have done for you, relate to me more fully than you have done, how it is that you suspect her whom you loved of falsehood to you?"

"Do not say loved, sir; I love her still."

"I am glad to hear it. I pray you to go on, and tell me now all, if you feel that you can have sufficient confidence in me, and that you can view me with a sufficient friendly feeling."

"Oh, sir, why do you doubt me? Do I not owe to you my life? Do I not owe it to you that I escaped the death that without a doubt was designed for me by Todd? and was it not by your persevering, that at length I had patience enough to wait until the proper time had come for my release, when it could be accomplished without the shadow of a doubt as to the result?"

"Well," said Sir Richard Blunt, with a smile, "I hope then that I have established some claim upon you; so now tell me your story, my friend, and at the end of it I will, from my experience, do what I can to bring you substantial comfort."

"You shall hear all, sir," said the cook, "but comfort and I have parted long since, I fear, from each other for ever."

CHAPTER CXV.
THE COOK BECOMES A VERY IMPORTANT PERSONAGE.

At this last declaration of Mrs. Lovett's late cook, regarding the tender adieu that he and comfort had taken of each other, Sir Richard Blunt only smiled faintly, and slightly inclined his hand as much as to say—

"That is all very well, but I am waiting to hear your story, if you please."

"Well, sir," added the cook. "You already know that I am not exactly what I seem, and that my being in that most abominable woman's employment as a cook, was one of those odd freaks of fortune, which will at times detract the due order of society, and place people in the most extraordinary positions."

"Exactly."

"I am, sir, an orphan, and was brought up by an uncle with every expectation that he would be kind and liberal to me as I progressed in years; but he had taken his own course and had made up his mind as to what I was to be, how I was to look, and what I was to say and to do, without asking himself the question, if nature was good enough to coincide with him or not. The consequence was then, that directly he found me very different from what he wished me to be, he was very angry indeed, and then I put the finishing stroke to his displeasure, by committing the greatest crime that in his eyes I could commit: I fell in love."

"Humph!"

"Yes, sir, that was just what he said at first, when some officious friend told of it, and sending for me he said—'You must give up all love nonsense if you wish to preserve my favour,' upon which I said—'Sir, did you never love?' 'That is not the question,' he said. 'It is of your follies now, not mine, that we are speaking,' and so he turned me out of the room."

"And what did you do? Did you give up your love?"

"No, sir; if he had asked me to give up my life that would have been much easier to me."

"Go on. What then happened?"

"Why, sir, my uncle and I met very seldom, but there was one upon my track that he paid to follow me, and to report my actions to him; and that spy—oh, that I had caught him! that spy made my uncle acquainted with the fact, that I continued, despite his prohibition, to meet with the only being who ever awakened in my bosom a tender feeling; and so I was abandoned by my relative, and left penniless almost."

"But you had youth and health?"

"I had, and I resolved to make use of those advantages as best I might, by endeavouring while they lasted, frail and fluttering possessions as they are, to make a home for myself and for her whom I loved."

"The feeling, I presume, was reciprocal?"

"I thought so."

"Was it only a thought, then?"

"Alas! no. It was a certainty; and if an angel with wings fresh spread from Heaven, and carrying upon them the soft light of an eternal world, had come to me and told me that she would be false to me, I would not have believed as much."

"And yet—"

"And yet, as you say, I have found her false. Well—well, Sir Richard—let me proceed. The thought of her unmans me at moments, but in time I may recover from such feelings."

"Most unquestionably you will; and then you will look to your present condition of mind with such a smile of incredulity, and only a faint faith in your own memory that paints you such feelings."

"I cannot say, sir, that it will not be so, but I do not think so. To proceed, however. I heard that an expedition was about to start to explore some rich islands in the Southern Sea. If successful, every one who took part in it would be enriched; and if unsuccessful, I could not lose my life in a better cause then in trying to make a happy home for her whom I love. I at once embraced the proposition, and became one of the adventurers, much against the inclination of the gentle girl whom I loved, and who in imagination pictured to herself a thousand dangers as involved in the enterprise."

"You went?"

"I did, and with every hope of returning in about a year an independent man. I thought little of the perils I was about to encounter in my voyage. I and the fair girl upon whom I had fixed my best hopes and affections parted, after many tears and protestations of fidelity. I kept my faith."

"And she?"

"Broke hers."

"As you think—as you think. You cannot be too cautious, my young friend, in making assertions of that character."

"Cautious, sir? Am I to believe the evidence of my own eyes, or am I not?"

"Not always," said Sir Richard Blunt, calmly. "But I pray you go on with your narrative."

"I will. The principal object of the voyage failed entirely; but by pure accident I got possession of a String of Pearls, of very great value indeed, which, provided I could get home in safety, would value in Europe quite a sufficient sum to enable us to live in comfort. But the dangers of the deep assailed us. We were wrecked; and fully believing that I should not survive, I handed the pearls to a stronger comrade, and begged him to take them to her whom I had loved, to tell herself my fate, and to bid her not weep for me, since I had died happy in the thought that I had achieved something for her; and so, my friend and I parted. I was preserved and got on board a merchant vessel bound for England, where I arrived absolutely penniless. But I had a heart full of hope and joy; for if I could but find my poor girl faithful to me, I felt that we might yet be happy, whether my comrade had lived to bring to her the pearls or not."

"And you found her?"

"You shall hear, sir. I walked from Southampton to London, subsisting on the road as best I could. Sometimes I met with kind treatment at farm-houses, and sometimes with quite the reverse, until at length I reached London tolerably exhausted, as you may suppose, and in anything but a good plight."

"Well, but you found your girl all right, I suppose?"

"No. I walked up the Strand; and as some of our happiest interviews had taken place in the Temple Gardens, I could not resist turning aside for a moment to look at the old familiar spot, when what do you think was the sight that met my eyes?"

"I really can't say."

"I will tell you, sir. I saw her whom I loved—the young and beautiful girl for whom I had gone through so much—the being upon whose faith and constancy I would at any time have staked my life—the, as I thought, most innocent, guileless creature upon the face of the earth—"

"Well, well, my good friend, what did you see this paragon of perfection about?"

"You will not believe it, sir."

"Oh, yes, I shall—do not be afraid of that—I shall believe it. Your narrative bears too much the stamp of truth about it for me to doubt it for a moment. I pray you to go on."

"I will then. The first object that met my eyes in that Temple Garden was the being whom I loved so fondly leaning upon the arm of a man in a military undress—leaning, did I say, upon his arm? she was almost upon his breast, and he was actually supporting her with one of his arms round her waist."

"Well?"

"What, sir! Is that all you can say to it? Would you say 'Well?' if you saw the only creature you ever loved in such a situation, sir? Well, indeed!"

"My dear friend, do not get excited, now."

"Oh, sir, it would excite a stick or a stone."

"Excuse me, then, for having said 'Well,' and go on with your story. What did she say to excuse herself to you?"

"'Tis well, sir—of course, I cannot expect others to feel as I do upon such an occasion. I did not speak to her, sir. The sight of such perfidy was enough for me. From that moment she fell from the height I had raised her to in my imagination, and nothing she could say, and nothing I could say, would raise her up again."

"And you, then, only walked away?"

"That is all. With such a pang at my heart at the moment as I wonder did not kill me, I walked away, and left her to her own conclusions."

"Then—then, my young friend, you did the very reverse of what I should have done, for you should have gone up to her, and politely taken leave of her, so as to let her know at all events that you were aware of her perfidy. I should not have been content to let her have the satisfaction of thinking I was at the bottom of the sea while she was enjoying a flirtation

with her officer; but, of course, different people take different courses upon emergencies. There is one thing, however, that I wonder you did not inquire about."

"What was that?"

"Your String of Pearls. How could you tell but that your friend had got to London, and had actually given her the Pearls with your message appended to them? I really am surprised that you did not step forward and say, 'Oblige me, miss, with my pearls, if you no longer favour me with your affections!'"

"No, no. To tell the truth, I was too heart-broken at the time to care about anything in all the world; I had lost her who was to me the greatest jewel it had ever contained, and I cared for nothing else. I do believe I was a little mad, for I walked about the rest of that day, not knowing where I went to, and at last I found myself, tired, worn out, famishing, opposite to Mrs. Lovett's shop-window, and the steam of those abominable pies began to tempt me, so much that I went into the shop, and after some talk, I actually accepted the situation of cook to her, and there, but for you, I should have breathed my last."

"Not a doubt of it. And now, my young friend, you know that I am a police-magistrate, and I dare say you have heard a great deal about my sources of information, and the odd way in which I find out things when folks think they keep them a profound secret. You have told me all your history, but you have thought proper, as you were, if you pleased, quite justified in doing, to withhold your name."

"I have done so, but I hardly know why. I will tell it to you, however, now."

"Hold, I know it."

"You know it, sir?"

"Yes, your name is Mark Ingestrie!"

"It is, indeed. But how you came to know that, sir, is to me most mysterious."

"Oh, I know more than that. The name of the young lady who, you believe, played you such a trick, is Johanna Oakley."

Mark Ingestrie, for it was indeed no other, sprang to his feet, exclaiming —

"Are you man or devil, that you know what I have never breathed to you?"

"Don't be surprised, my young friend. I can tell you a little more than that even. The friend to whom you intrusted your String of Pearls, was named Francis Thornhill; and his dog—let me see—Oh, his large dog was called 'Hector.'"

Mark Ingestrie trembled excessively, and sinking back in his seat, he turned very pale.

"This must be a dream," he said, "or you, sir, get your information from the spirits of the dead."

"Not at all. But have you faith in my inspiration now sufficient to induce you to believe anything that I may tell you?"

"In good truth, I have; and I may well have, for after what you have already told me, your power of knowledge cannot by me be for one moment doubted."

"Very well, then. In the first place, Mr. Francis Thornhill reached London in safety."

"He did?"

"I tell you so. He arrived in London with your String of Pearls in his pocket. He fully believed you were dead. Indeed, he fancied that he had seen the last of you, and was quite prepared to say as much to Miss Johanna Oakley."

"And he did? That will be some excuse for her, if she thought that I was gone."

"No, he did not. On his route he turned into the shop of Sweeney Todd to be shaved, and there he was murdered."

"Murdered!"

"Yes, most foully murdered; and the String of Pearls got into the possession of that man, proving ultimately one of the means by which his frightful villainous crime came to light. The dog remained at Todd's door seeking for its master, to the great discomfiture of the murderer, who made every effort within his power for its destruction, in which however he did not succeed."

"Gracious Heaven! my poor friend Thornhill to meet with such a fate! Oh God! and all on account of that fatal String of Pearls! Oh, Thornhill—Thornhill! rather would I have sunk for ever beneath the wave, than such a dreadful end should have been yours."

"The past cannot be recalled," said Sir Richard. "It is only with the present, and with the future that we have anything to do now. Would you like to hear more?"

"More? Of whom? Is he not dead?—my poor friend?"

"Yes, he is dead; but I can tell you more of other people. I can tell you that Johanna Oakley was faithful to you. I can tell you that she mourned your loss as you would wish her to mourn it, knowing how you would mourn hers. I can tell you that the gentleman's arm she was leaning upon was only a dear friend, and that the fact of her having to be supported by him at the unlucky moment when you saw this was solely owing to the deep grief she was plunged into upon your account."

"Oh no—no—no!"

"I say yes. It was so, Mr. Ingestrie; and if you had at that moment stepped forward, you would have saved yourself much misery, and you would have saved her such heart-breaking thoughts, and such danger, as it will frighten you to listen to."

CHAPTER CXVI.
JOHANNA IS AMPLY PAID FOR HER BRIEF SERVICE AT TODD'S.

Upon hearing all this, poor Mark Ingestrie turned very faint and fell back in his chair, looking so pale and wan, that Sir Richard Blunt was compelled to go across the room to hold him up. After giving him a glass of wine, he recovered, and with a deep sigh he said—

"And so I have wronged her after all! Oh, my Johanna, I am unworthy of you!"

"That," said Sir Richard, "is a subject entirely for the young lady's own consideration.—N. O. W."

Mark Ingestrie looked curiously in the face of Sir Richard Blunt, as with marked emphasis upon each letter he said, "N. O. W!" But he had not to wait long for an explanation of what it meant. A door at the back of the room was flung open, and Johanna sprung forward with a cry of joy. In another moment she was in the arms of Mark Ingestrie, and Sir Richard Blunt had left the room.

The Meeting Of Mark And Johanna.

The Meeting Of Mark And Johanna.

It would be quite impossible, if we had the will to attempt it, for us to go through the scene that took place between Johanna Oakley and Mark Ingestrie in the magistrate's parlour. For about half an hour they quite

forgot where they were, or that there was any one in the world but themselves. At the end of that period of time, though, Sir Richard Blunt gently walked into the room.

"Well," he said, "have you come to any understanding about that military man in the Temple Gardens?"

Johanna sprang towards the magistrate, and placing her arms upon his breast, she kissed him on the cheek.

"Sir," she said, "you are our very dear friend, and I love you as I love my father."

"God bless you!" said Sir Richard, "You have, by those few words, more then repaid me for all that I have done. Are you happy?"

"Very, very happy."

"So very happy, sir," said Ingestrie, as his eyes glistened through tears of joy, "that I can hardly believe in its reality."

"And yet you are both so poor."

"Ah, sir, what is poverty when we shall be together?"

"We will face that foe, Mark, I think," said Johanna, with a smile, "and he shall not extort a tear from us."

"Well," said Sir Richard, as he opened his desk, "since you are not to be knocked down by poverty, what say you to riches? Do you know these, Mr. Ingestrie?"

"Why, that is my String of Pearls."

"Yes. I took this from Todd's escritoire myself, and they are yours and Johanna's. Will you permit me always to call you Johanna?"

"Oh, yes—yes. Do so. All who love me call me Johanna."

"Very well. This String of Pearls, I have ascertained, is worth a sufficient sum to place you both very far above all the primary exigences of life. It will be necessary to produce them at the trial of Sweeney Todd, but after

that event they will be handed to you to do what you please with them, when you can realise them at at once, and be happy enough with the proceeds."

"If my poor friend, Thornhill," sighed Mark Ingestrie, "could but have lived to see this day!"

"That, indeed, would have been a joy," said Johanna.

"Yes," said the magistrate; "but the grave has closed on his poor remains —at least, I may say so figuratively. He was one of Todd's victims, one of his numerous victims; for I do believe that, for a long time, scarcely a week passed that did not witness some three or four murders in that man's shop."

"Horrible!"

"You may well use that expression, in speaking of the career of Sweeney Todd. It has been most horrible; but there cannot be a doubt of his expiating his crimes upon the scaffold, together with his partner in guilt, Mrs. Lovett."

Mark Ingestrie gave a shudder as that woman's name was mentioned, for it put him in mind of the cellar where he had lived so long, and where it was only by the most good fortune that he had not terminated his career.

Before they could say any more, one of the officers in attendance upon Sir Richard, announced Colonel Jeffery.

"Ah, that is your dreadful military rival," said Sir Richard to Ingestrie. "That is the gentleman whom you saw in the garden of the Temple with Johanna."

"I have much to thank him for. His conduct to Johanna has been most noble."

The colonel smiled when he saw Mark Ingestrie and Johanna, for he well knew, from private information he had got from the magistrate, that Mark Ingestrie and Mrs. Lovett's cook were identical; and holding out

his hand to the young man, he said—

"Accept of my best and sincerest wishes, Mr. Ingestrie."

"And you, sir," said Mark, "accept of my best thanks. Our gratitude is largely due to you, sir."

"I am quite repaid by this very happy result; and I have the pleasure of informing you, Sir Richard, that poor Tobias is very much better indeed."

"Which I am rejoiced to hear," said Sir Richard. "And now, my dear Johanna, it is time for you to go home. You will hear from me in the morning, for I intend to do myself the pleasure of calling upon your father, and explaining all to him; for there are some circumstances that he is yet in ignorance of, and particularly concerning Mr. Ingestrie."

"I will walk with you to your door, Johanna," said Mark rising and tottering.

"No," said Sir Richard Blunt; "that must not be to-night. Do not let him, Johanna. He is by far too weak and unwell to do anything of the kind. A calm and long night's rest here will do him a world of good. Business prevents me from leaving the office; but I daresay the colonel will see Johanna in safety."

"With pleasure," said Colonel Jeffery, "if Mr. Ingestrie has no objection to my doing so."

"Sir," said Mark, "there is no one in all the world that I would more cheerfully see protecting my Johanna. I feel that I am in too great a state of exhaustion to go out. I leave her to your care, sir."

"That is right," said Sir Richard Blunt. "Now, good-night, Johanna, and God bless you. You will see me in the morning, recollect."

Mark Ingestrie took a parting embrace of Johanna, and then she went off with the colonel, who, on their road home, told her how he and Arabella had got so far as to fix their wedding day, and how he should

not feel at all happy unless both she and Mark Ingestrie were at the ceremony.

"Indeed, he hoped," he said, "that they might give the parson only one trouble, by being married upon the same occasion."

Johanna warded this last part of the colonel's speech; but she was fervent in her hopes that he and Arabella would be so very happy, and in her praises of her young friend; so in very pleasant discourse indeed, they reached the old spectacle-maker's shop, and then the colonel shook hands with Johanna, and bade her a kind and friendly adieu, and she was let in by—to her immense surprise—her mother!

Mrs. Oakley fell upon Johanna's neck in a passion of tears, crying—

"Come, my child—come to your mother's heart, and tell her that you forgive her for much past neglect and unkindness."

"Oh, mother," said Johanna, "do not speak so. There is nothing to forgive; and if you are happy and we are all good friends, we will never think of the past."

"That's right, my dear," said Mr. Oakley, from the passage; "that's right, my love. Come in, both of you." But it is necessary that we should briefly state how it was that this wonderful change in the behaviour of Mrs. Oakley came about, and for that purpose we must retrace our steps a little.

The reader will be so good as to recollect that the last time Mrs. Oakley was introduced to his notice she was encumbered by Mr. Lupin, and had the pleasure of introducing that gentleman to the notice of Big Ben the beef-eater, who had quickly put all idea of escape out of the question, as regarded that highly religious personage.

At that point the presence of other events compelled us to leave the lady, and repair to Todd's shop, and to Mrs. Lovett's little concern in Bell Yard.

The appearance of Lupin's face when he found that he was in the grasp of Big Ben, would have been quite a study for a painter. It transcended all description, and for the moment seemed as if he were bidding farewell to this world and to all his iniquities in it, without the intervention of the law. But in a few moments he recovered from this condition, and sliding on to his knees, and in a whining tone, he cried—

"Mercy, Mercy! Oh, let me go!"

"At the end of a rope," said Big Ben. "Easy does it. What has he been and done, Mrs. O.?"

"Murder, murder!"

A crowd of people soon began to collect around them, and then Lupin made an effort to thrust himself out of the grasp of Big Ben, but the only result of the effort was very nearly to strangle himself.

"You are killing the man, you great brute!" cried a woman. "You are throttling the poor man."

"He will be murdered," shouted another female. "Oh, you great wretch, do you want to take his life?"

"Listen to me," said Mrs. Oakley. "He has murdered his poor wife, and that is the reason I have asked that he should be held tight."

"Murdered his wife!" exclaimed about twelve females in chorus. "Murdered his wife? Then hanging is a great deal too good for him. Hold him tight, sir, do. Oh, the wretch!"

The tide of popular feeling fairly turned against Mr. Lupin, and Big Ben had as much difficulty now in preserving the half dead wretch from popular fury as if he had been accused of any other crime, he might have had to prevent popular sympathy from aiding his escape.

"Oh!" cried one lady, of rather extensive proportions, who was the wife of a baker, "I should like to have him in a brisk oven for an hour and a half."

"And I," said the lady of a butcher, "would see him slaughtered without so much as winking at him."

"And serve him right, the wagabone!" cried Big Ben. "Come along, will you, you ill-looking scarecrow! Easy does it. Will you walk? Oh, very well, don't. Who are you?"

A little man with a constable's staff in his hand, rushed before Ben, crying out—

"What is it? what is it? I'm a constable. What is it?"

"Murder!" said Mrs. Oakley. "I give that man in charge for murdering his wife. I saw him do it."

"That will do," said the constable. "Give him to me. I'll take him. He dare not resist me. I'll have him."

Big Ben looked at the constable and then he shook his head, as he said very gravely—

"I tell you what it is, my little man, you ain't fit to tussle with such a fellow as this—I'll take him along for you. Where is he to go?"

"To the round-house, in course; but I'm a constable. I must take him—I will take him! Give him to me, sir, directly—I will have him—I must go with him!"

"Wait a minute," said Ben. "Easy does it! You must go with him, you say? Very good—easy does everything!"

With this, Ben grasped Mr. Lupin round the middle, and placed him under his left arm, and suddenly pouncing, then, upon the constable, he caught him up and placed him under the right arm; and then away he walked, to the admiration of the populace, and paying about as much attention to the kicking of the constable and the kicking of Mr. Lupin, as though they were two dogs that he was carrying home.

And so the murderer was taken to the round-house, where Mrs. Oakley duly preferred the charge against him, and promised to substantiate it before a magistrate when called upon so to do.

CHAPTER CXVII.
SHOWS HOW MRS. OAKLEY RECONCILED HERSELF TO EVERYBODY AT HOME.

When Ben and Mrs. Oakley had thus disposed of Mr. Lupin, and left him to his solitary and not very pleasant reflections in a cell of the round-house, they found themselves together in the open street, and Ben, as he cast a woeful glance at her, said—

"Well, how does yer feel now? Easy does it! Oh, you aint a-been and behaved yourself properly lately—you is like the old bear as we calls Nosey. He's always a-doing what he shouldn't, and always a-never doing what he should."

"Ben?"

"Well, blaze away. What is yer going to say now?"

"I feel, Ben, that I am a very different woman from what I was—very different."

"Then you must have gained by the exchange, for you was, I will say it, anything but a pleasant bit o' goods. There's poor old Oakley a-making of spectacles all days, and a-wearing of his old eyes out—and there's Miss Johanna, bless her heart! as wise a little bit o' human nature as you'd wish to see, whether she's in petticoats or the other things; and yet you neglects 'em both, all for to run arter a canting snivelling wagabone like this Lupin, that we wouldn't have among the beasteses at the Tower, if so be he'd come and offer himself."

"I know it, Ben—I know it."

"You know it! Why didn't you know it before?"

"I don't know, Ben; but my eyes are open now. I have had a lesson that to my dying day I shall never forget. I have found that piety may only be a cloak with which to cover up the most monstrous iniquity."

"Oh, you have made that discovery, have you?"

"I have, indeed, Ben."

"Well, I knowed as much as that when I was a small baby. It only shows how back'ard some folks is in coming for'ard with their edication."

"Yes, Ben."

"Well, and what is you going to be arter now?"

"I wish to go home, and I want you to come with me, and to say a kind word for me; I want you to tell them how I now see the error of my ways, and how I am an altered woman, and mean to be a very—very different person than I was."

Here Mrs. Oakley's genuine feelings got the better of her, and she began to weep bitterly; and Ben, after looking at her for a few moments, cried out—

"Why, it's real, and not like our hyena that only does it to gammon us! Come, mother Oakley, just pop your front paw under my arm, and I'll go home with you; and if you don't get a welcome there, I'm not a beef-eater. Why, the old man will fly right bang out of his wits for joy. You should only see what a house is when the mother and the wife don't do as she ought. Mother O., you should see what a bit of fire there is in the grate, and what a hearth."

"I know it—I ought to know it."

"You ought to know it!" added Ben, putting himself into an oratorial attitude. "You should only see the old man when dinner time comes round. He goes into the parlour and he finds no fire; then he says—'Dear me!'"

"Yes—yes."

"Then he gives a boy a ha'penny to go and get him something that don't do him no sort of good from the cook's shop, and sometimes the boy nabs the ha'penny and the shilling both, and ain't never heard of again by any means no more."

"No doubt, Ben."

"Then, when tea comes round, it don't come round at all, and the old man has none; but he takes in a ha'porth of milk in a jug without a spout, and he drinks that up, cold and miserable, with a penny-loaf, you see."

"Yes—yes."

"And then at night, when there ought to be a little sort of comfort round the fireside, there ain't none."

"But Johanna, Ben—there is Johanna?"

"Johanna?"

"Yes. Is she not there to see to some of her father's comforts? She loves him—I know she does, Ben!"

Ben placed his finger by the side of his nose, and in an aside to himself, he said—

"Now I'll touch her up a bit—now I'll punish her for all she has done, and it will serve her right." Then, elevating his voice, he added—"Did you mention Johanna?"

"Yes, Ben, I did."

"Then I'm sorry you did. Perhaps you think she's been seeing to the old man's comforts a little—airing his night-cap, and so on—Eh? Is that the idea?"

"Yes, I know that she would do anything gladly for her father. She was always most tenderly attached to him."

"Humph!"

"Why do you say, Humph, Ben?"

"Just answer me one question, Mrs. O. Did you ever hear of a young girl as was neglected by her mother—her mother who of all ought to be the person to attend to her—turning out well?"

"Do not terrify me, Ben."

"Well, all I have got to say is, that Johanna can't be in two places at once, and as she isn't at home, how, I would ask any reasonable Christian, can she attend to the old man?"

"Not at home, Ben?"

"Not—at—home!"

"Oh, Heaven! why did I not stay in that dreadful man's house, and let him murder me! Why did I not tell him at once that I knew of his crime, and implore him to make me his next victim! Oh, Ben, if you have any compassion in your disposition you will tell me all, and then I shall know what to hope, and what to dread."

"Well," said Ben, "here goes then."

"What goes?"

"I mean I'm a-going to tell you all, as you seem as if you'd like to know it."

"Do! Oh, do!"

"Then of course Johanna being but a very young piece of goods, and not knowing much o' the ways o' this here world, and the habits and manners o' the wild beasteses as is in it, when she found as the old house wasn't good enough for her mother, she naturally enough thought it wasn't good enough for her, you know."

"Oh, this is the most dreadful stroke of all!"

"I should say it were," said Ben, quite solemnly. "Take it easy though, and you'll get through it in the course of time. Well then, when Johanna found as everything at home was sixes and sevens, she borrowed a pair

of what do call 'ems of some boy, and a jacket, and off she went."

"She what?"

"She put on a pair of thingumys—well, breeches then, if you must have it—and away she went, and the last I saw of her was in Fleet Street with 'em on."

"Gracious Heaven!"

"Very likely, but that don't alter the facts of the case, you know, Mrs. O. On she had 'em, and all I can say is that you might have knocked me down flat to see her, that you might. I didn't think I should ever have got home to the beasteses in the Tower again, it gave me such a turn."

"Lost! Lost!"

"Eh? What do you say? What have you lost now?"

"My child! My Johanna!"

"Oh! Ah, to be sure. But then you know, Mrs. O, you ought to have staid at home, and gived her ever so much good advice, you know; and when you saw she was bent upon putting on the boy's things, you as a mother ought to have said, 'My dear, take your legs out of that if yer pleases, and if yer don't, I'll pretty soon make you,' and then staid and gived the affair up as a bad job that wouldn't pay, and took to morals."

"Yes—yes. 'Tis I, and I only, who am to blame. I have been the destruction of my child. Farewell, Ben. You will perhaps in the course of time not think quite so badly of me as you now do. Farewell!"

"Hold!" cried Ben as he clutched the arm of Mrs. Oakley only the more tightly in his own: "What are you at now?"

"Death is now my only resource. My child is lost to me, and I have driven her by my neglect to such a dreadful course. I cannot live now. Let me go, Ben. You will never hear of me again."

"If I let you go may I be—Well, no matter—no matter. Come on. It's all one, you know, a hundred years hence."

"But at present it is madness and despair. Let me go, I say. The river is not far off, and beneath its waters I shall at least find peace for my breaking heart. Let my death be considered as some sort of expiation of my sins."

"Stop a bit."

"No—no—no."

"But I say, yes. Things ain't quite so bad as you think 'em, only it was right o' me, you know, just to let you know what they might have been."

"What do you tell me?"

"Why that there ain't a better girl than Johanna in all the world, and that if all the mothers that ever was or ever will be, had neglected her and set her all their bad examples in the universal world, she would still be the little angel that she is now, and no mistake."

"Then she is not from home? It is all a fable?"

"Not quite, Mrs. O. just you trot on now comfortably by the side of me, and I will tell you the whole particulars, and then you will find that there ain't no occasion to go plumping into the river on Johanna's account."

Poor Mrs. Oakley, with delight beaming upon every feature of her face, now listened to Ben while he explained the whole matter to her, as far as he himself was cognisant of it; and if he did not offer to be very explicit in minor details, she at all events heard from him quite enough to convince her that Johanna was all that the tenderest mother could wish.

"Oh, Ben," she said, as the tears coursed each other down her cheeks, "how could you torture me as you have done?"

"All for your own good," said Ben. "It only lets you see what might have happened if Johanna had not been the good little thing that she is, that's all."

"Well, perhaps it is for the best that I should have suffered such a pang, and I only hope that Heaven will accept of it as some sort of expiation of my wickedness. If you had not held me, Ben, I should certainly have

taken my life."

"Not a doubt about it," said Ben; "and a pretty kittle of fish you would then have made of the whole affair. However, that's all right enough now, and as for old Oakley, all you have got to do is to go into the shop and say to him. 'Here I am, and I am sorry for the past, which I hope you will forgive, and for the future I will strive to be a good wife.'"

"Must I say that, Ben?"

"Yes, to be sure. If you are ashamed to say what's right, you may depend upon it you haven't much inclination to do it."

"You have convinced me, Ben. I will humble myself. It is fit and proper that I should. So I will say as nearly as I can recollect just what you have told me to say."

"You can't do better; and here we are at the corner of the street. Now if you would rather go in by yourself without me, only say the word, and I'm off."

Mrs. Oakley hesitated for a moment and then she said—

"Yes, Ben, I would rather go alone."

"Very good. I think it's better too, so good-by; and I'll call to-morrow and see how you are all getting on."

"Do so, Ben. No one can possibly be more welcome than you will be. You will be sure to come to-morrow?"

"Rather."

With this Ben walked away, and Mrs. Oakley entered the house. What then passed we do not feel that we ought to relate. The humiliations of human nature, although for the best of purposes, and for the ultimate happiness of the parties themselves, are not subjects for the pen of the chronicler. Suffice it, that Mr. and Mrs. Oakley were perfectly reconciled, and were happy upon that day.

CHAPTER CXVIII.
TAKES A PEEP AT TOBIAS AT THE COLONEL'S HOUSE.

The more stirring events of our story, have compelled us in some measure to neglect poor Tobias. He had suffered very much from that visit of Todd's to the colonel's house, and it had a very prejudicial effect upon his mind too, inasmuch as it deprived him of that feeling of security, which had before possessed him beneath that roof.

The colonel felt this very acutely, and he could not help perceiving by Tobias's manner, that the faith he put in his assurance that Todd could not possibly again come near him, was not full and complete. Under these circumstances, then, it was a very great satisfaction to the colonel to be able to make the gratifying communication he had it in his power to make to Tobias, on the morning following the arrest of Todd and Mrs. Lovett.

The illness contingent upon the fright that Todd had given the poor boy, or the relapse as we might call it, had in a great measure worn off, and if Tobias's mind could have been quite at ease, his recovery would have been as rapid as any one could possibly have wished or expected.

As soon as he was up and about upon the following morning, then, after the arrests, the colonel sought Tobias's room, and with a cheerful smile upon his face he said—

"Well, Tobias, I come to bring you good news."

"Indeed, sir?" said Tobias his colour coming and going in flushes. "I am very weak, and—and if—"

"Come, come, Tobias. What I am going to tell you will strengthen you, I know. Todd is in Newgate!"

Tobias drew a long breath.

"Todd is in Newgate?" he replied. "Todd is in Newgate? The walls are very thick. I am safe now."

"Yes, you are, indeed, Tobias. The walls of Newgate are thick, and the doors are massive and well-guarded. Be assured that Todd will never issue out at them but to his execution. Your old cunning enemy is at length more powerless by a great deal than you are, and from this moment you may completely banish all fear from your mind upon his account."

"And the woman, sir, Mrs. Lovett?"

"She is in Newgate likewise."

"Both, both, and their crimes then are all known at last, and there will be no more murders, and no more poor boys driven mad as I was! Oh, God be thanked, it is indeed all over now, all over."

With this Tobias burst into tears, and relieved his surcharged heart of a load of misery. In the course of about five minutes he looked up with such a great smile of happiness upon his face, that it was quite a joy to see it.

"And you, sir, you," he said, "my dear friend have done all this!"

"Not all, Tobias. I have helped in every way that lay in my power to bring the affair about, but it is Sir Richard Blunt the magistrate, who has toiled day and night almost in the matter, and who has at last brought it to so successful an issue, that the guilt of both Todd and Mrs. Lovett can be distinctly and clearly proved, without the shadow of a doubt."

"Unhappy wretches!"

"They are, indeed, Tobias, unhappy wretches, and may Heaven have mercy upon them. Some other old friends of yours, too, will, before nightfall I think, find a home in Newgate."

"Indeed, sir, whom mean you?"

"The folks at the madhouse at Peckham. Sir Richard would have had them apprehended some time ago, but he was afraid that it might give the alarm to Todd, before the affair was ripe enough to enable him to be arrested, with a certainty of his crimes being clearly understood and brought home to him. Now, however, that is all over, and they will be punished."

"They are very, very wicked. I think, sir, they are almost worse than Sweeney Todd."

"They are, if anything; but they will meet with their deserts, never fear; and as Minna Gray is expected every moment, so your mother tells me, I will not deprive you of the gratification of giving her the piece of news yourself. Of course, all the town will know it soon through the medium of the press; and Sir Richard Blunt, too, will be here in the course of the morning, to arrange with you concerning your evidence."

"My evidence? Shall I be wanted?"

"Yes, Tobias. Surely you would not like so notorious a criminal to find a loop-hole of escape, from the want of your evidence?"

"Oh, no, no—I will go. I have only to tell the truth, and that should never be denied for or against. I will go, sir."

"You are right, Tobias. It is a duty you owe to society. If some one long ago, and before you even had the evil fortune to go into his shop, had found out and exposed the iniquities of Sweeney Todd, how much misery would have been spared in this world both to you and to others!"

"Ah, yes, sir; and yet—"

"Yet what, Tobias?"

"I was only thinking, sir, that what at times seems like our very worst misfortunes, at times turn out to be the very things that are the making of us."

"Indeed, Tobias?"

"Yes, sir. If I had not been Sweeney Todd's boy, and if he had not persecuted me in the way he did, I should never have known what it was to have the friend I now have in you, sir; and perhaps she whom I love so dearly, would not have thought so much of me, if she had not deeply pitied me for all that I suffered."

"There is profound philosophy in what you say, my poor boy," replied the colonel; "and if we could only bring ourselves to think, when things apparently go wrong with us, that after all it is for the best, we should be much happier than we are now; but with our short-sighted wisdom, we hastily take upon ourselves to decide upon matters concerning the issues of which we know nothing, and so by anticipation we make ourselves pleased or sorrowful, when the precise contrary may be the real result."

"Yes, sir," said Tobias, "I have had time to think of that, and of many other strange things, as I lay here."

"Then you have done yourself some good, Tobias. But I hear a light footstep upon the stairs, and I will now leave you, for I can guess by that heightened colour that you hear it likewise, and I know that two may be good company but three none."

Tobias would have said something deprecatory of the colonel leaving him, and he did begin, but with a smile his kind and hospitable friend took his leave, and Tobias soon had the satisfaction of relating to the young girl, whom he was so tenderly attached to, that nothing further was now to be feared from Sweeney Todd or from Mrs. Lovett.

We may now leave Tobias in good company; and it was really surprising to those who have not made a habit of noting the intimate connection there is between the mind and the body, to see how from the very moment that he felt assured there was nothing further to apprehend

from Sweeney Todd, Tobias's health picked up and improved. The absolute dread with which that bold impious bad man had inspired the boy, had been the sole cause of keeping him in so delicate a state. His dreams had been all of Todd; but now that word Newgate, in conjunction with Todd's name, was a spell that brought with it peace and security.

Tobias, as he sat with the hand of the young and fair girl who had pleased his boyish fancy in his own, was now truly happy.

When Johanna got home, after being escorted from Sir Richard Blunt's house in Craven Street by Colonel Jeffery, she found her mother at home, and not a little surprised was she to find herself suddenly clasped in that mother's arms, a most unwonted process for Mrs. Oakley to go through.

"Oh, my child, my dear child!" sobbed the now repentant woman. "Can you forgive me as your father has done?"

"Forgive you, mother? Oh, do not speak to me in such a way as that. It is quite a joy to find you—you are really my mother?"

"You might well doubt it, my dear child; but the future is before us all, and then you will find that it was only when I could not have been in my right mind, that I preferred any place to my own home."

Old Oakley wiped his eyes as he said to Johanna—

"Yes, my darling, your mother has come back to us now in every sense of the word, and all the past is to be forgotten, except such of it as will be pleasant to remember. Your good friend, and I may say the good friend of us all, Sir Richard Blunt, sent us a letter to say that you would be here to-night, and God bless him my child, for watching over you as he did."

"Oh, how perilous an enterprise you went upon, my darling," said Mrs. Oakley.

The door of the adjoining room was partially open, and from it now stepped forward Arabella, saying—

"It is I who ought to ask pardon of you all for advising that step; and you will grant me that pardon I am sure, if upon no other ground, upon that that I have suffered greatly for my folly and precipitation."

"My dear Arabella," said Johanna, "you must not blame yourself in such a way. How pleased I am to find you here, my dear friend. Ah! at one time how little did we ever expect to meet all thus, in this little room!"

Johanna and Arabella embraced each other, and while they were so occupied, big Ben came out of the room from whence Arabella had proceeded, and flinging his arms round them both, he made a great roaring noise, in imitation of the largest of the bears in the Tower collection.

At the moment, Johanna was alarmed, and could not conceive what it was; but Arabella, who knew that Ben had been in the room, waiting for some opportunity of coming out in a highly practical manner, only laughed, and then Johanna knew in a moment who it was, and she cried —

"Ben, it is you!"

"Yes, it's me," said Ben, "and I'm only astonished at you two girls fancying I was going to be quiet, and see all that kissing and hugging going on, and not come in for any of it. Don't kick now, for I must kiss you both, and there's an end of it. It's no use a-kicking."

To the credit of both Arabella and Johanna we may state, that they neither of them kicked, but very quietly let Ben kiss them both.

"Well," said Ben as he plumped himself down upon a chair after the salute. "Well!—Murder! Where am I going to now?"

"Dear me," said Mrs. Oakley. "All four legs of the chair are broken off, and Ben is on the floor."

"Really, Ben," said Mr. Oakley, "you ought to be perfectly careful when you sit down."

"Easy does it," said Ben. "I really thought I was going to kingdom come. Pull me, Johanna, my dear. Pull me up."

Johanna shook her head, and declined the Herculean attempt, so that Ben had to scramble to his feet the best way he could, and then as he sat down upon the sofa which was sufficiently strong to withstand any shocks, Mrs. Oakley asked him what it was he had been upon the point of saying, when the chair had so very unceremoniously given way with him; but Ben had quite forgotten it, only he said he recollected something else that was quite as good, and that was that he ordered to come about that hour a foaming tankard of mulled wine, and then he winked at Mrs. Oakley and hoped she had no medicine in the house to put in it.

"Oh, no, Ben," she said, "and if there isn't a knock at the door; and if you ordered it at the Unicorn's Tail, you may depend that's it."

"Very good," said Ben, and then he proceeded to the door and found that it was the boy from the Unicorn's dorsal appendage with the spiced wine; and after whispering to bring a similar quantity in half an hour, and to keep on at it every half hour until further orders, Ben took it into the parlour, and a happier party than was there could not have been found in all London.

CHAPTER CXIX.
THE CRIMINALS IN NEWGATE.—TODD'S ATTEMPT AT SUICIDE.

It is grievous to turn from the contemplation of so pleasant and grateful a scene as that that was taking place at the old spectacle-maker's house, to dive into the interior of Newgate. But thither it is that now we would conduct the reader.

The state of mind that Todd was in after his arrest, was one that such a man with such strong passions as he had was exceedingly unlikely to come to. It is difficult to describe it, but if we say that he was mentally stunned, we shall be as near the mark as language will permit us to be.

He walked, and looked, and spoke very much like a man in a dream; and it is really doubtful whether, for some hours, he comprehended the full measure of the calamity that had befallen him on his apprehension.

At Newgate they are quite accustomed to find this unnatural calmness in great criminals immediately after their arrest, so they take their measures accordingly.

Sir Richard Blunt had given some very special instructions to the Governor of Newgate concerning his prisoner, when he should arrive and be placed in his custody, so everything was ready for Todd. How little he suspected that for two days and two nights the very cell he was to occupy in Newgate had been actually pointed out, and that the irons in which his limbs were to be encompassed were waiting for him in the lobby!

He was placed in a small stone room that had no light but what came from a little orifice in the roof, and that was only a borrowed light after all, so that the cell was in a state of semi-darkness always.

Into this place he was hurried, and the blacksmith who was in the habit of officiating upon such occasions, riveted upon him, as was then the custom, a complete set of irons.

All this Todd looked at with seeming indifference. His face had upon it an unnatural flush, and probably Todd had never looked so strangely well in health as upon the occasion of the first few hours he spent in Newgate.

"Now, old fellow," said one of the turnkeys, "I'm not to be very far off, in case you should happen to want to say anything; and if you give a rap at the door, I'll come to you."

"In case I want to say anything?" said Todd.

"Yes, to be sure. What, are you asleep?"

"Am I asleep?"

"Why, he's gone a little bit out of his mind," said the blacksmith, as he gathered up his tools to be gone.

The turnkey shook his head.

"Are you quite sure you have made a tight job of that?"

"Sure? Ay, that I am. If he gets out of them, put me in 'em, that's all. Oh, no! It would take—let me see—it would take about half a dozen of him to twist out o' that suit of armour. They are just about the best we have in the old stone jug."

"Good."

"Yes, they are good."

"I mean very well. And now Mr. Sweeney Todd, we will leave you to your own reflections, old boy, and much good may they do you. Good-night, old fellow. I always says good-night to the prisoners, cos it has a tender

sort o' sound, and disposes of 'em to sleep. It's kind o' me, but I always was tender-hearted, as any little chick, I was."

Bang went the cell door, and its triple locks were shot into their hoops. Todd was alone.

He had sat down upon a stool that was in the cell; and that stool, with a sort of bench fastened to the wall, was the only furniture it contained; and there he sat for about half an hour, during which time one of the most extraordinary changes that ever took place in the face of any human being, took place in his.

It seemed as if the wear and tear of years had been concentrated into minutes; and in that short space of time he passed from a middle aged, to be an old man.

Then reflection came!

"Newgate!" he cried as he sprang to his feet.

The chains rattled and clanked together.

"Chains—Newgate—a cell—death! Found out at last! At the moment of my triumph—defeated—detected! Newgate—chains—death!"

He fell back upon the stool again, and sat for the space of about two minutes in perfect silence. Then he sprang up again with such a wild yell of rage and mental agony, that not only the cell, but the whole of that portion of the prison, echoed again with it.

The turnkey opened a small wicket in the door, which when it was opened from without, still was defended by iron bars across it, and peering into the cell, he said—

"Hilloa! What now?"

"Hilloa!" shouted Todd. "Air—air!"

"Air? Why what do you mean by gammoning a fellow in that sort o' way for, eh? Haven't you got lots o' air? Well, of all the unreasonable coves as ever I comed across, you is the worstest. Be quiet, will you?"

"No—no! Death—death! Give me the means of instant death. I am going mad—mad—mad!"

"Oh, no yer ain't. It's only yer first few hours in the stone-jug that has comed over you a little, that's all, old fellow. You'll soon pick up, and behave yourself like any other christian. All you have got to do is never to mind, and then it's nothink at all, old chap."

Clap went shut the little wicket door again.

"Help! Help!" shouted Todd. "Take these irons off me. It is only a dream after all. Back, back you grinning fiends—why do you look at me when you know that it is not real? No—no, it cannot be, you know that it cannot be real."

"Be quiet will you?" shouted the turnkey.

"Keep off, I say. All is well. Mrs. Lovett dead—quite dead. The boy to die too. The house in a blaze—all is well arranged. Why do you mock and joke at me?"

"Well, I never!" said the turnkey. "I do begin to think now that he's getting queer in the upper story. I have heard of its driving some of 'em mad to be bowled out when they didn't expect it, more 'special when it's a hanging affair. I wonder what he will say next? He's a regular rum un, he is."

"What have I done?" shouted Todd. "What have I done? Nothing—nothing. The dead tell no tales. All is safe—quite safe. The grave is a good secret keeper. I think Tobias is dead too—why not? Mrs. Lovett is dead. This is not Newgate. These are not chains. It is only the nightmare. Ha! ha! ha! It is only the nightmare—I can laugh now!"

"Oh, can you?" said the turnkey. "It's rather an odd sort o' laugh though, to my thinking. Howsomdever, there's no rule agin grinning, so you can go on at it as long as you like."

"Mercy!" suddenly shrieked Todd, and then down he fell upon the floor of the cell, and lay quite still. The turnkey looked curiously in at him, through the little grating.

"Humph!" he said, "I must go and report him to the Governor, and he will do whatsomdever he likes about him; but I suppose as they will send the doctor to him, and all that ere sort o' thing, for it won't do to let him slip out o' the world and quite cheat the gallows; oh dear no."

Muttering these and similar remarks to himself, the turnkey went, as he was bound in duty to do upon any very extraordinary conduct upon the part of any prisoner in his department, to report what Todd was about to the Governor.

"Ah!" said that functionary, the surgeon, "and I will soon come to him. I fully expected we should have some trouble with that man. It really is too bad, that when people come into the prison, they will not be quiet. It would be just as well for them, and much more comfortable for me."

"Werry much, sir," said the turnkey.

"Well—well, he shall be attended to."

"Werry good, sir."

The turnkey went back and took up his post again outside Todd's door, and in the course of ten minutes or so, without making the least hurry of the subject, the Governor and the jail surgeon arrived and entered the cell.

Todd was picked up, and then it was found that he had struck his head against the stone floor, and so produced a state of insensibility, but whether he had done it on purpose or by accident, they could come to no opinion.

"Lay him on the bench," said the surgeon, "I can do nothing with him. He will come to himself again in a little while, I daresay, and be all right again in the morning."

"He seems really, indeed, to be a very troublesome man," said the Governor to the surgeon.

"Very likely. Have you a mind for a game of cribbage to-night, Governor? I suppose this fellow will hang?"

"Yes, I don't mind a game. Yes, they will tuck him up."

With this they left Todd's cell, and the turnkey closed the door, and made the highly philosophical remark to himself of—

"Werry good."

Todd remained until the morning in a state of insensibility, and when he awakened from it he was very much depressed in strength indeed. He lay for about two hours gazing on the ceiling of his cell, and then the door was opened, and the turnkey appeared with a bason of milk-and-water and a lump of coarse bread.

"Breakfast!" he cried.

Todd glared at him.

"Breakfast; don't you understand that, old cock? However, it's all one to me. There it is—take it or leave it."

Todd did not speak, and the not over luxurious meal was placed on the table, or rather upon the end of the bench upon which he lay, and which served the purpose of a table.

The moment Todd heard the door of the cell closed behind the turnkey, he rose from his recumbent posture, and, although he staggered when he got to his feet, he seized the bason, and at once, without tasting any of its contents, broke it against the corner of the bench to fragments.

"I shall elude them yet!" he said. "They think they have me in their toils —but I shall elude them yet!"

He selected a long jagged piece of the broken bason, and dragging down his cravat with one hand, he was upon the very point of plunging it into his throat with the other, when the turnkey sprang into the cell.

Todd In Newgate, Tries To Commit Suicide.

Todd In Newgate, Tries To Commit Suicide.

"Hold a bit!" he cried. "We don't allow that sort of thing here with any of our customers. You should have thought of those games before you got into the stone jug!"

With one powerful blow, the turnkey struck the piece of the broken bason from the hand of Todd, and with another he felled him to the floor.

"None o' your nonsense," he said; and then he carefully collected the pieces of the broken bason.

"Why should you grudge me the means of death," said Todd, "when you know that you have brought me here among you to die?"

"Contrary to rules."

"In mercy, I ask you only to give me leave to take my own life, for I have failed in the object of my living."

"Contrary to rules."

The turnkey left the cell, then, as coolly as if nothing had happened, and carefully locked the door again, while he went to report the attempted suicide of the prisoner to the proper quarter.

Foiled, then, in every way, Todd looked round the cell for some means of ridding himself of his life and his troubles together; but he found none. He then paced the cell to and fro like a maniac, as he muttered to himself —

"All lost—lost—lost—all lost! Foiled, too, at the moment when I thought myself most secure—when I had made every preparation to leave England for ever! Oh, dolt that I was, not to have done so long ago, when I had half—ay, when I had only a quarter of the sum that I should this day have fled with! In my dreams I have seen myself as I am now, and the sight has shaken me, but I never thought to be so in reality. Is there any hope for me? What do they know?—what can they know?"

Upon these questions, Todd paused in his uneasy walk in the cell, and sat down upon the low stool to think. His head rested upon his breast, and he was profoundly still.

CHAPTER CXX.
A LUNCHEON AT SIR RICHARD BLUNT'S.—THE DOG AND HIS OLD FRIEND.

We willingly leave Todd to his own reflections upon the disastrous state of his affairs, while we solicit the attention of our readers to the private house and office of Sir Richard Blunt again, in Craven Street.

The worthy magistrate had quite a party to lunch on that day, and he had fixed the hour as eleven when he wished to see his friends.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I expect two old friends here this morning."

"Old friends?" said everybody, in surprise.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Shall I admit him, sir?"

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

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

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

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

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

"In course he would, sir," said the ostler. "In course he would. Lord bless you, gemmen, if this here dog as I calls Pison, cos why he was pisoned, was only to get hold of Todd, I would not give much for his chances. You

sees, gemmen, as I have kept him in good condition."

"He does look well," said the captain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"They could not be worse," said the captain.

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

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

"Not a doubt of it."

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

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

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

"It is indeed, madam."

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

"It was, indeed, my friend," Sir Richard said.

"Yes, you may say that, my dear, sir—you may say that. With my very delicate stomach, I should have been as good as done brown if I had had 'em. I should have fallen a victim to the wild beasteses, the very next time as I went a-near 'em; and all I can say is, as I shall be uncommon glad to show these creatures to any of this company, as will come to the Tower at feeding time."

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

"I'll come and bring Pison."

"No, will you though?" said Ben.

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

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

"Oh, I'll hold him."

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

"Won't I!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"She is a dreadful woman."

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

CHAPTER CXXI.
TODD IS COMMITTED FOR TRIAL, AND EXPECTS THE WORST.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Rather, Sir Richard."

"Any news?"

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

"What do you mean?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"She is saved!" gasped Todd.

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

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

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

"Sir, I offer myself as king's evidence. Do you understand me?"

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

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

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

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

"Now, madam, the coach is ready," said a turnkey.

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

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

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

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

Of course every precaution had been taken to prevent the mob from wreaking their vengeance upon the criminals, which they were well-disposed to do. A number of people were knocked down and some of the

officers rather roughly treated; but the result was, that Todd and Mrs. Lovett were got into the office in safety.

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

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

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

Todd And Mrs. Lovett At Bow Street Police Office.

Todd And Mrs. Lovett At Bow Street Police Office.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Dolt—Idiot—idiot! and I did suspect it once!"

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

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

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

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

"No," was the brief response.

The same question was put to Mrs. Lovett, but she did not answer, and the death-like paleness of her countenance sufficiently testified that it was out of her power to do so. In another moment, overcome by dread and chagrin, she fainted.

"Is she dead?" said Todd.

No one replied to the question, and he added—

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

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

Todd was asked if he had anything to say.

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

"The Roman Catholics?"

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

"And is this your defence?"

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

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

"It's—it's truth," said Todd, "that staggers your worship."

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

"Murder of whom?"

"Charles James Thornhill."

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

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

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

CHAPTER CXXII.
A LARGE PARTY VISITS BIG BEN AND THE LIONS IN THE TOWER.

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

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

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

Tobias And Minna Rejoice At The Capture Of Todd And Mrs. Lovett.

Tobias And Minna Rejoice At The Capture Of Todd And Mrs. Lovett.

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

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

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

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

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

"And my Johanna to me," said Ingestrie.

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

"Stop—stop!" cried Sir Richard.

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

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

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

"Agreed—agreed," said everybody.

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

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

"What is that?—A wherry coming towards us from the Temple-stairs," said the colonel.

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

"It's Hector!"

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

"Barge a-hoi!" cried the captain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Very good," said the colonel smiling. "Come on board."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Do you hear that, Mr. Ingestrie?" said Arabella.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You wait, Miss Arabella," he cried. "I'll come for you."

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

"Put her down—put her down! Ben!—Ben! She'd rather walk. Put her down!"

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

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

"But I can walk, Ben."

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

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

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

"Where's the t'other little one?" said Ben.

"I am here," cried Arabella, laughing.

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

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

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

"But we are none of us hungry," said Johanna.

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

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

"Very much worse," laughed the colonel.

Ben now led the way along a narrow arched passage, and through two rather gloomy corridors to a stone room, with a grand arched roof, in the ancient fortress; and there, sure enough, they found the little snack, as

he called it, laid out very nicely for their reception.

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

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

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

"Enough!" cried Sir Richard. "Why, there's enough for fifty people."

"There's almost enough for a regiment!" said the colonel.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER CXXIII.
THE BEASTS AT THE TOWER.

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

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

"No—no!" was the general response.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh, nothing at all."

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

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

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

"Well, I hardly know," said Ben. "But one day we had a young chap—a new warder—who came here out of the country, and he said he had had a dream the night before he came that he should be devoured by a wolf. Now we hadn't a wolf in the Tower collection at all, so, in course, we all laughed at him, and told him he would have to go to foreign parts to bring his dream true. But you'd hardly believe it, that very day afore the young fellow had been one hour in the Tower, there comes a boat to the stairs, with an officer, and he asks to see the keeper of the beasts, and he says to him—'My ship is lying at the Nore, and we have brought from Friesland one of the largest wolves as ever was known for the Tower collection,' says he, 'and he's in a large bag we made on purpose to hold him in the boat.' Well, when the young warder heard this he said —'That's my wolf. He has come for me!' and off he set a trembling like anything. The wolf was brought in in a coal sack, and we got him into an empty den that was shut up with a chain and a staple only; but as all the fastenings were out of his reach, he could not interfere with it if he was ever so cunning. Well, night came, and we all took it easy, and went to bed; but in the middle of the night what should we hear but the most horrid howling that ever you could think of, and when we ran to the Lion Tower, where it came from, we found the iron door of the wolf's den open, and the young warder lying, half in and half out of it, stone dead. The wolf had had him by the throat."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No—no—no!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER CXXIV.
RETURNS TO NEWGATE, AND THE PROCEEDINGS OF MRS. LOVETT.

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

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

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

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

"The chaplain will come," was the reply.

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

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

"Yes, he will do much better."

"Very good."

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

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

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

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

"What for?"

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

"You are afraid that I should escape?"

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

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

"You may make yourself easy upon that score."

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

"And your own?"

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

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

"I should presume so."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Most certainly."

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

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

Mrs. Lovett Makes Her Confession To The Governor Of Newgate.

Mrs. Lovett Makes Her Confession To The Governor Of Newgate.

"Have you any more to add?" said the magistrate.

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

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

"Very well."

"You are aware that it will be used against you."

"And against Todd?"

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

"Then I am satisfied, sir."

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

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

"No doubt, sir. You may depend upon our keeping a good watch upon her. It is quite impossible she can do herself a mischief. There is literally nothing in the cell for her to convert to any such use; besides, I doubt if really great criminals ever have the courage to die by their own hands."

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

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

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

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

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

She paused, for the man was at the wicket.

"Do you want anything?" he said.

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

"Humph! I thought I heard you speaking."

"I was only rehearsing my defence."

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

"Innocence, my friend, should be composed."

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

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

These words were spoken so low, that if the turnkey had been listening with all his might on the other side of the door he could not possibly have overheard them. The recent visit of that functionary, if the peep

through the little opening in the door could be called a visit, had taught Mrs. Lovett to be more cautious how she trusted the air of her cell with the secret resolves of her teeming brain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER CXXV.
MRS. LOVETT SEES SOME TWILIGHT SPECTRES IN HER CELL.

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

A flash of light came into the place.

"Who is that?" she cried.

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

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

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

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

"Indeed!"

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

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

"Why, in a manner of speaking, a guinea is worth twenty-one shillings here, just the same as it is outside, ma'am."

"Then how much will purchase my liberty?"

The turnkey shook his head.

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

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

"Oh, yes—yes."

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

"Your humble servant, ma'am. I only wish Newgate was full of such as you."

"Ah, I hear a footstep. Who is it that is about to intrude upon me to-night?"

"It's the chaplain."

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

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

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

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

"Depend upon me."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That will do very well," said Mrs. Lovett.

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

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

"Can you not leave me a light?"

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

"Oh, no. It will do very well. Good night."

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

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

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

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

She pronounced these words with a shudder, for even she could not at such a moment feel quite at ease. She held in her hands the means of death, and yet she hesitated—not that she had the remotest intention of foregoing her fixed resolve; but feeling that at any moment she had it in her power now to carry it out, she lingered there upon the shores of life.

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

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Lovett In Newgate.—Is Conscience-Stricken.

Mrs. Lovett In Newgate.—Is Conscience-Stricken.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Hush!" she said. "Hush!"

"What's the matter?" said the turnkey.

"Nothing—nothing."

"But I heard you calling out about something."

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

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

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

fancied monsters of the brain which had disturbed her.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER CXXVI.
SWEENEY TODD IS PLACED UPON HIS TRIAL.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I am ready," said Todd.

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

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

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

Todd Goes To Take His Trial.

Todd Goes To Take His Trial.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Do you wish to say anything?"

"Yes. Where is *she*?"

"Mrs. Lovett do you mean?"

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

"She will not be here."

"Not here? How—why?"

"She is dead."

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

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

The governor touched him on the shoulder.

"Plead to the indictment," he said.

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

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

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

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

"My lord, and gentlemen of the jury—

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

"Where is she?" said Todd.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I am done," said Todd, "but it is false to say that she is dead. That fiend cannot die. She is a devil, I tell you all, and if there be any here who fancy that she is dead, I tell them that they are mistaken. She cannot be

killed. I know that well. Go on with what you call your proceedings; I have no more to say to you."

CHAPTER CXXVII.
THE TRIAL OF SWEENEY TODD CONTINUED.

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

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

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

"My lords, and gentlemen of the jury—

"If this were only some ordinary everyday proceeding, I should not sit so calmly under the indecorous interruptions of the prisoner at the bar; but when I feel, in common with all here present, that that person has so

great a stake as his life upon the issue of this investigation, I am disposed in all charity to allow a latitude of action, that otherwise would not, and could not, be endured.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Keep off the dog—keep off the dog, I say!"

"Bow!—wow!—wow!" barked Hector again.

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

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

"A witness?"

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

"Will anybody keep him quiet?"

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

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

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

"Oh, very well. Pray proceed, Mr. Attorney."

The Attorney-General then resumed.

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

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

"Gentlemen, the captain of the ship and Colonel Jeffery, both became very anxious concerning the fate of Mr. Thornhill, and they made every inquiry. They questioned the prisoner at the bar, who at once admitted that he had shaved him, but stated that he had left his shop when that operation was over. The captain of the Star was compelled to go to Bristol with his ship, but Colonel Jeffery, in conjunction with a friend, pressed his inquiries about Mr. Thornhill without success. The matter appeared to be involved in the most profound mystery, and the only hope of an elucidation of it, consisted in the probability that such a valuable piece of property as the String of Pearls would be sure to turn

up some day in some one's possession. Gentlemen, it did so turn up. It appeared that at Hammersmith resided a Mr. John Mundell, who lent money upon securities, and it will be deposed in evidence, that one evening the prisoner at the bar, magnificently attired, and in a handsome coach, went to this Mr. Mundell, and pawned a string of pearls for some thousands of pounds.

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

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

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

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

"Gentlemen, Sir Richard Blunt found that almost every vault was full of the fresh remains of the dead. He found that into old coffins, the tenants of which had mouldered to dust, there had been thrust fresh bodies with scarcely any flesh remaining upon them, but yet sufficient to produce the stench in the church, by the effluvia arising from them, and finding its way into the pews. In one vault, too, was found the contents of which

were too horrid for description; suffice it that it contained what butchers, when speaking of slaughtered animals, call the offal. The stench in St. Dunstan's Church was no longer a mystery.

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

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

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

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

A thrill of horror pervaded the court at this announcement.

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

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

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

"No! no!"

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

CHAPTER CXXVIII.
TODD'S TRIAL CONTINUES, AND GOES ALL AGAINST HIM.

The Attorney-General sat down.

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

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

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

This witness's deposition was very simple and concise.

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

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

The hat was produced.

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

"Whose hat is it, or was it?"

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

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

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

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

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

"Be it so," said Todd, gloomily.

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

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

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

"Indeed. Then he might have sold this one."

"He might, certainly."

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

"Of that I can say nothing."

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

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

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

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

"Pison, my lord."

"But what is Pison?"

"He means Poison."

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

"It's all the same," said the groom. "Pison is my way, and the t'other is yourn, that's all!"

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

"I don't know. When I found the dog, in a wery bad state indeed, it was gone."

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

"Five hundred?"

"Yes, or a thousand."

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

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

"I shouldn't like to swear it."

"Very well, that will do."

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

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

"I knew Mr. Thornhill, and much regretted his loss. In company with Mr. Fletcher I went to Todd's shop to make some inquiry about him, to the effect that he had been shaved there, and had then left. I did not feel

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

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

"It is."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I had that pleasure."

"You had? Have you not now?"

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

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

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

"I did."

"What, colonel, did again? Is she married?"

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

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

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

"I do. He is a resident in my house."

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

"I will."

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

"I will swear that he is not mad, and—"

"Come, sir, I want an answer, yes or no."

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh, very well. Then I am done."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER CXXIX.
THE TRIAL OF SWEENEY TODD CONTINUED.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"This, however, was only suspicion, and I could take no advantage of it, unless something else developed itself likewise; but that was not long in happening. My attention was directed to the peculiar odour in St.

Dunstan's Church, and from the moment that it was so, I in my own mind connected it with Sweeney Todd, and the disappearances of the persons who had so unaccountably been lost in the immediate neighbourhood of Fleet Street. In the midst of all this then, I had a formal application made to me concerning the disappearance of Mr. Francis Thornhill, who had been clearly traced to the shop of the prisoner at the bar, and never seen by any one to leave it.

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

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

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

"Measures were taken to prevent any more murders, by some persons in my pay always following any one into the shop; and then, when the evidence was all ready by the finding and identification of Mr. Francis Thornhill's leg bone, I took measures to apprehend the prisoner at the bar. I shall, of course, be happy to answer any questions that may be asked of me."

The Attorney-General then spoke, saying—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"How was it then that after you felt convinced of the guilt of the prisoner at the bar, as you state that you were, although I think upon very insufficient grounds, that you did not at once arrest him? Does it not

seem very strange that you permitted him for some weeks to go on just as usual?"

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

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

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

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

"I do not prosecute."

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

"You can conclude so."

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

"Not exactly," said the judge.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I can. It was the thigh-bone of Mr. Francis Thornhill."

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

"I will, sir. Mr. Thornhill met with an accident of a tedious and painful nature. The external condyle or projection on the outer end of the thigh-bone, which makes part of the knee joint, was broken off, and there was a diagonal fracture about three inches higher up upon the bone. I had the sole care of the case, and although a cure was effected, it was not without considerable distortion of the bone, and general disarrangement

of the parts adjacent. From my frequent examination I was perfectly well acquainted with the case, and I can swear that the bone in the hands of the jury was the one so broken, and to which I attended."

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

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

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

"Never a precisely similar one."

"But you have heard of such cases?"

"Certainly."

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

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

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

"Certainly not."

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

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

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

CHAPTER CXXX.
TODD ENTERTAINS SOME HOPES OF AN ACQUITTAL.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Attorney-General rose again, and said—

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

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

"My lord, and gentlemen of the jury—

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

"Gentlemen, the prisoner at the bar is clearly and distinctly charged with the murder of one Francis Thornhill, and instead of any evidence, near or remote, fixing that deed upon him, we have nothing but long stories about vaults, and bad odours in churches, and moveable floor-boards, and chairs standing on their heads, and vaults, and secret passages, and pork pies! Really, gentlemen of the jury, I do think that the manner in which this prosecution has been got up against my virtuous and pious client, is an outrage to your common-sense."

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

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

"In the first place, we are told that a number of very respectable men went out from their various respectable houses, and never went back again. Pray, what has that to do with the death of one Francis Thornhill? Then we are told that the respectable men went to get shaved; and then

that Sir Richard Blunt had a shave no less than eight times at the prisoner's shop, and yet here he is quite alive and well to give his evidence here to-day, and no one will say that Sir Richard Blunt is not a respectable man. Then we have a bad smell in the church of St. Dunstan's. Really, gentlemen of the jury, you might as well say that the prisoner at the bar committed felony, because this court was not well ventilated.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Well, gentlemen of the jury, when he was shaved, and after my client had had to turn this dog twice out of his shop, Mr. Thornhill left and went towards Fleet Market. The prisoner watched him from his door, and actually saw him begin fighting with a porter at the top of the market; and then as another person came in to be shaved, the prisoner at the bar returned into his shop to attend to that customer, and saw no

more of Mr. Thornhill. In the course of a quarter of an hour, however, the dog pushed the door of the shop open, and brought in a hat in his mouth, but the prisoner turned him out again, and that is all he knows of the transaction.

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

"Gentlemen, it is for my client a most unfortunate thing that a person named Lovett, who kept the pie-shop in Bell Yard, is not now in the land of the living. If she were so, there is no doubt but that she would have told some true tale of how the vaults beneath the old church connected with her shop, and so have cleared the prisoner at the bar of all participation in her crimes.

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

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

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

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

"I waive my right of reply, my lord," said the Attorney-General.

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

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

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

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

"Gentlemen of the jury, the case is in your hands."

This was a very short summing up, but the bar quite understood it to mean that the guilt of the prisoner was so clear and transparent, that it was not at all necessary for the judge to go elaborately through the

evidence, but merely as a matter of form, leave the facts in evidence to the jury.

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

The clerk of the arraigns rose, and spoke—

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

"Guilty!" said the foreman.

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

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

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

CHAPTER CXXXI.
TODD MAKES AN ATTEMPT UPON HIS OWN LIFE.

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

The judge spoke.

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

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

"Death! death!—Did you say death?"

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

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

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

"Have you finished?" said the judge.

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

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

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

"Have you finished?"

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

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

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

"But I have said I did not do it. I am not guilty."

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

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

"What is it?"

"I am mad!"

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

"Mad!" said the judge.

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

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

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

"Mad! Mad!" shrieked Todd again.

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

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

Todd dropped his arms.

The judge put on the black cap, and continued—

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

"False! False!" cried Todd.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It is for your private ear."

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

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

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

"Is it, really!"

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

Todd, On His Trial, Attempts To Kill Sir Richard Blunt.

Todd, On His Trial, Attempts To Kill Sir Richard Blunt.

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

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

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

"I am perfectly unhurt."

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

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

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

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

"My lord," said a counsel at the table, rising, "there was a very similar case about five years since, when a notorious criminal attacked a witness for the prosecution with a fork, and it appeared afterwards that as he

was brought through some of the day-rooms of Newgate to the bar, he had hastily snatched it up from a table that he passed without the officers noticing him."

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

"It may be so my lord," said the Governor.

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

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

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

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

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

It was not thought advisable by the prison authorities to take Todd back to the same cell from which they had brought him. It was an idea of the Governor, and by no means a bad one, that desperate criminals were

caused to change their cells now and then, as it baffled and cut up completely any combination they might in their own minds have made for an attempted escape; so Todd found himself in a new place.

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

"It's quite light enough for you," growled a turnkey.

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

"The fetters hurt me," said Todd.

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

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

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

"And a good job too."

"And you think to hang me?"

"Rather!"

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

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

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

Todd's Second Attempt At Suicide In The Condemned Cell At Newgate.

Todd's Second Attempt At Suicide In The Condemned Cell At Newgate.

CHAPTER CXXXII.
TODD MAKES AN ACQUAINTANCE IN NEWGATE, AND TRIES AN ESCAPE.

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

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

Todd rested his head upon his hands, and thought.

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

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

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

"I hope he will discharge you all," said Todd.

"Do you?"

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

"Well, you are a nice article, I must say."

"Bring me two candles, and pens, ink, and paper."

The turnkey stared with astonishment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Todd ground his teeth together in his rage.

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

His chains rattled upon his limbs.

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

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

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

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

"Ten," he said. "Ten already. Of a truth I did not think it was so late. I must be quick. Others have escaped from Newgate, and why should not I? The attempt will and shall be made; and who knows but that it may be

successful? A man may do much when he is resolved that he will do all he wishes or die."

Todd filed away at the chains.

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

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

With a feeling of exhaustion, he paused.

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

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

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

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

"This is something," he said, "Nay, it is much, very much indeed. I feel it, and accept it as a kind of earnest of success. Where is the man—where are the two or three men, that will dare to stand in my desperate way,

when I have one of these files in each hand, and are free from fetters. They will need be mad to do it. Such an amount of zeal is not to be found. No, they will step aside and let me pass."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Still Todd hesitated what he should do, notwithstanding the hypothesis regarding the noise he heard appeared so very probable. He was resolved to spend a little more time in listening, for he felt that once to commit

himself would possibly be to spoil his own chances of escape. He kept his ear to the stone of the wall, then which shook more and more each passing moment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER CXXXIII.
THE PROGRESS OF THE OPERATIONS TO ESCAPE FROM NEWGATE.

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

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

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

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

"Oh, no—no—no—no."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Very kind of her," said Todd.

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

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

Todd did the same thing, and looked at him.

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

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

"Then you certainly never looked in a glass."

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

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

"What is your name?"

"Lupin they used to call me. The Reverend Josiah Lupin."

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

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

"They call me Todd."

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

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

"Ha! ha!" said Todd.

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

expected such a scrape."

"Ha! ha!" said Todd.

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

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

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

"Perfectly."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, a chisel."

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

"Certainly not," said Todd.

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

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

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

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

"But its fall will make an alarm," said Todd.

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

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

All was still.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Quite, quite."

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

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

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

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

The Two Murderers, Todd And Lupin, Escaping From The Cell Of Newgate.

The Two Murderers, Todd And Lupin, Escaping From The Cell Of Newgate.

They both now stood in a narrow vaulted passage, and then they paused again for several minutes to listen if any noise in the prison gave intimation that any one was stirring; but everything was perfectly still,

and so death-like was the silence, that, but that they well knew to the contrary, they might have supposed that they were the only living persons within that gloomy pile of building.

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

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

"They ought," said Todd. "We will pray for her."

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

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

"Then you are," said Todd, "a professional—"

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

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

CHAPTER CXXXIV.
THE ESCAPE, AND THE RETREAT IN CAEN WOOD, HAMPSTEAD.

While Mr. Lupin talked, he did not lose time, but he was working away at the lock of the door at the end of the passage. After a few moments there was a crackling sound, and then the lock yielded to the exertion of Mr. Lupin, and went back into its home. The door, with a wheezing sound, slowly opened.

"All's right," whispered Lupin. "The less we say now, Todd, the better, for our voices will go farther now that we shall be clear of this passage. Come on. Follow me!"

They both emerged into the night air; and crouching down, Lupin ran along the little yard in which they were, and which was not above half-a-dozen yards across. He paused at a door, and then suddenly starting away from it, he muttered—

"It is not this one. Ah! this is it! Stand quite close up against the wall, and then there will be the less chance of any one seeing you. I must work away at this door."

"Where does it lead to?" whispered Todd.

"To the chapel."

Todd screwed himself up into the smallest space that he possibly could against the wall, close to the door, while Lupin tried to open it. That door for more than ten minutes baffled him. Probably that fact was owing in

some degree to the circumstance of his being in the dark, for of course, before emerging from the vaulted passage, he had thought it prudent to extinguish the little light he had.

"It baffles you," said Todd, in a voice of great anxiety.

"As yet, yes. No. It is open."

Todd breathed more freely.

"Come in," said Lupin. "Come in. We have done wonders as yet, my friend, and we will do wonders yet, I think, if Providence only looks with a gracious—There I go again. When shall I forget that chapel, I wonder?"

"It don't matter," said Todd. "I used to find a little religion answer very well myself."

"Not a doubt of it. Now, then, that the door is fast, we may muster up a light again."

With the aid of one of his matches, Lupin again illuminated the little wax end of the candle, and then Todd found that he was in a small kind of vestibule from which a green baize door led directly into the chapel. In fact, that was the entrance by which the lower class of offenders confined in Newgate were brought to the chapel on Sundays. The little building looked much larger by the faint light of that one candle than it really was, and Todd glared around him with a feeling of terror, as he had not felt since he had left his cell. Perhaps, after all, a good deal of that was owing to the low temperature of the chapel, that lent a chill to his system.

"Look at that seat," said Lupin, pointing to one. "Do you know what it is?"

"Only a seat," said Todd. "Is there anything particular in it?"

"Nothing, except the kind of interest it might have for you, as being the one upon which the condemned prisoners sit, on the Sunday previous to their execution, that is all."

Todd turned aside with a shudder.

"Enough," he said. "Enough. That is enough. Let us get on, and not waste time in idle talking about such idle matters as these. I do not feel very well."

"And I," said Lupin, "would give a few bright pieces out of those hundreds that you have hidden, for a glass of brandy. But that's not to be thought of now. This is a door that leads from the chapel to the Governor's house, through which the parson, and the Governor and Sheriffs come on the occasion of Sunday service here. It is by that we must attempt an escape in this place."

Sweeney Todd, and Mr. Lupin looked like two spectres, as they crept noiselessly through the chapel of Newgate; but Lupin appeared to know perfectly well the route which it was necessary for him to take, and he soon went up three small steps, and applied his ear to the panel of a door to listen, as he said—

"Through here lies our route."

"Is all still?" said Todd.

"Quite. I don't believe, except ourselves, there is any one up and about in Newgate except a couple of lazy fellows in the vestibule; but we are too far off them to be in any danger of their overhearing us. This door will not give any trouble. Ah!"

"What is the matter?"

"It is bolted on the other side."

"Then we are foiled?"

"Not at all. It will take us a little time to unbolt it, that's all. Hand me the chisel."

Todd handed it to him; and then holding the light for Lupin, the latter set to work upon the panelling of the door, to cut away sufficient of it to enable him to get his head through, to draw back the bolts, one of which was at the top of the door and another at the bottom of it.

The door, though, was not built for strength, for it was scarcely imagined that it would ever be attacked, so that the panelling was only of an ordinary character; and as the chisel was a good one, and Mr. Lupin was tolerably expert in its use, the chips from the wood soon began noiselessly to fall about him. He worked in a circle, so that when he should get fairly through the panel, there would be quite space enough for him to get his arm through, and unfasten both the bolts; and this he completed in about ten minutes.

"I should never have got on without you," said Todd. "The only notion I had of the affair, was to try and fight my way out of the prison, and if I fell in doing so, I was no worse off than I should be on Monday morning —or, indeed, rather better, for I could not endure the agony of waiting for death."

"They would not have killed you."

"They must."

"Nay, they will go through fire and water here, and suffer anything, rather than that a man should escape the gallows. They would have flung themselves upon you, and overpowered you by numbers, and on Monday morning, if you had a breath of life left in you, you would have been dragged out to death."

Todd shuddered.

"And you so innocent, too," added Lupin. "But it is the innocent that in this world, verily, are chastened alway."

"You are getting into your old habit of preaching again," said Todd, roughly.

"So I am. I am much obliged to you, my friend, to put me in mind of it. Very much obliged. I was for a moment preaching; but here is the door open, and now I beg that you will tread as though you trod upon a mine, for we do not know what persons in this portion of this confounded building may be upon the alert."

"Oh, that we were only in the open air!" said Todd.

"Hush! hush!"

The villain Lupin, almost as bad in his way as Todd was in his, now shaded the little light with his hands, and crept on slowly and cautiously, until he reached the staircase, which was nicely empanelled, and up that he slowly took his way. Before he got to the top of it, he blew out the light, and waiting there until Todd was close to him, he said, in the smallest possible whisper—

"Follow me, and be careful, I am afraid the light might gleam through some key-hole, and betray us. Come on, and recollect that a slip or a stumble may be fatal. Think that the rope is about your neck."

"I will," said Todd. "I will. I almost seem to feel it actually. Oh, yes, I will be very careful."

"Hush! hush! Are you mad to go on talking so?"

Todd said no more, and Lupin crept on until he got right to the top of the stairs. Then holding by a balustrade that was continued along the landing, he reached the head of another flight of steps, which led directly down to the hall or passage of the Governor's house. Lupin was terribly afraid that Todd would come upon these second stairs at unawares, and stumble down some of them, so he waited at the head of them, until Todd touched him, and then he whispered the one word, "Stairs."

"Yes," replied Todd, and then Lupin commenced the descent, followed by his trembling companion, and for the matter of that, Lupin himself shook now like an aspen leaf.

The steps were fourteen in number, and then, by the feel of a mat at the foot of them, Lupin was satisfied that he had actually gained the hall of the Governor's house. Todd was close behind him.

"Stop!" whispered Lupin, and Todd stopped as suddenly as though he had been some piece of machinery that could be in a moment arrested in its progress.

Lupin well knew now that without a light it would be folly to attempt opening the door of the Governor's house, which, as a matter of course, was well secured; and very reluctantly he lit another match, and ignited the wax candle-end again. He placed Todd in such a position on the mat at the foot of the stairs, that his bulky tall form acted as a screen against the rays of the light ascending the staircase, and then, with something of his old nervousness and abject fear of manner and expression, he narrowly scrutinized the door.

"Curses on all these precautions!" he muttered. "We may be detained here until morning."

In good truth, the door of the Governor's house was very well fastened up, and Mr. Lupin might well feel a little staggered at the sight of it. A chain that was up across it, he easily removed, and the bolts offered no obstacles; but what was the most serious consisted of a small, but exquisitely made lock that was on the door, and the key of which, no doubt, at such an hour was under the Governor's pillow.

Todd at that moment would have given anything to be able just to say—

"How are you getting on?" but in such a place, with, for all he knew to the contrary, the Governor of Newgate within a dozen yards of him, he dared not open his lips.

And now Lupin brought all his old skill to bear upon that one little lock upon the Governor's door, and yet it resisted him. One five minutes' attempt to pick it was to him pretty conclusive evidence that it was not to be done.

He had the chisel in his pocket, and in despair he inserted it between the door and the post. It broke short off by the handle. Lupin uttered a groan, which was echoed by Todd, and then they both stood glaring at each other in solemn silence. Todd crept towards Lupin, and leaning forward he whispered faintly—

"It can't be done?"

"No," said Lupin, "that lock stops us."

"Lost—lost!" said Todd. "We are lost, then?"

"Hush. Let me think. The key of this lock is with the Governor, of course. Now, Todd, you are a man of strong nerves, you know, or else it would have been quite impossible for you to have gone through life in the way you have done. What do you say to going and trying to get the key?"

"I—I?"

"Yes, to be sure. I have, up to this moment, you know, done all the work, and if this lock had not baffled me, I would have done the remainder cheerfully; but could you not take one of these files—the end of it is very sharp—and persuade the Governor to give up the key?"

"Kill him, you mean?"

"You may call it killing."

"If I thought it could be done with anything like a certainty of result, I would make no more of the life of the Governor than—than—"

Todd was at a loss for a simile, and Lupin helped him out of the difficulty by saying—

"Giving a man a clean shave for one penny, or eating a veal pie."

Todd nodded.

"Now, hark you," continued Lupin, speaking in the same very low whisper, indeed, that he had conducted the conversation in. "It is quite a maddening thing, you see, to find that there is nothing between us and liberty but this door. Every moment is of the greatest possible importance. Will you do it?"

"Are you mad?"

"No. I am quite sane, I confess, though that I have not the pluck to do it. You ought to be a man of courage. What is it to you, if you were to murder everybody in this house, so that you got this door open? That is the great object, the only object; and to you, you know, three or four more deaths will not make much consequence."

"My friend," said Todd, with a sickly smile, "I am afraid you believe the calumnies that have been heaped upon my innocent head. But, if nothing can be done, but what you say, I will make the attempt. There are two files, though, and they are equally sharp. Do you take one, and I will take the other."

"You want me with you?"

"I do, most, surely."

"Well—well; if it must be so, it must. I will come. Let us set about it at once, and—"

Before Mr. Lupin could say another word, there came a sharp rap at the door from the outside with the knocker; and so sudden and so utterly unexpected was the sound at such an hour, that Lupin and Todd fell on each other in their hurry to escape, they knew not where.

CHAPTER CXXXV.
THE CHASE THROUGH SMITHFIELD, AND THE MURDER.

They were afraid to speak, were those two murderers, as they now stood trembling in the passage of the Governor's house in Newgate. They could only be conscious of each other's presence by the hard breathing which their fears gave rise to, and as Lupin had extinguished the little light, the most intense darkness reigned around them.

Bang—bang—bang! went the knocker upon the door of the Governor's house again.

"Lost—lost!" said Todd.

If Lupin was not the most hardened villain of the two, he was certainly at that moment the most courageous. He aimed a blow at Todd in the dark to give effect to his admonition for silence; but it did not take effect. Todd, however, was quite still now, and in the course of a few moments the knock at the door was repeated a third time. Then Lupin whispered to Todd—

"Keep yourself up as close against the wall as you can. Some one will come to the door, and you can throttle whoever it is, while I take the key of the little lock from them."

"Yes," said Todd, faintly.

The word had hardly escaped his lips, when a flash of light from above came streaming down into the passage, and from each side of the door, close to the passage wall, against which they screwed themselves into as

small a compass as possible, they saw a man approaching.

The person who came to answer the knock at the Governor's door was evidently only just roused from sleep, for he was looking heavy, and yawning as he came. The candle he carried swayed to and fro in his hand, and it was very unlikely that he would see anything that was not remarkably close to his nose.

"Ah, dear me" he yawned. "Can't people come at reasonable times? Who'd be a Governor's clerk, I wonder, to—ah, dear!—get up at all hours of the night in Newgate. Ah, heigho!"

Mr. Lupin wanted to say only two words to Todd, and those were "Kill him;" but he was afraid even to whisper them, lest Todd should not be equally discreet in reply. He knew he could whisper softly enough; but he thought his companion might not be so accomplished in that particular, so he was silent.

Before the individual who had announced himself to be the Governor's clerk could get into the passage down the flight of stairs, the person on the outside of the door got impatient, and executed another rather startling rap.

"Oh, bother you," said the clerk. "I only wish you were at the bottom of the Thames. I'm coming, stupid; don't you see the light through the little bit of glass at the top of the door, that—ah, dear! how gapish I am—you keep hammering away there, as if you thought we were all deaf or stupid?"

The clerk was evidently wakening up, but as he carried the light right in front of his eyes, he had not the smallest chance of seeing either Mr. Todd or Lupin, and in that way he reached the passage, or hall it might be called from courtesy.

To be sure, how could he for one moment suspect to find two of the most notorious criminals in all Newgate snugly hidden in the hall? We must consider how very improbable such a thing was, before we blame the clerk for any imprudence in the matter.

The grand object of Lupin, who kept his sharp little ferret-looking eyes upon the clerk as he descended, was to note if he had a key with him at all; if he had, there could be no doubt of its being the key of the little lock that had so baffled his, Lupin's, attempts to open it, upon the door of the Governor's house. To his great satisfaction he saw that, dangling from the clerk's finger by a piece of tape, he did carry a key, and Lupin at once naturally concluded it was the one he wanted.

"Only just let me find out now," said the clerk, "that this is something about nothing, and won't I make a riot about it in the morning. To rouse a fellow out of his bed, it is really too bad, as if any kind of thing could not be just as well done in the day time as in the middle of night. Now stupid, who are you?"

These last words he addressed to the person outside, by placing his mouth close to the keyhole.

A voice responded something, the only recognisable word of which was "donkey."

"What do you say?" cried the clerk, again. "You are—a—a—donkey, do you say?"

"No," said the voice from the outside through the key-hole. "But you are."

"Oh, am I, you infernal vagabond? I'll soon let you know what's what, I will, you rascal."

With this the clerk began to open the door, and the moment he got the key in the little lock, so that Mr. Lupin was thoroughly aware it was the one he wanted, he sprung upon the unfortunate clerk, and dashing his head against the door, which was heavily plated with iron, he knocked him insensible in a moment.

To open the lock was the work of an instant, and the door creaked upon its hinges.

"Who are you?" said Lupin.

"A messenger from the Secretary of State," said the man on the outside, "and I shall report your insolence."

"Don't," said Lupin.

"Indeed, I shall."

"Then take that."

With the file he dealt him a frightful wound in the face, and then they both rolled down the whole flight of steps together, for Mr. Lupin had overbalanced himself with that blow. Todd sprang over them both, and gained the open street, just as a watchman who was opposite began to spring his rattle at seeing such a scuffle going on at the Governor's door. The messenger from the Secretary of State, notwithstanding his wound, grappled with Lupin, but that rascal got hold of him by his hair, and knocked his head against the pavement until he was quite dead. Then rising, he cried—

"Through Smithfield, Todd! Follow me."

"I will," said Todd, and off they both set, pursued by the single watchman, who had happened to be the sole witness to the whole affair, and who, finding himself outstripped by the two men, wisely stopped at the corner of Giltspur Street to spring his rattle, which he did with a vengeance that soon brought others to his assistance.

"An escape from Newgate!" the watchman kept crying—"An escape from Newgate! There they go—through Smithfield; two men, one very big and the other not so big! An escape from Newgate!"

The Astonished Watchman.—Leaving Newgate Behind.

The Astonished Watchman.—Leaving Newgate Behind.

These cries soon sent about a dozen persons on the trail of the fugitives, and as the alarm was understood at the prison, four of the most bold and skillful men upon the premises at once started in pursuit. From the

watchman who still stood at the end of Giltspur Street, they heard in what direction the prisoners had gone, and they did not lose a moment in dashing after them, calling out as they went—

"Fifty pounds reward for two prisoners escaped from Newgate! Fifty pounds reward for them!"

These words summoned up many an idler who was trying to dream away the night in the pens of Smithfield, and the officers soon got together a rabble host for the pursuit of Todd and his villanous companion.

But these officers with their fifty pounds reward were rather late in the field. It was the few persons who first heard the rattle and the outcries of the watchman, who were close upon the heels of the men, and they kept them well in sight right across Smithfield and so on towards Barbican. Todd heard the shouts of the pursuers, but he did not look back, for fear of losing time by so doing; and the fact was, that Mr. Lupin was so fleet of foot that it required all the exertion of Todd to keep up with him at all. Upon any less exciting occasion it is extremely doubtful if Todd could have kept up such a race; but as it was, he seemed to lose his wind, and then in some mysterious way to get on without any at all. Mr. Lupin crossed Aldersgate Street, and dashed down Barbican. He then turned down the first opening he came to on the right, and he did so, not because he was making for any known place of safety, but because he knew that a labyrinth of small streets were thereabouts, amid the intricacies of which he hoped to baffle his pursuers; and it was certainly under the circumstances very good policy in him to take the course he did.

From the moment of so abruptly turning out of Barbican, they were both out of sight of their pursuers, who had been able to keep them steadily in view up to this; but although that was the case, they were not without their perils, for a watchman met them both and aimed a blow at Lupin's legs with his stick, crying in an Irish brogue—

"Stop that, my beauty—Stop that any way!"

Lupin sprang upon him like an enraged tiger, and turning the stick from his hands, he laid him flat with one blow of it and on he rushed, carrying it with him as a defence against the attack of any one else.

They now turned a corner and met a string of half-drunken gents of the period, arm-in-arm, and occupying the whole breadth of the pavement. Lupin avoided them by swerving into the road-way, but they caught hold of Todd, crying—

"Here's the devil. Let's make him an offer for his tail!"

Certainly, Sweeney Todd was not at that moment disposed for trifling, and he laid about him with his immense fists in such style that the gents were all rolling in the kennel in a moment or two; and then, however, before Todd could again reach Mr. Lupin so closely as he had been, he heard a loud shout of—

"There's one of them. Come on!—Come on!"

That was no drunken shout, and Todd immediately felt that the danger was imminent. He rushed on at increased speed, and just got up to Lupin at the corner. They turned it together, and then Todd managed to say—

"They come—they come!"

"Officers?" said Lupin.

"Yes, I think so. On—on. Oh, push on!"

"This way."

Lupin crossed the road, and sprung down a narrow court; but even as he did so, came that voice, crying—

"There they go. Stop them—stop them! There they go! Fifty pounds reward!"

A frightful oath burst from Todd's lips, as he emerged from the court still close upon the heels of Lupin. They were now in a tolerably wide street, and they saw but one individual in it, and he was evidently, by the

curious manner in which he sometimes favoured the curb-stone by walking upon it for a few paces, and then lumbered up against the house, just a little gone in intoxication.

This individual, after some fumbling in his pocket, produced a latch key, and having staggered up the steps of a house, he made some ineffectual attempts to open the door.

"Hold!" said Todd to Lupin. "Anything is better than this race for life. We can hide in the passage of that house until the pursuit is past. Come."

"A good thought," said Lupin.

By this time the inebriated individual had succeeded in opening the street-door with his latch-key, and he was so elated at having performed the feat, that he stopped to laugh before he entered the house. The moment, however, that he did get into the passage, Todd sprung up the steps, and very adroitly placed his foot against the door, so that when the person from within slammed it as he thought shut, it was a good two inches off that condition. It was then amusing to hear him, with drunken gravity and precision, as he thought, shooting the bolts into their sockets, after which, often tumbling on his way, he went along the passage, and up stairs.

Todd opened the door.

"Come," he said.

"All's right," said Lupin.

"Stop thief! Stop thief!" cried a chorus of voices at the corner of the street.

"Indeed," said Lupin, "The Lord be good to you all."

He stepped into the house after Todd, and very quietly closed the door. The passage was profoundly dark, and there they both stood, those two convicted murderers, listening to what was taking place outside their place of refuge. They heard the sounds of several voices, and it was quite

evident that just about that spot the pursuers were baffled, and did not know now which course to take after the fugitives, who were so snugly ensconced so near them.

CHAPTER CXXXVI.
TODD AND LUPIN ESCAPE TO CAEN WOOD.

"What's to be done?" said a voice.

"I'll be hanged if I know," said another, "and yet I feel sure that they came this way. I thought how it would be when they took to all these streets. Lord bless you, we might have passed them in some doorway easy enough—a dozen times."

"So we might," said the other voice. "All we can do now, is to go round to the different outlets of the city, and give an alarm."

"Well, I won't give it up yet," said a third person; "I feel quite sure they are lingering somewhere about here, and I'll be on the watch yet for a time, and hunt about quietly. You be off and give the notice to the watch, and leave Johnson and I to do what we can."

"Very good—I wish you luck."

There was a scuffle of feet, and it was quite clear that some of the men had gone off at a quick pace, leaving, no doubt, the two only in the street.

"Well," whispered Lupin. "Well, my friend, what do you think of all this?"

"I don't know what to think," said Todd. "I'm very tired."

"Ah, and so am I, but that can't be helped. I ain't used to such a run as we have had. But it won't do us any harm. If we can get off, it will be a world's wonder, I can tell you. It ain't now every day that a fellow gives

Newgate the go-by."

"No—no, and I must say that I did not myself expect it. But I was prepared to cheat the hangman."

"Pho! That's a poor-enough look out."

"Yes, but it's a something. She did it."

"She? Who the deuce is she?"

"Mrs. Lovett."

"Oh, I recollect. I have heard of her—I have heard of her. She was the nice creature who lived in Bell Yard, wasn't she, and accommodated the folks with pies?"

"Yes," said Todd, and if Lupin had seen the horrible contortion of visage with which he accompanied the word, even he, with all his nerve in such matters, might well have been excused for a sudden accession of terror. "Well," added Todd, after a pause, "you are a man of judgment Mr. Lupin, and all I want to know now, is what you mean to do?"

"Get away from here as soon as possible. But it won't be quite safe to try it yet. This house is very quiet, and no doubt everybody is in bed and asleep, so I shall get a light and look about a little. It would be quite a providential thing to find something to eat."

"Yes, and to drink," said Todd.

"Just so. I would give something handsome now, if I had it, for a good glass of brandy. That run has made me first hot and then shivery all over; but who knows what luck may be in store for us? Come now—here's a light, and we shall soon, by the help of providence, see what sort of a crib we have got into."

It was lucky for them both that Lupin had retained about him the means of getting a light, for if he had not, they would have been left to conjectures merely regarding their position. He ignited one of the little

pieces of wax-ends, and when the small flame rose and began to burn steadily, he held up the piece of candle, so they both looked curiously about them.

The hall of the house in which they were was well got up. A handsome table and some old carved chairs were in it, with some crests upon the backs, and upon numerous pegs hung hats, cloaks, and coats.

"Humph," said Lupin, "this is the very place for us, I shall take the great liberty of making free with some gentleman's coat and hat, and I think you had better do the same."

Todd at once practically acquiesced in the suggestion, by slipping on a large cloak with sleeves, and placing upon his head a hat richly bound with silver lace.

"Upon my word," said Lupin, "you almost look respectable."

"Do I?" said Todd. "It isn't then on account of the company I am in."

Lupin smiled, as he said—

"Very good—very good, but the less we cut at each other, my friend, the better."

"You began it," said Todd.

"So I did, so we will say no more about it, as yours was the hardest hit. How do I look in the cloak and hat?"

"Just nice," said Todd, making a frightful face.

Lupin laughed again.

"Come," he said. "Now that we have a little time to spare, let us see if these people keep a good larder. If they do and they lock it up at night, they will find that the cat has been at it by the morning, I rather think. Tread as lightly as you can, Todd, and keep down your voice as you have done. Sounds go so far in the night time."

"They do," said Todd. "I have heard them at odd times."

Lupin led the way along the hall, at the end of which was the staircase, and to the right of that a door which was not fast, so that they passed on quite easily to the domestic portion of the house, and soon found the way to a kitchen, which was upon the same floor. Then they opened a door that led into a little sort of outhouse, paved with red bricks, and in one corner of that was a larder, or safe, well stocked with provisions. Lupin took from it a magnificent quarter of venison, with scarcely a quarter of a pound cut from it; and that, with some bread were the only viands that he felt disposed to take from the larder.

"It will be wholesome," he said, "and do us a world of good, by the aid of Providence; and we don't know what we may have to go through yet, in this world of woe. Amen!"

"You fancy you are in the chapel again."

"Dear me; yes, I do—I do. Well, well, it don't matter—it don't matter. Come, friend Todd. Let us recruit ourselves a little. Oh, that I could find the way to the wine cellar of these people; and yet that should not be a difficult matter. Let us think. It must be somewhere hereabouts."

"There is a door," said Todd, pointing to one at the end of the outhouse. "It seems to be locked, and if so, it is no doubt that of the cellar."

"We will try it," said Lupin.

With this he quickly opened the door, by the aid of his picklocks, which no ordinary lock could withstand the fascinations of for a moment, and then sure enough the supposition of Todd was found to be correct, for a goodly collection of bottles in long rows presented themselves to the eye. Lupin at once laid hold of a bottle, and breaking off the neck of it he decanted a quantity of its contents into his throat, rubbing his stomach as he did so in a most ludicrous kind of way, to indicate how much he enjoyed the draught.

"Nectar," he said, when he took the bottle from his mouth to enable himself to breathe; "nectar."

"Is it?" said Todd, as he seized upon another bottle. "I am partial generally to something a trifle stronger than wine; but if it be really good, I have no particular objection to a drop."

With this Todd finished off half a bottle of the rich and rare old port that was in the cellar. They then worked away at the haunch of venison; and having made a very hearty meal, they looked at each other as though they would both say—"What next?"

"You say you have money?" said Lupin.

"True," said Todd.

"But not here of course, my friend; and who knows what difficulties we may find in our way before we reach your nice little hoard? Where did you say it was?"

"Hidden beneath a tree in Caen Wood, close to the village of Hampstead. I went one night, and myself placed the cash there in case of accidents."

"And how much do you suppose, my friend, there is?"

"I know what there is. I put away two thousand pounds, and that you know will be a thousand pounds for you, and another for me. I purpose in that manner equitably to share it, for I am not ungrateful for the great assistance you have been to me in this escape from Newgate."

If Mr. Lupin had not swallowed two-thirds of a bottle of old port-wine, the probability is that he would have detected that Todd was deceiving him, by the whining canting tone in which he spoke. The fact was, that Todd had not one farthing hidden in Caen Wood; but he thought it highly desirable while there existed any danger, and while Mr. Lupin was likely to be useful to him, to keep up such a delusion.

"Well," added Lupin, "you really are a liberal fellow; but as, I say, there is no knowing what good a trifle may be to us before we reach your snug two thousand pounds in Caen Wood, I propose to see what we can get in this house. People who keep such a good cellar, and such a capital larder, ought to have something in the place worth the taking in the way of cash."

"Yes, but I am afraid it will be hazardous," said Todd.

"A little, perhaps; but with this carving knife, don't you think we might make things pleasant?"

"That is possible. Well, if anything worth having is to be got, let us set about it at once; for I think we have spent time enough in this house; and no doubt our friends are upon the move off, if they have not gone long before this."

"Come on, then."

They both left the kitchen, and each being armed with a knife, they cautiously opened all the room doors on that floor; but they only found the usual furniture of such apartments, and it was quite clear that no cash was to be had in that portion of the premises.

"Come up stairs," said Lupin, with a look of savage determination. "Come on, Todd; we will see what can be done up stairs."

They carefully ascended the staircase, but they only just peeped into the drawing-room, and then they went up to the floor upon which the bed-rooms were situated. They paused at the first door they came to, and Lupin very carefully tried the lock. It was only on the latch, and in the room a rushlight was burning. They both crept in, and their footsteps made no noise upon the soft carpeting of the apartment. A bed was in the room, and upon it lay a young lady. Lupin gave a hideous grin as he looked at her, and then stooping down by the bed-side he said, in a whisper—

"If you scream, everybody in this house will be murdered!—If you scream, everybody in this house will be murdered! If you—Oh, that will do."

The young lady awakened with a start, but the words that were twice repeated still rung in her ears, and scream she did not, but she looked half dead from fright.

"Now, my dear," said Lupin, "Providence has brought us to your bedside, and if you make any disturbance, we mean to submit you and the whole of the family to the operation of a carving-knife, the Lord willing. All we want is money, and if we can get that quietly, we will go and not so much as ask your pretty little lips for a kiss."

The Murderers In The Young Lady's Chamber.

The Murderers In The Young Lady's Chamber.

"Oh, Heaven protect me!" said the young lady.

"A—men!" said Lupin. "Now my dear, who is in the house besides you?"

"My father, the alderman, and my mother, and the servants above stairs. —Oh, spare my parents."

"Very good, where can any money be got hold of?"

"Will a hundred pounds content you?"

"Yes," said Todd, putting his head between the curtains at the foot of the bed. The young lady gave a faint cry, and Mr. Lupin flourished the carving-knife over her—"Where are the hundred pounds?" he said, "and we will go."

"In my father's room. It is the next room. His purse is on the dressing-table. If you will let me go and get it, I will give it to you upon your promise then to leave the house."

"How are we to trust you not to say that we are here?"

"I swear by all that is holy—I use the name of the great God. Oh, indeed you may trust me."

"Go," said Lupin.

The young lady got out of bed, and both Todd and Lupin followed her from the room. She crossed the landing, and at once opened the door of a room. Then they heard a man's voice say—"Who's that?" and the young

lady replied—"Only me, father. I want something out of your room. I shall not be a minute." "Bless the girl," said a female voice—"What can she want?"

In a minute or two the young lady came back to the landing where Todd and Lupin were waiting for her.

"Now," said Lupin in a low voice—"Now, my little dear, have you got it?"

"Quick—quick!" said Todd, "or you die. I am half a mind to cut your throat as it is, just for the pleasure of the thing."

The young lady stood just upon the threshold of the door of her father's room, and then as Lupin held up his light, she raised both her hands, in each of which was a horse-pistol, and presenting one at Lupin's head and one at Todd's, she said—

"Thieves! thieves! thieves!"

CHAPTER CXXXVII.
THE MURDER AT CAEN WOOD, HAMPSTEAD.

It would be quite impossible to describe the effect that was produced upon Lupin and Sweeney Todd, by this heroic conduct on the part of the young lady, from whom they did not in the least expect any such active resistance to their proceedings.

Lupin was constitutionally, by far the greater coward of the two, and when he saw the bright barrel of the pistol in such startling and unexpected contiguity to his head, he at once stepped back, and missing his footing, fell down the stairs to the landing-place immediately below that flight.

Todd thought that there would be just a chance of dashing in upon the young lady and disarming her of her pistols; but now that both of them were levelled at him, and she began to cry out "Help! help! thieves!" again, louder than before, he reluctantly abandoned the idea, and turning, he bounded down the staircase.

The young lady leant over the stair-head and fired one of the pistols after him, which so accelerated the movements of Todd, that he tumbled right over Mr. Lupin, and fell down all the way to the hall with Lupin after him.

Under any other circumstances than the dangerous and exciting ones in which they were in, no doubt they would both of them have been too much hurt to do anything but lie on their backs in the hall; but the

feeling that if they were taken it would be to death, was sufficient to rouse them, and they both scrambled to their feet.

Lupin got the street-door open, and dashed out closely followed by Todd. A watchman tried to stop them, but him they felled with a blow, and then off went Lupin down a cross-street, that led him into Old-street Road, and with Todd at his heels, who was very faint.

"Stop, stop!" panted Todd, "stop!"

"What for?" said Lupin.

"I cannot run so fast. Are you hurt? Oh, that I had a knife at that girl's throat!"

Lupin paused, and held by a post at the corner of a street, and swore dreadfully, as he too panted a little for breath, although he was by no means so much used-up as Todd was. But then Lupin was a younger man, and much lighter on his feet, than our old friend of murdering notoriety.

"Oh, dear," said Todd. "What's to be done now?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing, did you say? But, my dear friend, something must be done. We have positively wasted half the night, and we are without money, and half dead. I am covered with bruises from head to foot by the fall down the staircase, and it will be daylight in another half hour or so at the utmost."

"Ah," said Lupin, "we must breakfast somewhere, I'm thinking, my friend."

"And so am I."

"Well, well, we have made certainly a mess of our adventure at the alderman's; but it can't be helped now. The idea, only to think of it now, Todd, of you and I, two such men as we are, and as the world refutes us to be, being beaten back, and, you may say, thrown down two pair of stairs, by a girl of sixteen or thereabouts."

Todd growled out some malediction.

"It was the will of Providence," said Lupin. "But who is this? Stand aside, Todd, and let this old gentleman pass on. We may as well not be seen and described by any one."

"Do you think he may likely have enough about him," whispered Todd, "to pay our expenses for the day?"

"A lucky thought. It is more than likely that he has. Knock him down and rob him, Todd. There's not a soul in sight. Give him one of the knocks you used to give the poor devils you made the pies of, you know."

"Be quiet," said Todd, "I am amazed that a man of your profound sense and sagacity, should give ear to such idle rumours about me! I am really both shocked and surprised, Mr. Lupin!"

"Amen!" said Lupin. "You rob the old man, and we won't quarrel about any such nonsense, Todd. Here he comes, grinning like an old polecat. What business has a man of that age out at such a time as this?"

"None," said Todd, "except to provide us with a little money."

Todd cast a keen glance around him, and was convinced that the report of Mr. Lupin that no one was in sight was quite correct, so he stepped up to the old man, and said—

"Good morning, sir."

"Thieves! thieves!" cried the old man, and began to run, but Todd put out one of his long legs and tripped him up. Then pouncing upon him, he extracted a well-filled purse from his pocket, and holding it up to Lupin, he said—

"This will do?"

"Rather," replied Lupin. "Come on."

Off set Lupin again on a run, rather to the discomfiture of Todd, who had not had such a scampering about for a long time indeed; but yet he felt the necessity of getting as soon as possible out of the immediate

vicinity of the old man whom they had just robbed, so they did not stop until they got right away on the northern side of Finsbury Square.

That side of the ancient square of Finsbury was not built then; and beyond it, where there is now such a squalid and uninviting neighbourhood, there was nothing but fields.

"Now," said Lupin. "Let us look at the purse!"

"Here it is," said Todd.

"It's very light!"

The fact was, that notwithstanding the speed at which he was compelled to run to keep up with Lupin, or rather to keep a few paces only behind him, Todd had contrived to abstract the better part of the contents from the purse, and to pocket them; for the story with which he had tickled the ears of Lupin of his having any money concealed in Caen Wood, Hampstead, was a mere delusion, got up for the purpose of making him, Lupin, more than commonly solicitous concerning his, Todd's, safety in the escape from Newgate.

"Yes," replied Todd, "it is light, but such as it is it may be of some service to us. Take it, Mr. Lupin, and you can be the treasurer: you know I can trust to you."

"Implicitly," said Lupin, as turning out the contents of the purse into his hand, he said—"Here are four guineas and a half, and about six or seven shillings in loose silver."

"Better than nothing," said Todd, with a look of great philosophy. "Our first care now is to get a breakfast."

"I don't know," said Lupin. "I took quite enough at the alderman's to last me some time. I should say, get out of London as quickly as we possibly can; and when we are at Caen Wood, we can, at our ease, consider what course we will feel inclined to take with our money in our pockets."

"A couple of thousands," said Todd.

"Exactly so. I move that we strike across the fields now at once, and make for Highgate and Hampstead, so that at each step we shall be leaving some danger behind us."

"Agreed," said Todd. "Come on! For my part I should like very much to find a conveyance of some sort; but that, I suppose, is impossible."

"Quite! Besides, on foot we are much less likely to be recognised and described. Come on, Todd; you ought to be able to walk to Hampstead, surely, after the little trifling exercise that you have had only."

"Trifling, do you call it?" said Todd, making one of his most hideous faces. "Trifling! I have not a bone in my body that don't ache. Trifling? I am one mass of bruises from top to toe, and I never, in all my life, felt so exhausted; but yet the love of life and of liberty will lend me strength; so, come on; I will go on to Hampstead, and I will reach it, my friend, unless I drop by the way."

"Well spoke," said Lupin.

They now pursued a course which led them rapidly by the back of the City Road, and through the now well-populated district called Hoxton; and keeping on in that way they crossed the high-road near to Stamford Hill, and soon began to get a good view of the heights of Highgate and Hampstead in the distance.

"Brandy," said Todd, "brandy!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"My good friend, I can't get on without some brandy. I am rather used to a little stimulant at times, so I must have it. Then we have no risk now to run by going into a public-house."

"I don't know that, Todd. But if you can't do without, some brandy you must have. To be sure, we are in luck's way, so far, that we are provided with hats and coats from the alderman's hall, and, therefore, people cannot have a description of us. The first quiet little hotel we come to, Todd, I promise you that I will not object to our stopping at, so that you may have your drop."

"Yes," said Todd, "that will do. My good friend, it is the only thing that keeps me up. When I used to feel a little down in spirits I poured some other spirits down, and then I get up again."

"Exactly. Here we are, at an old roadside house called the Adam and Eve, which will be the very thing. They may take you for Adam and me for Cain or Abel.—Come along."

They halted at the door of the little public-house, but upon going in they found the landlord and landlady bargaining with a man who was hawking something, and the following words came upon the startled ears of Todd.

"Only threepence, sir, I assure you, and the most exact likeness of Sweeney Todd, the murderer; taken while he was on his trial at the Old Bailey. You will see what a look he has, and the artist has been most successful in the squint: and only threepence."

"He will be hanged on Monday, of course?" said the publican's wife.

"Oh yes, ma'am, in course, and there's expected such a crowd as never was known at the execution."

"No doubt of it. Well, I'll give twopence."

"And a drop of ale," said the publican.

"Here you are, master, you shall have it. A capital likeness. If you was only now to catch a sight of the original Todd, you'd know him in a moment by the look of this picture, particularly the squint."

"Come in," whispered Lupin to Todd.

"Oh no—no—I don't want the brandy now."

"But I do. Your speaking about it, has got me into the mind of wanting some now; so come on and let us have it, my friend, at once. Why, you are not afraid that the portrait is too good a likeness, are you?"

"Oh dear, I don't know," said Todd. "I believe I have a remarkable nose, and rather an engaging look about the eyes.—Come along."

"A quartern of the best brandy," said Lupin.

Todd felt that now the safest thing he could do, was to brave the matter out, as anything in the shape of a retreat would be much worse than actually making an appearance at the bar of the public-house; and then it was truly ridiculous to see the manner in which Todd strove to alter the cast of his features, by protruding one lip, and putting on what he thought as a kind of satisfied smirking smile, extremely difficult, indeed, for his usual expression of face.

There was only one slight comfort he felt, and that was in the circumstance that the news of their escape from Newgate had not yet reached that place.

"A nice, bracing morning, gentlemen," said the publican.

"Very, by the goodness of providence," said Lupin.

"Amen!" said Todd.

"I have just, gentlemen, been buying a portrait of the execrable Todd; and if either of you have happened to see him in London, perhaps you can tell me if it is at all like the villain. We frighten our children now, if they misbehave themselves at all, and tell them that Todd is coming to make them into pies, and then they are as quiet as possible. Ha! ha!"

"How funny," said Todd,

"Well," said Lupin, as he looked at the twopenny portrait of Todd, with a pretended critical air, "I don't think it's like him at all. I saw him at Newgate; and my friend here, is more like him than this picture."

"You don't say so, sir?" said the landlord.

"He! he!" laughed Todd—"ho! ho!"

How he wished at that moment that he could have taken Lupin by the throat and strangled him!

The brandy was duly discussed, and Lupin having paid for it out of the contents of the old gentleman's purse, took a courteous adieu of the landlord, and with Todd left the house.

"Gracious goodness!" exclaimed Todd, "how could you dream of saying what you did about me at the bar?"

"My good friend, that was for the express purpose of drowning suspicion for you. I saw the landlady staring at you most fixedly, and so I said it on purpose, for fear she should really begin to think you could be no other than Todd the murderer—the execrable Todd, with whom they frighten the children."

"Oh, well," said Todd, "don't say anything more about it. I am quite satisfied. Indeed, I am more than satisfied, my dear friend."

"I thought you would be, when you come to think—"

"Oh, dear, yes."

"You may depend, Todd, that the greatest safety always runs alongside of the greatest danger; and that when you think that your fortunes are at the lowest, you may not unfrequently be upon the point of a highly favourable change: and it's all by the goodness of Providence."

"Bother you!" said Todd. "I do believe, if you were to live for a hundred years, you would not forget your chapel experience."

"Perhaps not; but I made a good bit of money that way, taking one thing with another, Mr. Todd."

CHAPTER CXXXVIII.
CAEN WOOD AND HAMPSTEAD IN THE OLD TIMES.

In such discourse as this, the precious pair beguiled the way to Highgate, from which they proposed crossing to Hampstead.

Notwithstanding the liberal potations that they had taken at the Alderman's house; and notwithstanding the brandy that had since been discussed, they neither of them felt any the worse for the imbibition. Probably, the active exercise they took carried off all bad effects. But, certainly, when they reached Highgate, both Todd and Lupin were hungry.

"Let us turn into the Old Gate-House Tavern," said Lupin.

"Don't you think a more obscure place," suggested Todd, "would be better for us, as we do not by any means court popularity?"

"No; there is more safety in a large place like the Gate House, where plenty of guests are coming and going continually, than in a little bit of a public-house where we should be looked at, and scrutinised from top to toe, from the moment we went in to the moment we came out."

"Very good," said Todd. "I think you reason well enough upon the point, and I give in to your better judgment completely. Ah! my good friend, I really don't know what I should have done at all without you."

"Been hanged!" said Lupin.

Todd gave a shudder, which was a tolerably convincing proof of how fully he agreed in what Mr. Lupin said; and then they went into the Old Gate-House Tavern, at Highgate, where they had a very plentiful breakfast; and by getting into a corner of the room, in which they sat, they did not attract any observation beyond the mere casual regards of the visitors to the house.

Before they left though, Todd had the horror of hearing a great confusion of voices in the passage, and in a few moments one of the waiters came into the room, quite bursting with his news.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the notorious Todd, and a man named Lupin, who was a murderer likewise, have escaped from Newgate!"

"Escaped?" said Lupin. "You don't say so?"

"Dear me, when?" said Todd.

"Last night, gentlemen, last night; and—coming—coming!"

The waiter was compelled to leave the room, as a bell rung violently.

"Let us go," said Todd.

"Yes, I think, now that the news has reached here, it will be wise to do so."

"Come along, then."

Todd rose in a moment; but Lupin in a whisper strictly cautioned him not to show any symptoms of hurry or alarm; and he was so far master of himself to see the necessity of such a caution, so that they both got safely out of the Gate-House Tavern, and took the route to Hampstead by Swains Lane, without having anything said to them.

"This is an escape indeed," said Todd.

"Yes," said Lupin, "you may depend that in a very little time there will be some officers at the Gate-House; but if we can get to the wood within the next half hour, I think we are safe enough. What do you think?"

"I think that if our safety depends upon getting into Caen Wood in half-an-hour, we ought to be there in half the time."

"Do you? Then come on for a run."

"Oh, dear," said Todd. "I am all aches and pains, and not at all fit for running; but I suppose I must. Don't go very fast, Mr. Lupin, or I shall never be able to keep up with you."

"Then you go first and run as fast as you can without greatly distressing yourself, and I will adopt my speed to yours."

"That will be better," said Todd.

Off they both set down Swains Lane, and as the first part of that well-known thoroughfare from Highgate to Hampstead goes down hill, they got on speedily with very little exertion; but when the foot of the little slope was reached it was quite another thing, and Todd was fast subsiding into a walk, when Lupin cried to him—

"We are pursued!"

At these words, Todd fell flat in the roadway.

"Up—up!" said Lupin, "there is a turn in the lane just ahead of us, and when we reach that we must get over the hedge and hide. I don't know that they are actually after us, but there are horsemen in the lane coming from Highgate."

Todd got up as far as his hands and knees, and then, as his ears were close to the ground, he said—

"We are lost, for I can hear horsemen coming from the other direction too."

"The deuce you can!"

Mr. Lupin stooped to listen, and in a moment he was assured of the fact. He seized Mr. Todd by the collar, saying—

"Now, Todd, if you want to escape, rouse yourself and follow me; but if you don't care about it, say so at once, and I will look after my own safety."

"Care about it?" cried Todd, "what else do you suppose I care about in all the world?"

"Come on, then."

"Here I am. Oh, yes I'm coming on—as quick as you like now, Lupin. The dread of capture banishes all fatigue. I can now run like a hunted hare."

"There is no occasion," said Lupin. "This way. We must hide now; speed would do us but little good against horsemen.—This way."

Lupin ran on until he got to the turn of the lane, which hid the horsemen from Highgate effectually from their view; and as the mounted party coming from the direction of Hampstead had not got so far as to appear, he thought it was just the place to halt at.

"Now, Todd," he said, "we must get over the hedge here, and our only chance of safety, if these men are really on the look-out for us, is to hide in the meadow."

Without waiting for Todd to make any remark upon the very doubtful means of escape presented, Lupin scrambled through the hedge. Todd then followed him, and the first care of Lupin's was to arrange the twigs that had been displaced in the hedge by their passage through it, so that there should not appear to be any gap at all there.

Immediately upon the other side of the hedge which they had thus crossed there was a ditch, and a large heap of manure. Mr. Lupin, without the slightest ceremony, laid himself down, and pulling a lot of the manure heap over him, he nearly covered himself quite up.

"This is very shocking," said Todd.

"It's quite a luxury compared to a cell in Newgate," replied Lupin. "You had better be quick."

The word Newgate acted upon the imagination of Todd as a very powerful spell, and he at once lay down and began to follow the example of his friend, Lupin; and indeed so very anxious was he while he was about it to hide himself completely, that he nearly smothered himself outright in the manure.

"I hope this will do," he moaned.

"Silence!" said Lupin.

Todd was as still as death in a moment.

As they now lay close to the earth, all sounds upon it were much more clearly brought to their senses than when they were walking, so that there was no sort of difficulty in distinguishing the tread of the horses that were coming from Highgate from those that proceeded from the other direction, and which latter ones were not quite so near as the others.

Faintly, too, they could hear the hum of commotion, which showed that the party consisted of three or four persons.

And now the mounted men from Highgate got right down into the hollow, close to the bend in the lane, and they paused, while one said, in a clear voice—

"We ought not to go any further. Those from Hampstead should meet us now, I think."

"They are coming," said another.

"Ah! so they are. I wonder if they have seen anything of the rascals. I do hope they will soon be nabbed, for this patrolling business is very tiresome."

These words were quite sufficient, if any doubt had been upon the minds of Lupin and Todd, to convince them that the mounted men were after them, and of the great peril they would have been in if they had staid in the lane.

To be sure there was nothing in what had been said to add to the supposition that the horsemen had any knowledge of the fact that the persons they sought were in that neighbourhood, and that might be considered to decrease the danger a little; but yet it was sufficiently great, under all circumstances.

In the course of the next two minutes the Hampstead party came up and joined the others.

"Any luck?" said one.

"No, we came right on across the heath, but we neither saw nor heard anything of them, and it is quite impossible to say, as yet, that they have come in this direction at all. I don't myself think it at all likely."

"Why not?"

"Because of all neighbourhoods close to London, it is the most high and exposed, while at the same time it is not thickly peopled."

"Well, there may be something in that. We have heard nothing of them in Highgate up to now, so I suppose we may go back again the way we came, and you will do the same."

"Have you been in any of the meadows?"

"No. But it's easy to get over the gate yonder, and take a look all round. The enclosures are not very numerous about here, and they would find it difficult to hide. Hold my horse, George, and I'll get into the meadows and take a look."

When Todd heard these words, he looked upon himself as lost, and could hardly suppress a groan.

The man who had last spoken got over a gate that was at some little distance off, and stood upon an elevated spot of the meadows to look about him.

"There's nothing moving," he said.

"Come along, then," cried another. "Let's get on."

"Here's a compost heap; they are perhaps in the middle of that. Is it worth looking at?"

"Not exactly. Come on."

The man retired to the road again and mounted, and in the course of a few moments the two parties rode back again upon the way that they had come.

"Todd?" said Lupin, "Todd?"

"Oh!" groaned Todd.

"Todd, I say, get up. Are you out of your mind? The danger is past now. They are gone."

"Gone!" said Todd, looking up. "You don't say so? Didn't I hear one of them say that he would look in this very place?"

"Yes; but that was only a joke."

"A joke?" said Todd with a deep groan. "A joke was it? Oh, how very careful people should be when they make jokes, when other people are hiding from their enemies. It might be very funny to him, but it was quite the reverse to me."

"That's true enough; but get up now, and in the name of everything that's safe and comfortable, let us get to the wood. These fellows are evidently patrolling the road, and they will be back again in a little while, and still come across us if we don't manage to get out of their way before that time.—Come along. We can get to the wood now quickly."

"Ah, dear me!" said Todd, as he shook himself to get rid of as much of the unsavoury mess he had lain in as possible. "Ah dear me! truly I have now hit upon evil times; and fortune, that I thought petted me, has slipped from me like a shadow, leaving me glad of a manure heap in a field as a place of shelter."

"All that is very true," said Lupin, "but it don't get us on a bit."

"I'm ready—I'm quite ready," groaned Todd.

They were upon the point of going into the lane again, but they were compelled—or rather thought it prudent—to wait until a man had passed, who, by the box that he carried on his back, was evidently a hawker of goods about the country. He soon trudged out of their way, and then they both got through the hedge again into the lane.

The place of their destination was now close at hand, upon their left; and watching a favourable spot by which to do so, they crossed the hedge upon that side and got into the fields; but although a sharp run across two or three meadows would have taken them at once to Caen Wood, they did not think it at all prudent so to expose themselves to observation.

"Skirt the hedge, Todd," said Lupin, "and stoop down so as to keep your head as much below the top of the hedgerow as possible. You are inconveniently tall, just now."

Upon this instruction, Todd bent himself almost double, and in that attitude he managed to scramble close to the hedge, and up to his knees, at times, in the ditches and drains that he came across in such a situation.

In this way, then, they got on until they reached the outskirts of Caen Wood. Not a creature was to be seen, and the most profound and solemn stillness, reigned around them. Todd was not used to that intense quiet of the country and he shook at it rather, but Lupin took no notice of his emotion.

"Here we are, at last," he said, "and all you have to do, Todd, is to point out the spot where you have hidden your money, and then we will divide it, and wait until nightfall before we venture out of this snug place."

"Come along," said Todd; "it's all right."

And then they both dived amongst the trees, which, in some places, quite shut out the daylight.

CHAPTER CXXXIX.
THE ADVENTURES IN CAEN WOOD OF THE TWO MURDERERS.

Todd was so much exhausted by the time they reached the wood, that he at once cast himself to the ground upon a heap of dry leaves, and he felt that he was speaking only the truth when he said—

"I could not go a step further just now, if it were to save my life, I feel that I could not; and here I must lie and rest."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lupin; "what a poor creature you must be. How old are you, Mr. Todd?"

"I don't know," said Todd. "The church I was christened at was burnt down only the day after, and all the books burnt. My father and mother are dead, and the nurse was hanged, and the doctor cut his throat."

"Upon my word," said Lupin, "they were a lively set. I suppose it was remorse did all that?"

"Remorse! What do you mean by remorse?"

"Why that sort of feeling, you know, might be awakened in their minds, by finding that you were not exactly the sort of baby that was expected. You must have looked a beauty in long-clothes, Todd; and as for your age, I should guess it about fifty-five."

"Guess your own age," said Todd, "and leave mine alone."

"Oh, if it's at all a sore subject I won't say another word about it. But come now, Todd, you charming creature, could you not manage to crawl a little way further?"

"What for? If we are safe in the wood at all, we are safe enough here where we are now."

"But, my dear friend, you quite forget."

"What—what? What do I forget? Don't plague me, Lupin. It is enough just now to remember that we have by almost a miracle made an escape from Newgate; and as for forgetting, I would be right glad to forget if I could that I had ever been there; but that will be impossible."

"It won't be very easy," said Lupin, "and if possible, it will take a long time; but what I was just mildly going to remind you of was, that in this wood your two thousand pounds, you know, are hidden, and that we were to share the amount."

"Ah, my dear friend, yes, I had not forgotten that little affair. It is, of course, very important; but let me rest a little, if you please."

"Oh, certainly—certainly."

"And then, my dear companion, it will be necessary to get a spade, you know, to dig it up. Our nails decidedly are neither long enough or strong enough, and I don't at all see how it is to be done without a spade, or something that shall be a good substitute for one."

"Oh, nonsense," said Lupin. "How deep do you suppose it lies?"

"About two feet."

"Very good then, you need give yourself no uneasiness about the digging it up. I have the chisel and the two files here; and if I can't dig two feet into the earth with them, and my hands to shovel out the mould with, I'm a Dutchman, that's all. Only you show me the spot, that's all, and I won't ask you to tire yourself in the matter."

"In a little," said Todd, "in a little. Without being so old as you would make me out, I am still older than you are Lupin, and cannot go through the amount of fatigue that you can. Just let me recover myself a little, and then instead of crawling to the spot where my money lies hidden, I shall be well able to walk to it and show it to you."

"Very good—very good. Of course I don't want to hurry you too much about the matter, only the sooner we do get a hold of the two thousand pounds the better. I wonder, too, that you don't feel rather anxious to see that it is quite safe, for some accident might have discovered it, for all you know to the contrary."

"Oh no, my friend, nothing but an earthquake could do that. You may depend it is quite safe where I put it. In a little time I shall be able to show you the exact spot, which I have so accurately in my mind's eye, that I can walk to it with the greatest of ease; of course I did not trust such a valuable deposit to the ground without accurately marking the spot that I had made my bank."

"Is it in gold?"

"All—all. I did think of hiding notes, but I was afraid that the damp, if there should come any heavy rains, would have the effect of rotting them, and I had no iron box sufficiently small to place them in; so I brought all gold, and a good weight it was too."

"Ah, we will make that weight light by dividing it."

"Just so."

Lupin's mouth actually watered at the idea of getting possession of such a sum, and as he turned his head aside, he muttered to himself—

"If I don't put Todd out of this world, and save the hangman the trouble, it shall go hard with me, and then I shall have all the money to myself, and I can get to America, and be a free and enlightened citizen for the remainder of my days."

Mr. Lupin could hardly forbear an audible chuckle over this delightful prospect; so that it will be seen that both of these villains meditated evil intentions towards each other, from which it may be gathered how much faith is to be put in the association of men for any guilty design. Was it likely that such persons as Todd and Lupin, after being false and ruffianly to all the world, should be true to each other, except so far as their common interests dictated? No, Todd amused Lupin with the story of the buried gold in the wood at Hampstead, because he, Lupin, was of assistance in his escape from Newgate; and Lupin assisted him to escape with the idea of murdering him in the wood, and securing for himself all the money that he believed was there hidden!

It was quite evident that Lupin was desperately impatient at the rest Todd was taking, previous to showing him where the money was hidden; and he walked to and fro, looking as vexed as possible, and yet fearing to say too much, lest he should get up a quarrel, the result of which might be, that Todd would refuse to show him where the gold was at all.

"I think," he said, "if I were to manage to get a good thick stave off some tree, it would help considerably in digging, would it not?"

"Without a doubt," said Todd.

"Then I will try, and by the time I have got it, perhaps you will be rested enough, my dear friend, to make an effort to get up and show me the spot where to dig for the gold."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Todd.

Mr. Lupin found that he was obliged to be contented with this doubtful acquiescence of Todd's; and he busied himself, by the aid of the chisel and the files, in getting off a stout strong bough from a sycamore-tree, which he shaped to a tolerable point. It looked like a formidable bludgeon; and as he eyed it, he thought what a capital knock on the head it would give to Mr. Todd.

It was rather odd that the same idea crossed Todd's mind, and as he saw the bit of wood, he muttered to himself—

"That would do it. One blow from that would do it."

Now, Todd had but one solitary incentive to the murder of Lupin, and that was, that he feared when he found out how he had been deceived regarding the money, he would find some mode of denouncing him to the police, while he took care of himself; and, therefore, upon that mere idea, Todd would take his life. But then, steeped in blood guiltiness as Todd was, the taking the life of any one always seemed to him to be the readiest way of solving any difficulty connected with them. It was his motive to consider that that was the shortest and easiest mode of settling the affair, if any one became at all troublesome; and he was not all likely to make an exception in favour of such a personage as Mr. Lupin.

"All ready?" said Lupin. "Are you rested now?"

"Yes," said Todd, as he rose. "Ah, dear me, yes, as much as I can expect, until I get a regular night's repose, you know, friend Lupin. But I don't expect that very soon."

"Oh, who knows? We are continually, in this world, getting what we don't expect, and not getting what we do; so you may rest easy enough, Todd, much sooner than you expect. Come, lean on my arm if you feel fatigued."

"Oh, no, thank you. Lend me the stick, it will help me on the best, for it seems just about my height."

Lupin could not very well refuse Todd's request with any prospect of keeping him in good humour at the same time, so he gave him the stick, although it must be confessed he did not do so with the very best grace in the world. But Todd did get it, and that satisfied him.

"Is it far off?" said Lupin.

"Oh dear, no. Quite close at hand—quite close. There's a small chesnut-tree, and a large chesnut-tree, and there's a small fir-tree and a large fir-tree, and a large oak-tree and a small oak-tree, and then there is a blackberry bush and a little stream of water."

"Good gracious, is there anything else?" said Lupin.

"No, my dear friend, that is all."

"Well. I must confess, that your description would not have very materially assisted me in finding the spot."

"Indeed, I thought nothing could possibly be more clear."

"Clear to you, Mr. Todd, it may be, but not to any one else; but that don't matter a bit as you are here yourself to point out the exact spot. Are we near it now?"

"Yes, you see that cluster of bushes?"

"Yes, oh yes."

"Well, the money lies hidden right in there, and you cannot miss it if you scramble in."

"Lend me the stick to clear away the brambles and the nettles, and I will creep in."

"My dear friend, I shall fall down if I lend you the stick. There is no difficulty in getting in. Don't you see there is a gap that you have only to push through, and there you are?"

"Well—well," said Lupin. "That's enough; I will get through. Come on, let us secure the gold."

Lupin stooped to push his way through the gap in the hedge, for the bushes grew so close together just there, that they resembled an enclosure carefully planted on purpose. Then Todd took the heavy stick that had been cut from the sycamore tree in both hands, and swinging it in the air, he brought it down with a stunning crack on the back of Lupin's head, just at the juncture of the neck.

"God!" said Lupin, and it was the first time in his life that, with true sincerity, he had pronounced that sacred name. He then turned and sunk to the ground, with his face towards Todd. He could not speak now, but the look that he gave to his murderer was awful in the extreme. The injury he had received had quite paralysed him, and his hands hung helplessly. But the quality of mercy belonged not to Todd's composition.

Again the huge stick was raised, and this time it fell upon the top of Lupin's head. The wretched man uttered one faint sigh and expired at once.

"Dead!" said Todd, as he stood gaunt and erect before his victim, with the stick stretched out in his hand. "Dead—quite dead. Ha!"

Todd Kills The Murderer, Lupin.

Todd Kills The Murderer, Lupin.

Todd made one of his old faces. He must at that moment have fancied himself engaged upon his ancient business in the cellars beneath his house in Fleet Street, or he never could have made the sort of face which had become so very incidental to him in that locality.

The body fell huddled up, and the change that rapidly took place in the countenance, was something truly awful to behold; but it had not much effect upon Todd. He had struck many a man down to rise no more, against whom he had no cause of suspicion or of dread; and it was not likely that he would scruple to do so to one whom he both feared and hated as he did Mr. Lupin.

"That is done!" said Todd, as he slowly let his arm droop until the stick touched the ground; and then relinquishing his grasp of it, he let it fall entirely. "That is done!"

A slight noise close at hand made the murderer start, and caused the blood to turn cold around his heart from very abject fear that there had been some witness to his crime.

"What was that?" he said, "what was that?"

All was still again. It was but some wild bird taking flight from a low branch of a neighbouring tree, not liking the vicinity of man, and especially such a man as Mr. Todd; for we may well suppose even those

little feathered fragile things are gifted with some of that physiognomical power that seems to be an attribute or an instinct of all animals, with regard to the human race.

"It was nothing," said Todd very gently. "It was nothing at all. This has been an easily done deed, and a safe one. Nearly noiseless, too. It may be many a long day ere the body be discovered. I will drag it in among the bushes, so as to hide it for as long a space as may be, else if it were found early it would be a kind of index to my route, and would, at all events, show that I had been here."

Full of this idea, Todd laid hold of the body and turned it back upwards. He even did not like to look in the face more than he could help. Then seizing the corpse by the collar of his coat, he dragged it into the hollow space among the bushes, and cast it down, saying as he did so—

"Rest you there, Mr. Lupin. I have only saved the hangman, after all, the trouble of taking your life, for I can feel well assured, that such would have been your end. You thought yourself a clever fellow, but after all you were nothing to me. Rest there; you were useful up to the moment that we reached the wood, and were in comparative safety. After that, you became an encumbrance, and so I have got rid of you, as I am in the habit of doing all such encumbrances to my views."

Sweeney Todd then crept out from among the bushes, and after having cast the stick with which he had done the murder in among the bushes on top of the body, he walked rapidly away to another part of the wood.

Ever and anon he stopped to listen if he could catch the slightest indication of the presence of any one else in the wood; but all was still, save now and then the song of some wild bird, as it lit for a few moments upon the branch of some tree, to warble a few notes, and then dart off again into the fresh and fragrant air.

"I am safe here," muttered Todd, "I am safe here for the present, and until nightfall I will remain; but between this time and sunset, I must determine what I shall do, and it must be done quickly, for on the

morrow the pursuit will be of a wider, as well as of a closer character than what it has been to-day."

CHAPTER CXL.
SHOWS HOW THE NEWS OF TODD'S ESCAPE WAS RECEIVED BY ALL CONCERNED.

Having traced Todd and Lupin thus far in their escape from the meshes in which the law had so properly bound them, we will now for a time leave the arch-villain Todd in Caen Wood, Hampstead Heath, while we take a glance at what ensued in London, upon the escape of the two worthies from Newgate.

It has often been remarked, that one person in London does not trouble himself about his neighbour's affairs, as is done in smaller communities, or know what is happening in his immediate vicinity; but it is likewise true, that nowhere does news travel so fast, or acquire so many exaggerations, as in London.

Thus, then, in the course of a few hours, there was scarcely a person in the metropolis that was not aware of the escape of Sweeney Todd and Mr. Josiah Lupin from Newgate. And not only were they aware of the mere fact of the escape, but women had added so many extravagances to the whole affair, that it was quite wonderful to think of the fertility of invention of the illiterate persons who had added so many wonders and exaggerations to the real facts of the case, which, after all, lay, as the reader knows well, in a very small compass indeed, considering the magnitude of the result.

Nor were the newspapers published on the ensuing morning at all backward in pandering to popular taste by making the affair as striking and as wonderful as they possibly could.

In one quarter of the town it was firmly believed that not only had Todd and Lupin set Newgate on fire, but that they had murdered the governor and half a dozen turnkeys, and then made their way into the Old Bailey through the ruins of the prison over the dead bodies of their victims.

In another part of London it was currently reported that an infuriated mob had attacked the prison, for the purpose of taking out Todd and hanging him forthwith, and that in the midst of the confusion incidental to such a scene, he had succeeded in making his escape in the disguise of a turnkey, with a huge bunch of keys in his hand as a symbol of his profession.

Then again, in the highly religious district of Islington, it was fully believed, and, in fact, cried through the streets, that his Infernal Majesty, in his own proper person, had called at Newgate at about half past twelve at night, and taken away both the prisoners at once without any further ceremony.

But all these idle rumours might be safely left to sink or swim as the incredulity or the credulity of their authors and hearers might determine, since it was after all only to a very few persons that the escape of Sweeney Todd was of the smallest importance, and, to still from that, the fate of Mr. Lupin was of any importance at all.

The persons with whose feelings and wishes we and our readers feel interested, are those to whom the escape of Todd presented grounds for some anxious and painful reflections; and it is to them and their proceedings that we would now draw the attention of our readers.

One of the first persons to whom the news was taken in a clear and compact unexaggerated form, was Sir Richard Blunt, and at an early hour of the morning he was roused from his rest by a messenger, who presented him with a brief note, containing only the following words from the Secretary of Newgate—

"Newgate.
"SIR,

"The prisoner, Sweeney Todd, has escaped from the jail, along with one Josiah Lupin.

I am, Sir, Yours Obediently,
"JOHN SMITH."

"The deuce he has!" cried Sir Richard, as he sprung out of bed and began to dress himself with unusual speed, for Sir Richard seldom did anything in a hurry, as experience had long since told him how very little was gained by hurry and how much was sometimes lost.

As soon as he got his things on, he descended to his private room, and there found an officer from the prison waiting to give him the particulars of the escape, which was done in a very few words.

"And they are clear off?" said Sir Richard.

"Quite so sir."

"Well, after this, I rather think the Secretary of State will agree with my opinion, that it is not bolts and locks and bars that are to be trusted to, to keep notorious and bold malefactors in prison, but a stout and watchful personal superintendence; and until that is the case, there will be continual prison escapes. Such a man as Todd should not have been allowed to be for five minutes quite alone."

"I think so, too," said the officer; "and there's another thing must be put a stop to before any good is done in Newgate."

"What's that, my friend?"

"Why, Sir Richard, the religious ladies must be stopped from coming in. The moment now that any notorious malefactor is cast for death, the prison is besieged by religious ladies, who, if they had their own way, would eat, drink, and sleep with him in his cell; and they bring in all sorts of things that are quite enough to help the fellow out of limbo. Why, Sir Richard, there was Michael Richardson that was cast for death

for murdering his wife; a religious lady came to pray with him, and brought him in files and tools enough for him to get out of the stone jug, and off they both went together to America."

"It is a serious evil."

"I believe you, Sir Richard; and, I think, the only way will be to let 'em all know that before they pass the lobby they will be well searched by a couple of turnkeys."

"That ought to stop them," said Sir Richard, as he rung the bell sharply. "You may depend upon it I will mention your suggestion to the Secretary of State."

One of the magistrate's servants now made his appearance in answers to the summons by the bell.

"My horse directly, Jones," said Sir Richard Blunt.

"Yes, sir."

In the course of ten minutes, Sir Richard Blunt was mounted, and off at a good trot to the City. Any one would have thought that he was going to Newgate; but such was not the case. The prisoners had flown, and he felt that by going to the prison he could only gratify his curiosity by seeing the precise mode in which they had effected their escape, when by going where he did go, he might do some good.

He did not halt until he found himself at the shop of old Mr. Oakley, and then, although the hour was a very early one, he knocked at the door. Mr. Oakley put his head out at the window, and Sir Richard said—

"Don't be alarmed; I only want to speak to you for a few moments."

"Oh, dear me, yes," said the old man. "I'm coming down stairs directly—I'm coming."

In a few moments the old spectacle-maker opened the door, and came out to the side of the horse, from which the magistrate did not dismount, but leaning down to Mr. Oakley, he said, in an earnest tone—

"There's no occasion for any alarm, but I have come to tell you that Sweeney Todd has escaped from prison."

"Oh, Lord!"

"Hush! It is of no great moment. Where is your daughter and Mr. Ingestrie? I must put them upon their guard against anything that may arise, for there is no exactly saying what that rascal, Todd, may be at."

"Oh, he will murder everybody."

"I think, Mr. Oakley that is going just a little too far, for I will take good care that he don't murder me, nor any one else, if I can by any possibility help it. I will soon have him, I think. Where is Mr. Ingestrie, Mr. Oakley?"

"Oh, dear, they are at the new house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. It's just opposite to the water if you go—"

"I know all about it, thank you, Mr. Oakley. All's right. Be under no apprehension, and above all things, don't you believe one word of anything you hear about Todd from popular rumour or from the newspapers. I will let you know everything that is of any consequence, personally or by letter. Good morning. I hope Mrs. Oakley is quite well this morning?"

"Yes, charming; but, dear me!"

"Yes, it is dear me. Good morning."

Away rode the magistrate, and now he put his horse, which was a good one, to a smart trot, and made his way to Colonel Jeffery's house in a very short space of time; for London was not quite so large as it is now, and it was not a day's journey to go from one house to another if your friends happened to reside at different ends of the town. The colonel, at that hour of the morning, was up and walking in his garden. When Sir Richard Blunt was announced, he guessed at once that something very unusual had taken place; and after shaking hands, he said—

"I know there's some news. Sir Richard. Is it pleasant, or the other way?"

"In truth," said Sir Richard, "that is a question I can scarcely answer you yet. All I have got to say is, that you had better look out, for they have let Todd get out of Newgate."

"Escaped?"

"Exactly so."

"Now that is too bad. One would really have thought they would have taken care of such a fellow as that. How in the name of all that's abominable is it, that if any one escapes from Newgate, it is sure to be some notorious rascal who ought by all means to be the most carefully kept in it."

"Ah! that I don't know, but I quite agree with you that it is a fact nevertheless."

"It's a very awkward thing, and I am particularly obliged to you for coming to let me know."

"Why, the fact is, colonel, my opinion of Todd is just this: that now he has lost all his money he is just like a wild beast, and that revenge against all and every one who has been instrumental in bringing him to his present condition, will be the dominant feeling in his breast."

"Not a doubt of it."

"Then by awaking you to a sense of this danger both to yourself and to your *protege*, young Tobias, I am doing my duty. It is not courage that will protect any one from Sweeney Todd. If that had been the case, this is the last house I should have dreamt of coming to with a warning; but it will be only by the greatest circumspection that his attempt to assassinate may be avoided, and the villain foiled."

"I thank you with all my heart, and feel the truth of your observation. I will not mention the matter to poor Tobias, for I feel that it would drive him half mad with terror; but I will take care to keep such a watch upon him, that no harm can come to him from Todd, now that I know that there is danger. He may, of course, hear of the affair from other sources, but he shall not from me."

"That is right. Mind you, colonel, I don't think this state of alarm must last long, and as regards Tobias, I am in hope that at the same time he hears of Todd's escape, he may hear of his recapture, for I am going to set about that as soon as I possibly can, after I have warned every one interested to keep themselves on the look-out concerning the rascal."

"You think you will have him again?"

"Oh, yes. He must be without resources, or, at all events, comparatively so; and under such circumstances, we shall soon trace him. Besides, he is rather a remarkable man, and one who, once seen, is not only easily known again, but easily described; so that when I set all the agencies on foot which I have at my command to find him out, he cannot for long elude me."

"I sincerely wish you every success."

"Thank you, colonel, for I must now be off, for I have to get to Chelsea to warn the Ingestries of the possible, if not the probable danger of Todd trying some delectable scheme of revenge against them, for he is most furious I know against Johanna."

"Off with you, Sir Richard, at once. Do not let me detain you, when you are upon such an errand. I would not have any harm come to Mrs. Ingestrie for worlds."

"Nor I. Good morning."

The magistrate mounted his horse again, and waving his hand to the colonel, he again started at a good round trot, and made the best of his way by the nearest possible route he could to Chelsea, where Mr. and Mrs. Ingestrie had set up housekeeping in Cheyne Walk.

That portion of Chelsea was then very fashionable, and from the appearance of the houses even now, it is very easy to see that it must have been a very desirable place at one time. All the evidences of wealthy ease meet you on every hand, as you look at those broad, well-put together, aristocratic residences, with their pretty bit of highly cultivated garden in front of them, and their massive doorways.

It was in one of these houses that Johanna and her young husband had taken up their residence. The string of pearls had been actually purchased by royalty of Johanna, and had produced a sum of money that had not only placed the young couple above all the ordinary pecuniary accidents of life, but had enabled them to surround Mr. and Mrs. Oakley with comforts, although the old spectacle-maker, from very habit, would stick to his shop, declaring, and no doubt with great truth, that his daily labour was now such a thing of habit that he would be miserable without it.

It was a very different thing, though, for old Mr. Oakley now to work at the bench in his shop, when he felt that he was placed above the real necessity for doing so, to when he had worked very hard indeed to support himself and Johanna, during the period, too, when in consequence of Mrs. Oakley's rather insane predilection for the Reverend Josiah Lupin, there was no comfort in the house, and, but for Johanna, all would have gone to rack and ruin.

The frightfully dirty ditch that lies before and beyond Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, was not then in existence, so that the really handsome row of residences was not destroyed—as it is now—by such dubious companionship. The river, too, was much clearer than now of craft, and likewise much sweeter, so that really at times, when the sun shone upon its ripples, it really deserved the title of "The Silver Thames."

It was still an early hour when Sir Richard Blunt reached Chelsea—that is to say, it was what then was considered an early hour, for all the world was not in the hurry that is the fashion now, and people did everything in a much more easy and deliberate way than they do now.

What is gained, or pretended to be gained, by all the hurry-skurry and jostling and driving that characterises society at present? We must confess ourselves at a loss to imagine, and we are decidedly of opinion that people were both happier and better when everything was taken in an easy way, and when folks did not disturb their dignities by all sorts of frantic manoeuvres to save time, as if the whole end and aim of life was

to get through as much of what is called business as possible, and as if the principal business of everybody was not to be as quiet and comfortable as possible.

The magistrate could not but pause for a moment as he reached Cheyne Walk and saw the bright sun shining upon the water, and gilding with beauty the sails of some small craft that were taking advantage of a light pleasant breeze to get along without labour.

"A pretty enough place this," he said, "and I don't know any that I should prefer to idle away my life in, if I had nothing to do, as I hope to have some of these odd days—but not yet."

CHAPTER CXLI.
SHOWS HOW TODD MADE UP HIS MIND TO VENGEANCE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sir Richard Blunt Pays A Visit To Johanna, At Chelsea.

"Yes, I am happy. Mark! Mark! here is Sir Richard come to breakfast with us."

"Nay, I did not think of dismounting."

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

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

It did not escape the observation of Johanna that there was a cloud of seriousness upon the countenance of Sir Richard Blunt; but she did not make any remark, although each moment she felt more and more convinced that it was some matter of business that called the magistrate to their abode so early; for it will be remembered that although he had transacted a good quantity of business, the day was yet very young.

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

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

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

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

"It's the view in-doors," smiled Mark, "that to me is so delightful and so full of animation."

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

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

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

"Indeed?" said Mark.

"Yes, to be sure," added Johanna, "for you know one is either obliged to hear the compliments, which feed no one but with false viands, or leave the table upon which there may be something much more substantial and decidedly more palatable."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Something has happened!" said Johanna.

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

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

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

"No—no," said Johanna.

"I will not."

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

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

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

"The villain!" cried Mark.

"Hush!" said Johanna. "Oh, hush, Mark!"

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

"We thank you from our hearts," said Johanna.

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

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

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

"All that is true," said Johanna, "most true."

"You now really alarm me!" said Mark.

"Then I did not mean to do so. All I wished was that you should be made aware of the real extent of the possible danger. For myself, I look upon all such men as Sweeney Todd as mad men, to a certain extent; and now that he is deprived of his money, there is no knowing but he may be willing to sacrifice his life for the gratification of, no doubt, one of the most powerful feelings of his mind, which is revenge!"

"No doubt," said Johanna.

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

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

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

"Is it likely, sir?"

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

"Then there is a hope," said Johanna.

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

"And if he does?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Certainly," he replied.

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

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

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

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

"Oh, yes—yes," said Johanna.

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

"None in the least," cried Mark.

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

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

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

"The secret shall be kept."

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

"I know it," said Ingestrie.

"That is well. And now good-day."

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

CHAPTER CXLII.
RETURNS TO TODD IN THE WOOD AT HAMPSTEAD.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What a delightful thing, now, it would be," he muttered, "if I could poison the whole lot of them at once, with some drug that would give them the most excruciating agony! And then I should like to go round to them all, and shout in their ears—'I did it!—I, Sweeney Todd, did it!' That would be glorious, indeed! Ha! ha!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No—no; I will never be the slave of such wild fancies! This is no time for me to give way to a belief in these things, which all my life I have laughed to scorn! If I had believed what the world pretends to believe, I must have been stark staring mad to load my soul with guilt in the way I have done, if my recompense had been the accumulated wealth of all the kingdoms of the earth; for death would, despite all that, come and rob me of all, leaving me poor as any beggar who lays him down by the road side to die!"

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

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

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

"Ha!—ha!"

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

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

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

"I must not venture forth yet," he said, "but in another hour it will be dark alike upon the heath as in the wood, and then I will go into the village and get some refreshment, after which, I rather think, that London, with all its dangers, will be the best place for me. I have heard

of people hiding there for many a day. I wonder, now, if a lodging in the Old Bailey would be a good thing? Surely they would never think of looking for me there."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Bills?"

"Yes, sir, about the murderer Todd, you know!"

"Oh, ah!"

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

"Very."

"All the bill-stickers round London have had a job in putting up the bills, and they say that if it costs a million of money they intend to have him."

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

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

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

"There's something in that, sir, as you say, but yet I would have a try. Five hundred pounds, you know, sir, is not to be picked up everyday on the road-side."

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

"Yes, right on. I live at west-end, and my way lays this way. Good night, sir!"

"Good night," said Todd. "I hope you may have the luck of meeting with this Todd, and so earning the five hundred pounds you mention; but I am afraid, after all, there is not much chance, for I heard he had gone down to the coast, and had got on board a vessel and was off by this time. That may not be true, though. Goodnight!"

CHAPTER CXLIII.
TODD TAKES A LOOK AT HIS OLD QUARTERS IN FLEET STREET.

The village of Hampstead was, at the time of which we write, really a village. It still retains many of its old houses and picturesque beauties, but it is not quite such a little retired spot as it was. If ever any one walked through Hampstead, however, who was less inclined than another to pause and speculate upon its beauties, certainly that man was our doubtful acquaintance, Sweeney Todd.

He did not think it quite prudent to stop in the High Street to solace himself with any worldly comforts, although he saw several public-houses very temptingly open, but passing right on, he descended Red Lion Hill, and paused at a little inn at the foot of it, that is to say, on the London side of the pretty village.

Brandy was Todd's request, and he was met by a prompt, "Yes, sir;" but Todd had, among his varied experiences, to find out what Hampstead brandy was, and the moment he placed a portion of it in his mouth, his eyes goggled furiously, and spitting it out, he said, in a voice of anger—

"This is some mistake."

"Mistake, sir?"

"Yes; I asked for brandy, and you have given me the rinsings of some bottles and dirty glasses."

"Oh, dear no, sir; that brandy is the very best that you will get in all Hampstead."

"The best in all Hampstead!" repeated Todd, with a groan; "what must the worst be, I wonder?"

"I assure you, sir, it is considered to be very good."

"Considered?" said Todd. "Then, my friend, there's your money, and as the brandy is considered to be so good, you can drink it; but having some respect, from old companionship, for my inside, I decline it. Good evening."

With these words, Todd laid a shilling upon the bar, and strode away.

"Well," said the publican, "how singular! that's the eighth person who has refused that one quartern of brandy and paid for it. Here, wife, put this back into the bottle again, and shake it up well."

Todd pursued his route down Haverstock Hill, until he came to the then straggling district of Camden Town, and there he did find a house at which he got just a tolerable glass of brandy, and feeling very much invigorated by the drop, he walked on more rapidly still; and a thought took possession of him, which, although it was perhaps not unattended with danger, might turn out to be a very felicitous one.

During his career in the shop in Fleet Street, he had collected a number of watches from the pockets of the murdered persons, but he had always been afraid to attempt the disposal of the best of them.

The fact was, that at that time everybody had not a watch as at present. It was an expensive article, and Mr. So-and-so's watch was as well known as Mr. So-and-so himself; so that it would have been one of the most hazardous things possible for Todd to have brought suspicion upon himself by going about disposing of the watches of his victims. It was the same, too, with some other costly articles, such as rings, lockets, and so on; and as he had realised as much money as he could previous to his arrangements for leaving England, Todd had left some of this description of property to perish in the fire, which he hoped to be the means of igniting in old Fleet Street upon his departure.

Now, as he crept along by Tottenham-Court-Road, he mused upon the state of things.

"If," he muttered, "I could only get into my late house in Fleet Street, I know where to lay my hand upon portable property, which was not worth my consideration while I had thousands of pounds in gold, but which now would be a fortune to me in my reduced circumstances. If I could but lay my hand upon it!"

The more Todd thought over this proposition, the more pleased he was with it; and by the time he had indulged himself with two more glasses of brandy, it began to assume, to his mind, a much more tangible shape.

"It may be done," he said, "it surely may be done. If I could only make my way in the church it might be done well, and surely one of these picklocks that I have about me might enable me to do that."

The picklock he alluded to was one that he had put in his pocket to accommodate Mr. Lupin, when they were both so intent upon their escape from Newgate, and when Mr. Lupin was foolish enough to believe that Todd really had two thousand pounds buried in Caen Wood, Hampstead. There was one thing, however, which made Todd pause. He did not think he was sufficiently disguised to venture into the locality of his old residence, and, unfortunately for him, he was rather a peculiar-looking man. His great chance, however, was, that in Fleet Street surely no one would now think of looking for Sweeney Todd.

"I must be bold," he said, "I must be bold and resolute. It will not do to shrink now. I will buy a knife."

This was a pleasant idea to Todd. Buying a knife seemed almost like getting half-way to his revenge, and he went into an obscure cutler's shop, and bought a long double-edged knife, for which he gave two shillings. He then carefully concealed it in his clothing.

After this, he hit upon a plan of operations which he thought would have the effect of disguising him. At that period, wigs were so commonly worn that it was nothing at all particular for a person to go into a wig-makers,

and select one—put it on—pay for it—and go away!

"Yes," said Todd, "I will buy a wig; for I have art enough and knowledge of wigs to enable me to do so—as shall produce the greatest possible change in my appearance. A wig, a wig will be the thing."

Todd had hardly well made this declaration than he came upon a wig-makers, and in he went. Pointing to a wig that was on a block, and which had a very clerical kind of look, he inquired the price of it.

"Oh, my dear sir," said the wig-maker, "that is much too old looking a perriwig for you. Let me recommend you a much younger wig. Now, sir, here's one that will take a matter of ten years off your age in a moment."

Todd had discretion enough to know well that he could not make up young, so he merely pointed to the wig again and enquired the price.

"Well, sir, it is a couple of guineas, but—"

Without another word, Todd laid down the couple of guineas, and putting the wig upon his head he left the shop, certainly having given the wig-maker an impression that he was the oddest customer he had had for some time; but little did he suspect that that odd customer was the criminal with whose name all London was ringing, and upon whose head —with or without a wig—so heavy a price was set.

After this, Todd made his way to a shop where second-hand clothing was bought and sold, and there he got accommodated with an old gray coat that reached down to the calves of his legs, and he bought likewise a very voluminous white cravat; and when he got into the street with these articles, and purchased at another shop a walking cane, with a great silver top to it, and put one hand behind his back and stooped very much, and moved along as if he were afflicted with all the corns and bunions that his toes could carry, and by bending his knees, decreased his height six inches, no one could have known him.

At least, so Todd flattered himself.

In this way he tottered on until he got to the immediate neighbourhood of Fleet Street. To be sure, with all his coolness and courage, he could not help shaking a little when he came to that well remembered neighbourhood.

"And I," he thought to himself, "and I by this time hoped and expected to be far over the sea, instead of being such a wretch as I am now, crawling about, as it were, amid pitfalls and all sorts of dangers! Alas! alas!"

He really shook now, and it was quite astonishing how, with his old wig, and his old gray coat and his stick, and his stooping posture, old and venerable, yes, positively venerable, Sweeney Todd actually looked.

"Ain't you well, sir?" said a respectable man, stepping up to him. "Can I assist you?"

Todd perpetrated about half a dozen wheezing coughs, and then, not sorry for an opportunity of trying his powers of imitation of age, he replied in a tremulous voice—

"Ah, sir! Yes—old age—old age, sir—eugh!—eugh!—oh, dear me, I feel that I am on my last legs, and that they are on the shake—old age, sir, will come on; but it's a comfort to look back upon a long life well spent in deeds of charity!"

"Not a doubt of it," said the stranger. "I was only afraid, sir, you were taken suddenly ill, as you stood there."

"Oh, no—no—eugh!—no. Thank you, sir."

"Good evening, sir."

"Good evening, my good sir. Oh, if I had you only in my old shop with a razor at your throat, wouldn't I polish you off!" muttered Todd, as the stranger left him.

In the course of another minute, Todd was on the Fleet Street side of Temple Bar.

He could almost see his old house—that house in which he had passed years of deep iniquity, and which he had hoped, ere that time, would have been a heap of ruins. There it was, tall, dismal, and gaunt looking. The clock of St. Dunstan's struck eleven.

"Eleven," he muttered. "A good hour. The streets are getting deserted now, and no one will know me. I will stoop yet more, and try to look older—older still."

Todd a little over acted his part, as he tottered down Fleet Street, so that some individuals turned to look after him, which was a thing he certainly did not wish, as his great object was to escape all observation if possibly he could; so he corrected that, and went on rather more strongly; and finally he came exactly opposite to his own house, and getting partially into a door-way, he looked long and fixedly at it.

What thoughts, at that time, chased each other through the guilty mind of that man, it is hard to say; but he stood like a statue, fixing his regards upon the house for the space of about a quarter of an hour.

Once only he clapped his teeth together, and gave a sort of savage growl.

It was lucky for Todd that no one saw him just then, or they would have thought him rather an extraordinary old man.

The house was perfectly dark from top to bottom. The shutters of the shop, of course, were all up, and the shutters of the first-floor windows were likewise closed. The other windows had their old dingy blinds all down; and, to all outward appearance, that den of murder was deserted.

But Todd could not believe such to be the case. In his own mind, he felt fully sure, that Sir Richard Blunt was not the man to leave the house without some sort of custody; and he quite settled with himself, that there was some one or more persons minding it, and, no doubt, by order, sitting there in one of the back rooms, so that no light should show in front.

"Curses on them all!" he muttered.

"Ah! you are looking at old Todd's house, sir?" said a voice.

Todd started; and close to him was a person smoking a pipe, and looking as jolly as possible.

"Yes—yes," stammered Todd, for he was taken by surprise rather. "Oh, yes, sir. I am amazed at the great wickedness of human nature."

"You may well, sir—you may well! Lord bless me! I never thought him a good looking man, but I never thought any ill of him neither, and I have seen him lots of times."

"Indeed, sir? Pray, what sort of man was he? I never saw him, as I live in Soho; and I am so much in years now, that in the bustling day-time I don't care to come into streets like this; for you see, sir, I can't move about as I could sixty years ago; and the people—God help them—are all in such a hurry now, and they push me here and there in such a way, that my failing breath and limbs won't stand it; and—and—eugh!—eugh! Oh, dear."

"Poor old gentleman! I don't wonder at your not liking the crowds. How old may you be, sir?'"

"A matter of eighty-nine, sir. It's an old age to get to, but I—I am younger than my brother, yet—Ha! ha! Oh dear, if it wasn't now for the rheumatism and the lumbago and a pain in my shoulder, and a few other little things, I should get on very well."

"Not a doubt of it. But you asked me what Todd was like, and I'll tell you, sir. He was nigh upon six feet high, and his face was two feet of it. He was just as ugly as any one you would wish to see for a pattern in that way, and that's his house where he murdered all the people."

"Peace be to their souls!"

"Amen! And there are underground places that lead right away through the vaults of St. Dunstan's to Bell-yard, where Mrs. Lovett's pie-shop was, you know, sir."

"I have heard. Ah, dear—dear, I have heard. A very wicked woman, indeed—very wicked; and yet, sir, it is to be hoped she has found mercy in another world."

"There would need be plenty of it," said the man with the pipe, "if Mrs. Lovett is to be accommodated with any."

"My friend," said Todd, "don't be profane; and now I must go, as I don't like being out late."

"And so must I, for my pipe's out. I shall turn in, now. Good night, sir, and a pleasant walk home to you."

"Thank you, sir, thank you—eugh! eugh! I think if it were not for my cough, I should do very well."

Todd hobbled away, and the man, who lived in Bouverie Street, went home. Todd had not got any real information from this man; but the brief conversation he had had with him, had given him a sort of confidence in his disguise, and in his power of acting, that he had not had before, so that, upon the whole, he was not sorry for the little incident.

And now it was quite evident that the streets were getting very much deserted. During the whole length of Fleet Street there was not half a dozen persons to be seen at all, and Todd, after casting a rapid glance around him to note if he were observed, suddenly crossed the way, and boldly went up to the door of old St. Dunstan's Church.

When once close to the door of the old building, he was so much in shadow that he felt tolerably secure from observation, but still he lingered a little, for he did not want to do anything so hastily as to rob it of its caution.

With his back against the church-door he glanced right and left, and then for the space of five minutes he bent all his faculties to the one task of ascertaining if any one was sufficiently near to watch him, and he got perfectly satisfied that such was not the case. He stood securely against the old church-door.

"So far," he muttered, "I am safe—quite safe."

CHAPTER CXLIV.
TODD MAKES HIS WAY INTO HIS OWN HOUSE.

When Todd was satisfied that he was not watched or even observed by any one, he turned and commenced operations upon the door of the church. The cunning person who had put on the lock, had had a notion in his necromantic head, that the larger you made a lock the better it was, and the less likely to be picked; and the consequence of this was, that Todd found no difficulty in opening the church-door.

The moment he felt the lock yield to the false key he employed, he took another keen glance around him, and, seeing no one, slipped into the sacred edifice and closed the door behind him. Feeling, then, up and down the door until his hand touched a bolt, he shot it into its socket, and then a feeling of great security took possession of him, although the interior of the church was most profoundly dark, and any one would have thought that such a man as Todd—in such a place—could hardly have been free from some superstitious terrors. An overbearing selfishness, however, mingled with the most vengeful and angry feelings, kept Todd above all these sensations, which are mostly the result of vacant mindedness.

The church felt cold, and the silence had about it a character such as the silence of no other kind of place has. It may be imagination, but the silence of a church deserted, always appears to us to be a silence different from any other, as the silence in a wood is entirely different from any other description of stillness.

"All is quiet enough here," whispered Todd. "I and the dead have this place to ourselves now, and so we have often had it. Many a time have I waded about this building in the still hours of the night, when all London slept, and opened some little window, with the hope of letting out the stench from the dead bodies before the morning should bring people to the building; but it would not do. The smell of decomposition lingered in the air, and it is here still, though not so bad. Yes, it is here still! I can smell it now, and I know the odour well."

Todd was sufficiently familiar with St. Dunstan's church almost to go over it even at that hour, and amid that darkness, without running against anything; but yet he was very careful as he went, and kept his arms outstretched before him. He dreaded to get a light, although he had the means of doing so, for Mr. Lupin had, at his request, given him some of the matches and little wax-candle-ends that the pious lady had supplied him with. Yet Todd knew how small a light would suffice to shine through some of the richly stained glass windows of the church, and therefore he dreaded to give himself a light.

He felt confident that he should have no sort of difficulty in getting into the vaults, for in consequence of recent events the stone that covered up the entrance could not be fast, and he knew from past experience that his strength was sufficient to raise it if he once got hold of it, and if it were not fastened down by cement, which, no doubt, was not the case now.

"I shall yet get," he said, "into my old house. The time has been rather short, and the goods there deposited by me in old times may there remain; and if so, I will carry away enough with me to keep me far above the necessities of life, and when once I have achieved that much, I will from some obscure place meditate upon my revenge."

In the course of about ten minutes he found the flat stone that led into the vaults, and to his satisfaction he found that it was merely laid crosswise over the aperture, in order to prevent any one in day time from

heedlessly tumbling in, but at night it was not, of course, expected that any one would be there to fall into such a danger.

With one effort Todd removed it.

"Good," he said. "Now I can make my way, and once below the level of the floor of the church, there will be no danger in at once accommodating myself with a light, which will be useful enough in the vaults."

Getting upon his hands and knees now, Todd, for fear of a fall down the stone steps, cautiously got down the first few of them, and then he paused to light one of the bits of taper with which he was provided. In the course of a few moments the tiny flame was clear and bright, and shading it with his hand, Todd carefully descended the remainder of the stairs.

How still everything was in those vaults of old St. Dunstan's. Were there no spirits from another world—spirits of the murdered, to flit in horrible palpability before the eyes of that man who had cut short their thread of life? Surely if ever a visitant from another world could have been expected, it would have been to appear to Todd to convince him that there was more beyond the grave than a forgotten name and a mouldering skeleton.

When he reached the foot of the stairs and was satisfied that the little light was burning well, he held it up above his head and bent a keen glance around him.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, "so they have been doing their best—poor fools as they are to meddle with such rubbish—to rid the family vaults of some of the new tenants that I took occasion to introduce into them. Well, let them, let them! I did play a little havoc with the gentility of the dead, I must admit!"

With this highly jocose remark, Todd passed on, taking a route well known to him, which would conduct him to the cellar that it will be recollected was immediately underneath his shop. It was from this that

he hoped to get into the house.

Todd In The Scene Of His Murders.

Todd In The Scene Of His Murders.

It took Todd much less time than it would have taken any one else to make his way to that cellar; but then no one was or could be so well acquainted with all the windings and turnings of the excavation that led to it as he, and finally he reached it, just as he found the necessity of lighting up another little piece of wax candle, as the one he had already lit had burnt right to his hand. He found a piece of wood, into which he stuck the new one securely, so that it was much handier to hold.

Todd now felt the absolute necessity of being much more cautious than before, for he did know who might be in the shop above, and he did know that a very small sound below would make itself heard. Holding up the light, he saw that his nice little mechanical arrangement regarding the two chairs, remained just as it had been as he used to use it.

"Ah!" he cried, "it will be some time in London again before people will sit down in a barber's chair with anything like confidence, particularly if it should chance to be a fixture. Ha!"

Todd was getting quite merry now. The sight of the old familiar objects of that place had certainly raised his spirits very considerably, and no doubt the brandy had helped a little. Setting the light down in a corner of the cellar, he placed himself in an attitude of intense listening, which he kept up for about five minutes, at the end of which time he gave a nod, and muttered—

"There may be some one in the parlour—that I will not pretend to say no to; but the shop is free of human occupants. And now for the means of getting into it. If anybody can, I can, and that with tolerable ease, too."

The apparatus by which Todd had been in the habit of letting down his customers, consisted of a slight system of lever, which he could move from the parlour, but provided he could reach so high, he could just as easily release the loose plank from where he was; in which case the chair that was above would have a preponderating influence, as that was on the heaviest arm of the plank from the centre upon which it turned.

"I can manage that," he said; and then taking the knife from his pocket, he found that by its aid he could just reach high enough to touch the lever that acted as a kind of bolt to keep the plank in its place. The moment he removed that bolt the plank slowly moved, and then Todd caught the end of it in his hand, and pulled it right down, so that it assumed a perpendicular aspect completely. Holding then the piece of wood to which he had attached the wax light in his mouth, he climbed carefully and noiselessly up into his old shop; and when there he replaced the plank, and on the end of the board which was the counterpoise to the chair, he placed a weight, which he knew where to lay his hands upon, and which kept the chair in its place, although a very little would have overcome the counterpoise, and sent it down to the cellar below.

Todd extinguished his light, and the moment he did so, he saw a very faint illumination coming from the parlour through a portion of the door, into which a square of glass was let in, and through which he, Todd, used to glare at poor Tobias.

The sound of voices, too, came upon his ears, and he laid himself flat down on the floor, close to the wall, under a kind of bench that ran along it for a considerable distance.

"I am certain I heard something," said a voice, and then the parlour-door was opened, and a broad flash of light came into the shop. "I am quite sure I heard an odd noise."

"Oh, nonsense," said some one else. "Nonsense."

"But I did, I tell you."

"Yes, you fancied it half-an-hour ago, and it turned out to be nothing at all. Lord bless you, if I were to go on fancying things out of what I have heard since I have been in this house, minding it for Sir Richard Blunt, I should have been out of my mind long before this, I can tell you."

"But it was very odd."

"Well, the shop is not so large: you can soon see if Todd is in it. Ha! ha! ha!"

"No, no, I don't expect to see Todd there exactly, I confess; it would not be a very likely place in which to find him."

"Well, is there anything now?"

"No—no. It all seems much as usual, and yet I thought I did hear a noise; but I suppose it was nothing, or a rat, perhaps, for there are lots, they say, below. It might have been a rat. I did not think that before, and I feel all the easier now at the idea."

"Then, come and finish our game."

"Very good—all's right. You make a little drop of brandy-and-water, and we will just have this game out before we go to rest, for I am getting tired and it's late."

"Not quite twelve yet."

"Ain't it? There it goes by St. Dunstan's clock."

Todd counted the strokes of the clock, and by the time they ceased to reverberate in the night air, the man who most unquestionably had heard a noise in the shop, had gone into the parlour again, half satisfied that it was a rat, and sat down to the game at cards that had been interrupted.

These were two men that had been put into the house to mind it, until the authorities should determine what to do with it, by Sir Richard Blunt. They were not officers of any skill or repute, although they were both constables; but then Sir Richard did not consider that anything in the shape of great intelligence was required in merely taking care of an

empty house—for the idea of Todd ever visiting that place again, had certainly been one that did not even enter the far-seeing brain of the magistrate.

"It's my deal," Todd heard one of them say, "but you go on, while I mix the brandy-and-water."

"Indeed!" muttered Todd, as he gathered up his gaunt form from under the bench. "Indeed! So there are two of you, are there? Well, if there is another world, you can keep each other company on your road to it, for I am not going to let your lives stand in the way of my projects. No—no, I shall yet polish off somebody in my old place, and it is a pleasure that it should be two friends of that man Blunt, whom I so hate, that I have no words in which to express it!"

Todd crept up to the parlour door with the long knife in his hand that he had bought at the cutler's in Camden Town, and putting his eyes close to the pane of glass in the door, he looked in at the two men.

They really seemed to be quite comfortable, those two men. A bright fire was burning in the grate, and a kettle was singing away upon the hob at a great rate. A pack of cards, some pipes, and some glasses, were upon the table that they had dragged up close to the fire-side; and they were, take them altogether, about as comfortable as anybody could well expect to be in that gloomy parlour of Todd's, at his house of murder in Fleet Street.

They were stout strong men though, and as Todd looked, he thought to himself, that with all his strength, and with all his desperate fighting for life, as he would do, it was not a desirable thing for him to come into personal contact with them.

"Cunning," he muttered, "will do more than strength. I must bide my time—but I will kill them both if they are in my way, and that they will be, is nearly past a doubt!"

"There," said the man who was mixing the brandy-and-water, "there, you will find that a stiff comfortable glass; lots of brandy, and lots of sugar, and only water enough to make it hot and steamy."

"You know how to mix, Bill," said the other, as he took a drop and then was obliged to cough and wink again, it was so strong and hot.

"Ah!" thought Todd, "if it would only choke you!"

The other man then took his drink at the brandy, and he too coughed and winked, and then they both laughed and declared how precious strong it was, and one of them said—

"The fun of it is, that it was old Todd's; and when he laid in such good stuff as this, he little thought that we would be enjoying it. I wonder where he is?"

"Oh, he's far enough off by this time, poking about at some of the sea-ports to try to get away, you may depend."

"Is he," muttered Todd; "you will find, my kind friend, that I am near enough to cut your throat, I hope."

CHAPTER CXLV.
TODD HAS A NARROW ESCAPE, AND HAS A BIT OF REVENGE.

It was quite a provoking thing, and gall and wormwood to Todd in a manner of speaking, to see those two boisterous men enjoying themselves in his parlour. There could be no doubt in the world, but that if he had had the means then and there to do so, he would have hurled destruction upon them both forthwith; but he could only look at them now, and wait for a better opportunity.

The fact was, that now, for the first time, Todd found that the architecture of his old place of residence was far from being of the most convenient order; inasmuch as you could not reach the staircase leading to the upper part of the residence, without going through the parlour; so that he was a prisoner in the shop.

"I tell you what it is, Bill," said one of the men, assuming quite a philosophical look. "That fellow, Todd, as used to live here, after all, was some use to society."

"Was he?"

"Yes, to be sure. Can't you guess?"

"Not I. I can't see what use a fellow can be to society who cuts folks' throats."

"Can't you?"

"No, nor you neither, if you come to that."

"Yes I can. Don't it make folks careful of going into a strange barber's shop, let me ask you that?"

"Oh, you idiot. That's always the way with you. You begins with looking as wise as an owl as has found out something wonderful, and then when one comes to find out what it is, it's just nothing at all to nobody. I tell you what it is, old fellow, it strikes me you are getting a drop too much."

"No—no; but I have got something on my mind."

"It stands on a very small place, then. What is it?"

"Just you listen and I'll tell you. I did think of not saying anything about it, because you see I thought, that is to say, I was afraid if I did, you would go off at once."

"Off? Off?"

"I don't mean dead—I mean out of this place, that's all, not out of this world; but now I feel as if I ought to tell you all about it, you know, and then you can judge for yourself. You know you slept here last night on that large sofa in the corner?"

"Yes, in course."

"Very good; you had had what one may call just the other drop you know, and so—"

"No I hadn't, but you had. I recollect quite well you dropped your light, and had no end of trouble to get it lighted again, and kept knocking your head against the mantel-shelf and saying 'Don't' as if somebody was doing it to you."

"Go along with you. Will you listen, or won't you, while I tell the horrid anecdote?"

"Horrid, is it?"

"Above a bit. It's enough to make all your hair stand on end, like quills on a guinea hen, as the man says in the play; and I expect you'll dream of it all night; so here goes, and don't you interrupt me any more, now."

"Go on. I won't."

"Well, you know we had a pretty good fire here, as we have now; and as twelve o'clock went ding-dong by old St. Dunstan's, we thought it was time to have some sleep, and you lay down on the sofa, saying as you could see by the fire light, while I took the candle to go up stairs to bed with, you know—old Todd's bed, I suppose it is, on the second-floor, and rather damp and thin, you know."

"Goodness, gracious! tell me something I don't know, will you? Do you want to drive a fellow out of his mind?"

"Well—well, don't be hasty! I'm getting on. I took the light, and shading it with one hand, for there's always a furious draught upon the stairs of this house; up I went, thinking of nothing at all. Well, in course, I had to pass the first-floor, which is shut up, you know, and has all sorts of things in it."

"Yes; go on—go on!"

"Is it interesting?"

"It is; only you go on. I'll warrant now it's a ghost you are coming to."

"No, it ain't; but don't percipitate, and you shall hear all about it. Let me see, where was I?—Oh, on the first-floor landing: But, as I say, I was thinking of nothing at all, when, all of a sudden, I heard a very odd kind of noise in the front room of the first-floor."

"I wonder you didn't fall headlong down stairs with fright, candle and all."

"No, I didn't. It sounded like the murmur of people talking a long way off. Then I began to think it must be in the next house; and I thought of going up to bed, and paying no attention to it, and I did get up two or three steps of the second-floor stairs, but still I heard it; and it got such a hold of my mind, do you know, that I couldn't leave it, but down I went again, and listened. I thought of coming to you; but, somehow, I didn't do so."

"Now, go on!"

"Well, after listening with my ear against the door for some time, I was certain that the sound was in the room; and I don't know how I screwed up courage enough to open the door very gently, and look in!"

"You did?"

"I did; and the very moment I did so, out went the light as clean as if you had taken your fingers and snuffed it out; but in the room there was a strange pale kind of light, that wasn't exactly like twilight, nor like moonlight, nor like any light that I ever saw, but you could see everything by it as plain as possible."

"Well—well?"

"The room was crammed full of people, all dressed, and looking at each other; and some of them were speaking; and upon all their clothes and faces there was blood, sometimes more, and sometimes less; and all their eyes looked like the eyes of the dead; and then one voice more loud than the rest said—'All murdered!—All murdered by Todd! The Lord have mercy upon his soul!'"

"Oh, gracious! What did you do?"

"I felt as if my breath was going from me, and my heart kept swelling and swelling till I thought it would burst, and then I dropped the candle; and the next time I come to my senses, I found myself lying on the bed in the second floor, with all my clothes on!"

"You dreamt it?"

"Oh, no—no. It's no use telling me that. I only wish I thought so, that's all."

"But, I tell you, you did."

"You may tell me as much as you like; but in the morning when I came down, there was the candle on the first-floor landing, just as I had dropped it. What do you think of that? Of course, after I drew out my

head again from the first-floor front room I must have gone up stairs in the middle of my fright, and I dare say I fainted away, and didn't come to myself again till the morning."

"Oh, stuff! Don't try to make me believe in your ghost stories. If—if I thought it was true, I should bolt out of the house this minute."

"You would, really?"

"Yes, to be sure; is a fellow to stay in a place with his hair continually standing on end, I should like to know? Hardly. But it's all stuff. Take another drop of brandy! Now I tell you what, if you have the courage to go with me, I will take the light now and go up to the first-floor, and have a good look all about it! What do you say to that, now? Will you do it?"

"I don't much mind."

"Only say the word, and I am quite ready."

"Well, I will. If so be they are there, they won't do us any harm, for they took no more notice of me than as if I had been nothing at all. But how you do shake!"

"I shake? You never were more mistaken in all your life. It's you that's shaking, and that makes you think I am. You are shaking, if you please; and if you don't like the job of going up stairs, only say so; I won't press it upon you!"

"Oh, I'll go."

"You are sure of it, now? You don't think it will make you ill? because I shouldn't like that. Come now, only say at once that you would rather not go, and there's an end to it."

"Yes, but I rather would."

"Come on, then—come on. Courage, my friend, courage. Look at me, and be courageous. You don't see me shivering and shaking and shrinking. Keep up your heart, and come on!"

"You wretches," muttered Todd. "It shall go hard with me, now, but I will play you some trick that shall go right to drive you out of your shallow wits. Go! It is the very thing I would, of all others, have wished you to do."

It was quite clear that the man who had proposed going up stairs to explore the first-floor, was much the more alarmed of the two; and now that he had made the proposal, he would gladly have seized upon any excuse for backing out of it, short of actually confessing that his fears had got the better of him. No doubt he had been greatly in hopes that his companion, who had told the ghost story, would have shrunk from such an ordeal; but as he did not do so, there was no resource but to carry it out or confess that it was but a piece of braggadocio, which he wanted the firmness to carry out. He strove now to talk himself out of his fears.

"Come on—come on! Ghosts, indeed! There are no such things, of course, as any reasonable man knows; and if there are, why, what harm can they do us? I say, what harm can they do us?"

"I don't know!"

"You don't know? No, nor nobody else! Come on, I say. Of course providence is providence, and if there are ghosts, I respect them very much—very much indeed, and would do anything in the world to oblige them!"

The valiant proposer of the experimental trip to the first floor uttered these last sentences in a loud voice, no doubt with the hope that if any of the ghostly company of the first-floor were within hearing, they would be so good as to report the same to their friends, so that he might make his way there with quite a good understanding.

They trimmed the candle now; and having each of them fortified himself with a glass of brandy that Todd had laid in for his own consumption, they commenced their exploit by leaving the parlour and slowly ascending the staircase that led to the upper portion of the house.

Of course, Todd knew well the capabilities of that house, and long before the two men had actually left the parlour he had made up his mind what to do. The door of communication between the shop and the parlour was not fastened, so that he could on open at the moment; and when the men left that latter room he at once entered it. Todd's first movement, then, was to supply himself with a good dose of his own brandy, which he took direct from the bottle to save time.

"Ah!" he whispered, drawing a long breath after the draught, "I feel myself again, now!"

In order to carry out his plan, he knew that he had no time to spare; for he did not doubt but that the two men would make their visit as short as possible to the first-floor; so—with cautious but rapid footsteps—he slipped into the passage and at once commenced the ascent of the staircase after them. The light they carried guided him very well. How little they imagined that any of its beams shone upon the diabolical face of Sweeney Todd!

"Can't you come on?" said one of the men to the other. "Damme, how you do lag behind, to be sure. Any one would think you were afraid."

"Afraid? Me afraid! that is a good joke."

"Well, come quicker, then."

"You will both of you," thought Todd, "come down a little quicker, or I am very much mistaken indeed."

The distance was short, and the landing of the first floor was soon gained by the men. He who had seen, or dreamed that he had seen, the strange sight in the room upon a former occasion, was decidedly the most courageous of the two. Perhaps, after all, he was the least imaginative.

"I think you said it was the front room?" said the other.

"Oh, yes, I heard not a sound in the back one. Here's the door. You hold the light while I listen a little."

"Yes—I—I'll hold it. Keep up your courage, and don't shake now. Oh, what a coward you are!"

"Well, that's a good one. You are shaking so yourself that you will have the light out, if you don't mind. Do try and be a little steady with it; and your teeth chatter so in your head, that they are for all the world like a set of castanets."

"Oh, how you do talk. Come, listen at the door; I must say I don't hear anything; but I have the greatest respect for ghosts, I have. I never say one word against the dead—God bless 'em all!"

While this man held the light—or rather waved it to and fro in his agitation—the other, with his ear placed flat against the panel of the door, listened attentively. All was perfectly still in the first-floor, and he said—

"Perhaps they haven't begun yet, you know."

"Perhaps not;—shall we go away, now?"

"Oh, no—no. There's no end of curious things in the room; and now that we are here, let's go in, at all events, and have a little look about us. Don't be afraid. Come—come."

"Oh—I—I ain't exactly afraid, only, you see, I don't see much the use of going in, and—and, you know, we have already heard an odd noise in the shop, to-night."

"But that was nothing, for I looked, you know."

"Yes—yes,—but—but I'm afraid the fire will go out below, do you know."

"Let it go, then. If you are too much of a coward to come with me into this room, say so at once, and you can go down stairs while I have a look at it by myself. You can't have the candle, though, for it is no use my going in by myself."

"What! do you expect me to go in the dark? Oh dear, no, I could not do that; open the door, and I will follow you in; I ain't a bit afraid, only, you see, I feel very much interested, that's all."

"Oh, well, that's quite another thing."

With this, the most courageous of the two men opened the door of the front room on the first-floor, and peeped into it.

"All's right," he said. "There ain't so much as a mouse stirring. Come on!"

Highly encouraged by this announcement, the other followed him; and they allowed the door to creak nearly shut after them.

While this hesitation upon the stairs was going on, Todd had been about half way up from the passage, crouching down for fear they should by chance look that way, and see him; but when he found that they had fairly gone into the front room, he made as much speed to the top of the stairs as was consistent with extreme caution, and laying his hand upon the handle of the lock of the door of the back room on that floor, he noiselessly turned it, and the door at once yielding, he glided in.

The two rooms communicated with each other by a pair of folding-doors, and the light that the men carried sent some beams through the ill-fitting junction of the two, so that Todd could see very well about him.

CHAPTER CXLVI.
THERE IS A FIRE IN FLEET STREET AFTER ALL.—TODD ESCAPES.

When once he had gained that back room, Todd considered that his design against the peace of mind of the two men was all but accomplished; and it was with great difficulty that he kept himself from giving a hideous chuckle, that would at once have opened their ears to the fact that some one was close at hand, who, whether of this world or the next, was a proficient in horrid noises.

He controlled this ebullition of ill-timed mirth, however, and listened attentively.

"There don't seem much else beside lots of clothes," said one of the men, "and hats, and sticks, and umbrellas."

"Ah!" said the other, "and they all belong to the murdered men that Todd cut up to make pies of!"

"Horrible!—horrible!"

"You may say that, old friend. It's only a great pity that Sir Richard has so expressly forbid anything to be touched in the old crib, or else there's some nice enough things here, I should say, that would make a fellow warm and comfortable in the winter nights."

"Not a doubt of that. Here's a cloak, now!"

"A beauty—quite a beauty, I say. He can't know what is really here. Do you think he can?"

"What, Sir Richard?"

"Yes."

"Oh, don't he. I wouldn't venture to touch so much as an old hat here, for I should feel, as sure as fate, he'd find it out."

"Oh, nonsense, he couldn't; and as for the ghosts, they don't seem at all likely to interfere in the matter, for there's not one of them to be seen or heard of to-night."

"No, I defy the ghosts—a-hem! I begin to think, do you know, that ghosts are all a sham. Why here we are, two men as brave as lions, or we should not have come here, and yet the deuce a ghost is to be seen. I tell you what I'd do if one was to come. I'd say, 'Old fellow, was this your cloak?' and then if he said 'yes,' I'd say, 'well, old fellow, it's of no use to you now, you know; will you give it to me?'"

"Ha!—ha! Capital! Why you have quite got over all your fears."

"Fears? Rubbish! I was only amusing myself to hear what you would say."

"Was you, though? Only acting, after all?"

"Precisely."

"Well, then, I must say you did it remarkably well, and if you take to the stage you will make your fortune. Oh, here's a nice brown suit now, that would be just my size. I should feel inclined to say to the ghosts what you would say about the cloak."

"Well, let's say it, and if nobody says anything to the contrary, we will take it for granted. I will take the cloak, and you the brown suit; Sir Richard will be none the wiser, and we shall be a little the richer, you know. 'Mr. Ghost, may I have this cloak, if you please, as you can't possibly want it?'"

"Upon my life you are a funny fellow," said the other; and then holding up the brown suit, he said, "Mr. Ghost who once owned this, may I have this brown suit, as it is of no use to you now?"

It was at this moment that Todd dashed open the two folding doors, and with one of the most frightful, fiendish yells that ever came from the throat of man, he made one bound into the front room.

The effect of this appearance, and the sound that accompanied it, was all that Todd could possibly wish or expect. The two men were almost driven to madness. They dropped the light, and with shrieks of dismay they rushed to the door—they tore it open, and then they both fell headlong down the staircase to the passage below, where they lay in a state of insensibility that was highly amusing to Todd.

Todd Alarms The Two Bow Street Officers.

Todd Alarms The Two Bow Street Officers.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, as he stood at the head of the stairs; "Ha! ha!"

He listened, but not so much as a groan came from either of the men, and then he clapped his huge hands together with a report like the discharge of a pistol, and laughed again. Todd had not been so well pleased since his escape from Newgate.

He slowly descended the stairs, and more than once he stopped to laugh again. The passage was intensely dark, so that when he reached it he trod upon one of the men, but that rather amused him, and he jumped violently upon the body.

"Good," he said. "Perhaps they are both dead. Well, let them both die. It will be a lesson to others how far they interfere with me. Society and I are now fairly at war, and I will win as many battles as I can. They can't say but this is a well-fought one, two to one. Ha! They ought to make me a Field-Marshal. Ha!"

Making the most hideous faces, just for the fun of the thing, Todd made his way to the parlour, and taking from a corner, where he knew to lay his hands upon them in a moment, a couple of old newspapers, he

twisted them up into a kind of torch, and lighting it then at the fire, he went with it flaming in his hand to the passage.

The two men lay profoundly still. Terror and the fall they had had, combined to throw them quite into a swooning state, from which probably it would be hours before they would recover.

"This is capital," said Todd. "Lie there, both of you, until I have transacted the business in this house that brought me here. Then I will, perhaps, think of some amusing way of finishing you both off—ha!"

Still carrying the flaming papers in his hand, Todd now made his way to the first-floor, and found the candle that the men had dropped. That he lighted, as it would be much more convenient to him than the papers; and then he trod them out, for he did not wish any great light as yet to appear from the windows of that house, and perchance awaken the attention of some passing traveller or curious neighbour.

Shading the light with his hand, and looking like some grim ogre, Todd took his way to the second-floor. As he went, he every now and then muttered his satisfaction to himself, or gave utterance to one of his unearthly laughs; for in the whole of that night's adventure there was much to please him.

In the first place, he hoped, and fully expected, to get enough booty from the house to place him a little at his ease as regarded money matters, provided that with it he should be fortunate enough to get away from England. Then, again, it was no small satisfaction to Todd to do anything which looked like a triumph over Sir Richard Blunt, and this not only looked like it, but really was.

"A good step," he muttered, "a capital step, and a bold one, too; but bold steps are always good ones. Who knows but that from some place of security I may laugh at them all yet; and then, if I do not succeed in killing any of them before I go, I can at my leisure think of and mature some scheme of revenge against them; and there is much to be done with ingenuity, if you are quite unscrupulous. Ha! ha! I have some dainty schemes, if I can but carry them out in the time to come—ha!"

When Todd reached the second-floor, he at once went into the front-room, in one corner of which was a large old fashioned bureau. Now it was not to be supposed that this bureau had escaped the scrutiny of Sir Richard Blunt; but then it had so happened that before he came to search it he had all the evidence he wished against Todd, so that the search was not so complete or so scrutinising as it might have been.

We shall see that it was not.

"Ah" said Todd, as he drew out the drawers one after the other, "all the locks forced! Well, be it so. That was just what I expected. But I do not think they have moved it from the wall by the look of it."

The bureau, it was quite evident, had not been removed from the wall. It was of immense weight, but Todd managed to move it by short sudden jerks; and then when he had got it quite away at right angles from the wall, he said—

"Here was it that I hid, until some favourable opportunity should occur for the private disposal of them, various articles of value, that I dare not try to convert into money in my open way, for fear of detection. Here are watches, and rings, and jewels, that were described in hand-bills, offering rewards for missing persons, and in advertisements in the papers; so that it became most unsafe for me to show them even to the not very scrupulous Hebrews, who have from time to time bought goods of me."

As he spoke, he removed a portion of the back of the bureau, which slid out of its place softly and easily, for it was made with great skill and care. This sliding piece, when it was fairly removed, disclosed a receptacle capable of holding a great quantity of small articles, and filled up with narrow shelves, as if to hold them securely.

There were costly watches—wigs with rare jewels set in them; for the fashion of wearing wigs was so common at the time, that many wealthy residents of the Temple would pop into Todd's shop for a little arrangement of their wigs or a puff of fresh powder, if they were going

somewhere in a hurry, and so lost their lives. Then there were some pairs of rich diamond knee and shoe buckles, and a few lockets, and a whole heap of chains of gold.

"Ah," said Todd; "here is enough to set me up for a time, if I can dispose of them; and now I must run risks that I would not think of while I had thousands at my command. I must take these things that I was content enough to leave behind me, lest they should at some inopportune moment lead to my detection. Now they shall do me service."

Todd commenced filling his pockets with this dangerous kind of property, each article of which was associated with the frightful crime of murder!

A couple of thousand pounds certainly would not have paid for what Todd upon this occasion managed to stow away about him; and he thought that if he could get one-fourth of that amount for the articles, that it would not be a very bad night's work, considering the not very flourishing state of his finances at that time, compared with what they had been.

During the process, though, of stocking himself with the contents of the secret place in the bureau, he more than once crept to the door of the room, and going out upon the landing, he leant over the staircase and listened. All was most profoundly still, and he was satisfied that Sir Richard Blunt's two men remained in the passage, in the same state of insensibility—if not of death—in which he had left them.

Leaving there some articles of smaller importance than those with which he loaded himself, Todd pushed the bureau back into its place again; and then, taking the light in his hand, cautiously descended the stairs.

When he reached the passage, there lay the two men as he had left them. Indeed, he had been absent much too short a space of time for any very material change to take place in their condition.

"Well," he said. "Now to dispose of you two. What shall it be? Shall I cut your throats as you lie there, or—no, no, I have hit it. No doubt you have both been full of curious speculations respecting how I disposed of those persons whom I polished off in my shop; so you shall both know exactly how it was done. Ha! a good joke."

Todd's good joke consisted now of going into the parlour, and fastening the levers which held up the shaving-chair. Then he lifted up one of the insensible bodies of the men, and carried it into the shop.

"Sit there, or lie there, how you like," he said, as he flung the man into the large shaving-chair.

It was quite a treat now to Todd, and put him in mind of old times, to arrange his apparatus for giving this wretched man a tumble into the vaults below. He went into the parlour and drew the bolt, when away went the man and the chair, and the other chair that was on the reverse side of the plank took the place of that which had gone.

"Ha! ha!" shouted Todd. "This is grand—this is most glorious! Ha! ha! Who would have thought, now, that I should ever live to be at my old work again in this house? It is capital! If that fall has not broken his neck, it's a wonder. It used to kill five out of seven; that was about the average—ha!"

Todd didn't fasten the bolt again, but went at once for the other man. He was sitting up!

Todd staggered back for a moment, when he saw him in that position looking at him. The man rubbed his eyes with his hands and said in a weak voice—

"Good God! what is it all about?"

Todd placed the light on the floor within the parlour, so that it shed sufficient rays into the shop to let him see every object in it; and then, with a cry like that of some wild beast rushing upon his prey, he dashed at the man.

The struggle that ensued was a frightful one. Despair, and a feeling that he was fighting for his life, nerved the man, who had recovered just in time to engage in such a contest, and they both fought their way into the shop together. Todd made the greatest exertions to overcome the man, but it was not until he got him by the throat, and held him with a clutch of iron, that he could do so. Then he flung him upon the chair, but the man, with a last effort, dragged Todd after him, and down they both went together to the vault below!

Todd And The Bow Street Officers—The Death Grapple.

Todd And The Bow Street Officers—The Death Grapple.

CHAPTER CXLVII.
SIR RICHARD BLUNT AND CROTCHET COMMENCE THEIR SEARCH FOR TODD.

When Sir Richard Blunt left Chelsea, he felt that he had given a sufficient warning to all who could feel in any way personally interested in the escape of Sweeney Todd from the punishment that his numerous crimes merited.

He rode direct to the office of the Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, and his name at once procured him an interview. This was not the supercilious personage who once before, upon an occasion of Sir Richard Blunt calling upon him regarding Sweeney Todd, had exhibited so much indifference upon the subject, and Sir Richard was received as he ought to be.

"I have waited upon you, sir," said the magistrate, "to say that I have now made every arrangement that is possible for the purpose of counteracting any mischief that the man, Todd, might strive to do; and I think it very likely that I may not have the pleasure of seeing or communicating with you for some time."

"Then you still think, Sir Richard, of going personally after the notorious ruffian?"

"I do, sir. I feel that in some sort I am bound to rid society of that man. I had so large a share in his former apprehension, and in his conviction, that I feel his escape quite a personal matter; and I have no hesitation in

saying that I shall not feel at ease until I have again placed him in the hands of the law."

"It is most desirable that he should be so placed, Sir Richard, and I have only two things to say to you upon the subject. One is, that I hope you will be careful of your own safety in the affair; and the other is, that anything we can do or any facilities we can throw in your way, you may most unhesitatingly command in the prosecution of your most praiseworthy enterprise."

"I thank you, sir. I shall take one man with me. His name is Crotchet; and I should wish that in your name I might tell him that, in the event of our search for Todd being successful, he may count upon an adequate reward."

"Certainly! He shall have the whole reward, Sir Richard; and as for yourself, the ministry will not be unmindful of your service in a way that I am sure will be more gratifying to you than an offer of money."

"Sir, I thank you. The government has already, upon more than two or three occasions, been sufficiently liberal to me as regards money to place me in a good position, and I have now no further desires of that sort. I will bid you good morning, sir, and at once start upon the expedition in search of Sweeney Todd. If he be alive and above ground in this country, I will have him."

"If anybody will, you will, Sir Richard."

The magistrate left the place, and repaired at once to his private office, which was close at hand, in Craven Street. There our old friend, Crotchet, was waiting for him.

"Well, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, "I have just seen the Secretary of State, and if we catch Todd, you are to have all the money."

"All on it, sir? Oh, my eye! No, I doesn't want all on it, Sir Richard. I isn't a pig."

"I never thought you were, Crotchet; but you may make up your mind to the whole of the reward, as the government will provide for me in another way; so you know now, at starting, what you have to expect, and it will keep you in good heart during all the botheration we may have in looking after this man."

"Why, so it will, sir, you see, so it will, and if I do catch him and get all this tin as is offered as a reward for him, I shall retire from the grabbing business, you see, sir."

"What will you do then, Crotchet?"

"Set up a public-house, sir, and call it 'The Crotchet's Arms,' to be sure. That's the sort of ticket for me."

"Well, Crotchet, you will be quite at liberty to do what you like; and now let us at once start on our errand. We will, from the door of Newgate, see if we cannot trace the progress of this man, with his new friend, that rascal, Lupin."

A tap sounded on the panel of the door of the room in which Crotchet and Sir Richard were conversing.

"Come in," said the magistrate, and his clerk entered with a written paper in his hand.

"Here, sir," he said, "is a report from a city officer, which will give a clue to the route that Todd and Lupin have taken, sir."

"Ah, that is welcome. Let me see it. 'Two men broke into the house of Alderman Stanhope; one a tall man with a large face—the other, shorter.' Humph! Not a doubt of it. I will go and see about it. No doubt it was Todd and his new friend Lupin. This is something of a clue, at all events however slight, and may, after all, put us upon the right track. Come on, Crotchet, we will do the best we can in this matter. Have you your pistols in good order?"

"Yes, yer honour, and a pair of darbies in my pocket, that if once they get on the wrists of old Todd, he will find it no such easy matter to get them off again."

"That is right. I only want to get face to face with the ruffian, and then I will engage that he shall not be much further trouble to society or to individuals."

Sir Richard Blunt and Crotchet proceeded then at once to the house in the City, into which Lupin and Todd, it will be recollected, had made a violent entry, and from which they had been so gallantly repulsed by the young lady. Then, from the description of the assailants, not a shadow of a doubt remained upon the magistrate's mind that they were the parties he sought; but there all clue seemed to be lost.

He and Crotchet stood in the street looking about them rather despairingly; and then they thought of going to the round-house close to Finsbury; and when they got there, they found an officer, who reported that two men answering the description of the fugitives had been seen making their way westward; and he had met a woman who had passed them, and who had heard the words "money," and "Caen Wood."

This was, in good truth, most important intelligence, if it could be relied upon; and that was the only kind of doubt that Sir Richard had. He spoke to Crotchet about it.

"What do you think, Crotchet? Is it worth while to follow this seeming clue to Highgate?"

"Yes, yer honour, it is. We can go there and back again while we are considering about it here. It's clear enough as we shan't get any other news in this part of the town; and so I advises that we go off at once to Highgate, and calls at every public-house on the road."

"Every public-house?"

"Yes, yer honour. Todd won't do without his drops of something strong to keep him a-going. These kind of feelings go down—down, till they haven't the heart to say don't, when the hangman puts the noose round their necks, if they haven't their drops. It's brandy, yer worship, as keeps 'em a going."

"I do believe, Crotchet, that there is a great deal of truth in what you say; and that it is only by use of stimulants that they keep up a kind of artificial strength, as well as drowning reflection; and so they go blundering on in the career of crime."

"You may depend upon it, sir. They'd cut their own throats in a week, If it wasn't for the tipple, yer honour."

Acting then upon the practical advice of Crotchet, which in a great measure accorded with his own convictions, Sir Richard Blunt repaired to a livery-stable, and hired two good horses. He found no difficulty in getting them, upon declaring who he was; and so, well mounted, he and Crotchet went upon the very road that had been so recently traversed by the two culprits, Todd and Lupin.

At the first public-house they came to they got no news; but at the second they were told, that two men, answering the description they gave of those they sought, had called and had some brandy.

The magistrate no longer doubted but that he was upon the right track now. With such a feeling, he pushed on, making what inquiries he could on the road; but until Highgate was reached they got no further news, and then, by dint of diligent ferreting out, they found a woman who had seen two men go down Swains Lane, and from the description she gave of them, there could be no doubt but that they were Todd and Lupin. Now as Swains Lane led direct to Caen Wood, it was a great confirmation of the former intelligence; and Sir Richard made up his mind to search the wood, as well as it could be done by him and Crotchet.

They engaged a lad from Highgate to come with them, and to take care of the horses, while they should go into the wood; but they did not say one word to him regarding their object in going there, nor could he possibly suspect it. Sir Richard and Crotchet both thought it would be much more prudent to keep that to themselves, than to put it in the power of a boy to gossip about it to every one who might chance to pass that way, while he was minding the horses.

When the wood was reached, Sir Richard said to the lad—

"Now, my boy, we shall not be very long gone, but you will bear in mind that if we are absent longer than you expected, you will be paid in proportion; so don't be impatient, but walk the horses up and down this bit of the lane; and think that you have got a very good job."

"Thank you, sir," said the boy. "Across that there meadow is the nearest way to the wood. I seed two fellows go that way, early this morning, and one on 'em was the ugliest fellow I ever saw, and he calls out to the other —'Come along Lupin, we shall be all right in the wood now. Come along, Lupin—Ha! ha!'"

"You heard that?"

"Yes, sir, I did. You see, I was sloe-gathering in the hedge, and they don't let you do it, cos they say you breaks down all the young twigs, and spoils the hedge, and so you does; and so, sir, when I heard footsteps a-coming, I hid myself right down among the long grass, so that they did not see me."

Mr. Crotchet gave a long whistle.

"Very good," said Sir Richard; "we shall be back with you soon. You take good care of the horses."

"I will, sir."

"What do you think of that, Crotchet?" said Sir Richard, as they made their way into the very meadow across which Todd and Lupin had run to get to Caen Wood.

"It's the finger o' Providence, yer worship."

"Well, I cannot deny, Crotchet, but that it may be so. At all events, whether it be Providence or chance, one thing is quite certain, and that is, that we are on the track of those whom we seek."

"Not a doubt o' that, sir. Into the wood here they have been, but whether they have staid here or not, you see, sir, is quite another affair. But it's worth looking well to; at all events yer worship, and I shan't leave an old

tree in this here place as we is coming to, that I shan't walk right round and have a jolly good look at, somehow or another."

"Nor I, Crotchet. They may know of some hiding-place in this wood, for all we know to the contrary, and if they do, it strikes me we shall ferret them out."

"In course we shall, sir; and here we is."

They had reached the wood by this time, and before plunging into its recesses the magistrate looked carefully about him, and Crotchet did the same.

"Do you think, your worship, there's a chance of such a fellow as Todd staying long here?"

"Why do you think that?" said Sir Richard.

"Why, sir," said Crotchet, putting his head on one side, "this here is a sort of place that makes a man think; and always when I am in a quiet place like this, with the beautiful trees all about me, and the little birds a singing, and the frogs a croaking, it makes me think of things that I don't always think of, and of those as has passed away like spirits, and as we may meet in t'other world nor this, sir."

"Indeed, Crotchet, I do not wonder that the silence and solitude of nature should have that effect upon you."

"Exactly, sir. In course, it ain't for me to say whether in this ere world there ought to be prigs, and sneaks, and cracksmen, and all that sort of thing or not; but I will say, sir, as I'm not a little surprised how anybody can do anything very wrong, sir, in the country."

"Indeed, Crotchet?"

"Yes, sir; it has an effect on me. When I gets among the old trees and sees the branches a waving about, and hear the wind a moaning among 'em, it makes me think as there ain't a great deal in this world as is worth the bothering about, you see, sir; and least of all is it worthwhile doing anything that ain't the right thing."

"You are quite a philosopher, Crotchet, although you are not the first nor the only one upon whom the beauties of nature have produced an elevating effect. The reason I fear is that you are not familiar with such places as these. You are town-bred, Crotchet, and you pass your life among the streets of London; so such places as this affect you with all the charm of novelty, while those who are born in the country know nothing and care nothing for its sights and sounds."

"That's about it, sir, I shouldn't wonder," said Crotchet; "but I feels what I feels and thinks what I thinks."

They now had fairly penetrated into Caen Wood; and we may here appropriately remark, that Caen Wood was much more of a real wood then, than it is now, when it is rather an imitation of one than one in reality. The smoke and the vegetation-killing vapours of London have almost succeeded in begriming the green trees even at that distance off; and in a few short years Caen Wood, we fear, will be but a thing of tradition in the land.

So time works his changes!

Sir Richard Blunt, with long practised sagacity, began his hunt through the wood. It could scarcely be said that he expected to find Todd there, but he would be satisfied if he found some conclusive evidence that he had been there, for that would show him that he was upon the track of the villain, and that he was not travelling wide from the course that Todd had taken. The idea that he might have at once, on foot, made his way to some part of the coast, haunted Sir Richard, notwithstanding all the seemingly conclusive evidence he had to the contrary; and knowing well, as he did, how very little reliance ought to be placed upon personal descriptions, he did buoy himself up with many hopes consequent upon the presumed identity of Todd with the person who had been seen by those who had described him.

Taking a small piece of chalk from his pocket, the magistrate marked a few of the trees in the different directions where they searched, so that they might not, amid the labyrinths of the wood, give themselves

increased trouble; and in the course of half an hour they had gone over a considerable portion of the wood.

They paused at an open spot, and Crotchet lifted from the ground a thick stick that appeared to have been recently cut from a tree.

"This is late work," he said.

"Yes; and here are the marks of numerous footsteps. What is the meaning of this strange appearance on the ground, as if something had been dragged along it?"

Crotchet looked at the appearance that Sir Richard pointed out, and then with a nod, he said—

"Let's follow this, Sir Richard. It strikes me that it leads to something."

CHAPTER CXLVIII.
SHOWS HOW TODD HAD A VERY NARROW ESCAPE INDEED.

There was something in the tone of Crotchet that made the magistrate confident he suspected something very peculiar, and he followed him without a word.

The track or trail upon the ground was very peculiar, it was broad and defined, and had turned in the direction that it went every little weed or blade of grass that was within its boundaries. A number of decayed leaves from the forest trees had likewise been swept along it; and the more any one might look at it the more they must feel convinced that something heavy had been dragged along it.

What that something heavy was, Mr. Crotchet had his suspicions, and they were right.

"This way, your worship," he said, "this way; it goes right into this hedge as nicely as possible, though the branches of these bushes are placed all smooth again."

As he spoke, Crotchet began to beat the obstructing branches of a wild nut tree and a blackberry-bush, that seemed, by their entwining arms, to have struck up a very close sort of acquaintance with each other; and then he suddenly cried out—

"Here it is, sir."

"What, Crotchet?"

"The dead 'un."

"Dead! You don't mean to say that one such is here, and that the dead body of Todd is in the thicket?"

"Come on, sir, I don't think it is him. It don't seem long enough; but here's somebody, as safe as possible, sir, for all that. Push your way through sir: it's only prickles."

The magistrate did push his way through, despite the vigorous opposition of the blackberry-bush; and then—lying upon its face—he saw the dead body of a man.

The readers of this narrative could have told Sir Richard Blunt what that body had been named while the breath of life was in it; but neither he nor Crotchet could at first make up their minds upon the subject.

"Do you know him?" said Sir Richard.

"I guess only."

"Yes, and you guess as I do. This is Lupin, Todd's prison companion, and the companion in his escape."

Crotchet nodded.

"I went to Newgate," he said, "and had a good look at him, so that I should know him, sir, dead or alive; so I'll just turn him over, and have a good look at his face."

With this, Crotchet carefully—by the aid of his foot—turned over the body, and the first glance he got at the dead face satisfied him.

"Yes, your worship," he said, "Lupin it is, and Todd has killed him. You may take your oath of that."

"Not a doubt of it: such is the result of the association of such men. Todd has found him, or fancied he should find him, an encumbrance in the way of his own escape, and has sought this wood to take his life."

"That's about it, sir."

"And now, Crotchet, we may make certain of one thing, and that is, that Todd is not in this wood, nor in this neighbourhood either. I should say, that after this deed, the first thing he would do would be to fly from this spot."

"Not a doubt of that, your worship; but the deuce of it is to find out which way he has gone."

"We must be guided in that by the same mode of inquiry, Crotchet, that brought us here. We were successful in tracing him to this wood, and we may be equally successful in tracing him from it. We must go into the village of Hampstead, and give information about this dead body; and we will make there what inquiries we can."

They were neither of them very anxious to remain in Caen Wood, after discovering how it was tenanted; and in a very short time they were mounted again, and went along the lane until they emerged upon Hampstead Heath, and so took the road to the village, where Sir Richard gave information to the authorities concerning the finding of the body of Lupin.

There, too, he heard that a man answering the description of Todd had passed through the village, and refused to partake some questionable brandy, at a public-house, on its outskirts. This man was evidently proceeding to London. Crotchet heard this information with great attention; and when he and Sir Richard Blunt were alone, he said—

"I tell you what it is, sir—the country will never suit Todd."

"How do you mean, Crotchet?"

"I mean, sir, that, in my opinion, he has gone back to London again. The country, sir, ain't the sort of place for such men as he is. You may depend upon it, he only came to the little wood to get rid of Lupin, and he has gone back to try and hide in London till the row is over."

"You really think so?"

"I do, sir; and if we want to find him, we must go, too."

"Well, Crotchet, of one thing I am pretty well convinced, and that is, that he is not in this part of the country, for after the murder in the wood, which he will be in continual fear of being discovered, it is not likely he would stay about here; and so, as we have traced him a little on the road to London, we may as well, for all we know to the contrary, assume that he has gone there at once."

"Come on, then, sir," said Crotchet; "I feel's what you call's a sort of a—Oh, dear me, what is it? A presentment—"

"A presentiment, Crotchet."

"Ah, sir, that's it. I feel that sort of thing that old Todd will try and hide himself in some old crib in London, and not at all trust to the country, where everybody is looked at for all the world as though he were a strange cat. Lord bless you, sir, if I had done anything and wanted to hide, I should go into the very thick of the people of London, and I ain't quite sure but I'd take a lodging in Bow Street."

Sir Richard Blunt was himself very much of Crotchet's opinion regarding Todd's proceedings, for his experience of the movements of malefactors had taught him that they generally, after their first attempt to try to get away, hover about the spot of their crimes; and it is a strange thing, that with regard to persons who have committed great crimes, there is a great similarity of action, as though the species of mind that could induce the commission of murder from example, were the same in other respects in all murderers.

To London, then, with what expedition they could make, Sir Richard Blunt and Crotchet went, and although they made what inquiry they could, they found no news of Todd. And now we must leave them for awhile, thrown completely out in all their researches for the escaped criminal, while we once more proceed to the house in Fleet Street, where we left Todd in rather an uncomfortable situation.

It will be recollected that, locked in the grasp of the officer, Todd and that individual had gone down with the chair through the opening in the floor of his shop.

This was the first time that Todd had undertaken that mode of getting into the cellars of his house; and when he found the chair going, he gave himself up for lost, and uttered a cry of horror. It seemed to him at that moment as if that were the species of retribution which was to come over him—death by the same dreadful means that had enabled him so often to inflict it upon others.

No doubt Todd's anticipations of being dashed to destruction upon the stones below would have been correct had he gone down alone, or had there been no one already immediately beneath the trap-door in the shop flooring; but as it was, he fell, fortunately for him, uppermost, and they both, he and the officer, fell upon the other man who had gone down only a short time previous. That saved Todd; but he was terribly shaken, and so was the officer, and it was a few moments before either of them recovered sufficiently to move a limb.

The lives of those two depended upon who should recover his strength and energies first. Todd was that man. Hate is so much stronger a passion than every other, and it was under the influence of that feeling that Todd was the first of the two to recover; and the moment he did so, the yell of rage that he uttered really might have been heard in Fleet Street. It was very indiscreet of Todd, but at that moment he thought of nothing but revenge. His own safety became a secondary consideration with him.

He grasped the officer by the throat!

At the moment that, by the feel only, for that place was in the most profound darkness, Todd felt sure that he had the officer by the throat, he knew that his triumph was certain. It would have been as vain a thing to attempt to escape the chances of destiny, as to dream of avoiding the grasp of that iron hand that now closed upon the throat of the unfortunate officer.

It was just then, though, that the officer began to recover a little from the shock of his fall. It was only to recover to die. Better for him would it have been had he slept on in insensibility to the pangs that were

awaiting him; but that was not to be.

"Ah, wretch!" shrieked Todd, "so you thought you had me? Down—down to death!—Ha!—ha!"

The officer struggled much, and dashed about his feet and arms, but all was in vain.

"Ha!—ha!" laughed Todd, and that hideous laugh awakened as hideous an echo in the dismal place. "Ha!—ha! I have you now. Oh! but I should like to protract your death and see you die by inches! Only that my time is precious, and for my own sake, I will put you quickly beyond the pale of life."

The man tried to cry out; but the compression upon his throat of those bony fingers prevented him. He had his hand at liberty, and he caught Todd by the head and face, and began to do him as much mischief as he could. There was for a few seconds a fierce struggle, and then Todd, keeping still his right hand clasped about the throat of his victim, with the left laid hold of as much of his hair on the front of his head us he could, and raising his head then about six inches from the stone floor on which it had rested, he dashed it down again with all his might.

The officer's arms fell nerveless to his sides, and he uttered a deep groan.

Again Todd raised the head, and dashed it down, and that time he heard a crashing sound, and he felt satisfied that he had killed the man.

There was now no further use in holding the throat of the dead man, and Todd let him go.

"Ha!—ha!" he said. "That is done. That is done—Ha! Now am I once more lord and master in my own house—once again I reign here supreme, and can do what it may please me to do. Ha! this is glorious! Why, it is like old times coming back to me again. I feel as if I could open my shop in the morning, and again polish off the neighbourhood. It seems as if all that had happened since last I stropped a razor above, had been but a dream. The arrest—the trial—the escape—Newgate—the wood at Hampstead! All a dream—a dream!"

He was silent, and the excitement of the moment of triumph had passed away.

"No—no," he said. "No! It is too real—much too real! Oh, it is real, indeed. I am the fugitive! The haunted man without a home—without a friend; and I have this night nor any other night any place in which I may lay my head in safety. I am as one persecuted by all the world, without hope—without pity! What will now become of me?"

A low groan came upon Todd's ear.

He started, and looked around him. He tried hard to pierce with his half-shut eyes the intense darkness, but he could not; and muttering to himself—"Not yet dead—not yet dead?" he crept to an obscure corner of the cellar, and opened a door that led by a ladder to the floor of the back parlour, where there was a trap door, under which the large table usually stood, and which he could open from below.

In the parlour Todd got a light, and feeling then still disturbed about the groan that he had heard below, he armed himself with an iron bar that belonged to the outer door, and with this in his right hand, and the light in his left, he crept back again to the cellar.

A glance at the two men who lay there was sufficient to satisfy him that they were no more; and after then taking from them a couple of pairs of pistols, and a small sum of money, he crept back again to the parlour. As he did so, he heard St. Dunstan's clock strike the hour of four.

"Four!" he said. "Four. It will not be light for nearly two hours yet, and I may rest myself awhile and think. Yes, it is necessary now that I should think; for I have time—a little time—to do so, and much, oh, so much to think of. There's some of my own brandy, too, in the parlour, that's a comfort."

The fire was still burning in the parlour grate. Todd raked the glowing embers together with the iron bar, and then he took a good draught at the brandy. It revived him most wonderfully, and he gave one of his old chuckles, as he muttered—

"Oh, that I could get a few whom I could name in such a position as I had yon man in in the cellar a short time since. That would be well, indeed. Ha! I am, after all, rather lucky, though."

A sharp knock come, at this moment, at the outer door of the shop, and Todd sprang in alarm to his feet.

CHAPTER CXLIX.
TODD IS IN GREAT PERIL IN THE EARLY MORNING IN LONDON.

The silence that ensued after that knock at his door, for he had become to consider it as his again, was like the silence of the grave. The only sound that Todd heard then, was the painful beating of his own heart.

The guilty man was full of the most awful apprehensions.

"What is it?" he said. "Who is it?—who can it be? Surely, no one for me. There is no one who saw me. No—no! It cannot be. It is some accidental sound only. I—begin—to doubt if it were a knock at all.—Oh, no, it was no knock."

Bang! came the knock again.

Todd actually started and uttered a cry of terror, and then he crouched down and crept towards the door. He might, to be sure, have made his escape from the premises, with some little trouble, by the way he had got into them; but he was most anxious to find out who it was that demanded admittance to the old shop in Fleet Street, with all its bad associations and character of terror; so he crept towards the door, and just as he reached it, the knock came again.

If the whole of his future hopes—we allude to the future that might be for him in this world only, for Todd had no hopes nor thoughts of another—had depended upon his preserving silence and stillness, he could not have done so, and he gave another start.

"Hush—hush!" he then said. "Hush! I must be very cautious now—very cautious, indeed. Hush—hush!"

He then, in a tone of voice that he strove to make as different as possible from his ordinary tone, and which he was very successful indeed in doing, he said—

"Who is there?"

"It's me," said a voice, in defiance of all probability or grammar. "It's only me."

"Oh! what a mercy," said Todd.

"Open the door. Is it you, Joe? Why didn't you come home, eh? You might have got away easy enough. I have brought you something good to eat, old fellow, and some news."

"Ah, what news, my boy?"

"Why, they say that old Todd is in London."

Todd fell to the floor in a sitting posture, and uttered a deep groan. It was some few moments before he could summon strength and courage to speak to the man again. But he began to feel the necessity of doing something, for the man began to hammer away at the door, and the very worst thing that could happen to Todd, just then, would have been that man going away from the door of the shop with an impression that all was not right within it, and spreading an alarm to that effect.

"I will open the door just wide enough," muttered Todd, "and then I will drag him in and cut his throat, and throw him down into the cellar along with the two others. That will only make three this morning—yes, this morning, I may say, for it is morning now."

Acting upon this resolve, which certainly was diabolically to the purpose, Todd spoke to the man again, saying in the same assumed tone in which he had before addressed him—

"All's right—all's right. I'll open the door."

"That's the thing; but you seem to have a bad cold."

"So I have—so I have. A very bad cold; and it has affected my voice so that I can hardly speak at all."

"So I hear."

Todd slowly undid the fastenings of the door, and an infernal feeling of joy came over him at the idea of murdering this unhappy man likewise. It quite reconciled him to the danger in which he was, for he could not but know that the daylight was rapidly approaching, and that each moment increased his peril.

"Yes," he muttered, "he will make three this morning, three idiots who fancy they are a match for me; but I will soon convince them of the contrary, I will soon put him out of his pains and anxieties in this world. Ha! he shall be an independent man, for he shall have no wants, and that is true independence."

Todd drew the last bolt back that held the door.

"Come, Joe, are you coming?" said the man.

"Soon enough, my dear friend, soon enough," said Todd. "You will find me quite soon enough. Come in."

Todd felt quite certain that if the man caught but the slightest glance at him, it would be sufficient to convince him that it was not Joe, and, therefore, he only now opened the door wide enough to let him slip into the shop, and kept himself back partially behind it, so as to be, with the exception of one arm, quite out of sight.

The man hesitated.

"Come in," said Todd. "Come in."

"Why, what's the matter with you," said the man, "that makes you so mighty mysterious, eh? What is it, old fellow?"

"Oh, nothing. Come in."

The man stepped one foot across the threshold, and put his head in at the shop-door.

"Come, now," he said. "None of your jokes, Joe. Where are you?"

Todd felt that that was a critical moment, and that if he failed to take advantage of it, the least thing would give the man the alarm, and he might draw back from the door altogether, and so stop him from executing that summary proceeding against him which he, Todd, thought essential to his interests.

"No, old fellow. There's no trick. Come in."

"Oh, but I—"

The man was drawing back his head, and Todd saw that the moment for action had come. Darting forward, he stretched out his right hand and caught the man by the throat, saying as he did so, in the voice of a demon—

"In, wretch—in, I say!"

The man's cravat came away in the hand of Todd, who rolled upon his back on the floor of the shop. The man finding himself free from the terrific grip that had been laid upon him, fled along Fleet Street, crying—

"Help—help! thieves!—murder! Todd!—help! fire! murder—murder!"

Todd lay upon his back with the cravat in his hand, and so utterly confounded was he by this accident, that for a few moments he felt disposed to lie there and give up all further contest with that fate that never seemed weary of now persecuting him after the long course of successful iniquity he had been permitted to carry on.

He heard the loud cries of the man, and he knew that even at such an early hour how those cries would soon rouse sufficient assistance to be his destruction. He yet did not like to die without a struggle. Newgate, with its lonely cells, came up before his mind's eye, and then he pictured to himself the gibbet; and with a positive yell, partly of rage and partly of fear, he rose to his feet.

"What shall I do?" he said. "Dare I rush out now into Fleet Street, and by taking the other direction to that in which this man has gone, try to find safety?"

A moment's thought convinced him of the great danger of that plan, and he gave it up. There remained then nothing but the mode of retreat through the church; and no longer hesitating, he took the light in his hand and dashed open the little door that communicated with the narrow stairs that would take him underneath the shop.

Before descending them he paused to listen, and he heard the cries and shouts of men afar off. He found that his foes were mustering in strong force to attack him; and clenching his double fist, he swore the most horrible oaths. This was a process that seemed to have some effect upon the spirits of Todd. The swearing acted as a kind of safety valve to his passion.

He descended the staircase, and when he reached the foot of it he paused again. The noise in the street was not so acute. It had sobered down to a confused murmur, and he felt that his danger was upon the increase. Shading the light with one hand, for there was a current of air blowing in the cellars and secret passages, he looked like some fiend or vampire seeking for some victim among the dead.

"They come," he said. "They come. They think they have me at last. They come to drag me to death. Oh that I had but the power of heaping destruction upon them all, of submitting them all to some wretched and lingering death, I would do it! Curses on them—how I should revel in their misery and pain."

He went on a few paces past the dead bodies of the two men, and then he paused again, for he could distinctly hear the trampling of feet upon the pavement near to the house; and then, before he could utter a word, there come such a thundering appeal to the knocker of the outer door, that he dropped his candle, and it was immediately extinguished in the start that he gave.

It was quite evident that his foes were now in earnest, and they were determined he should not escape them by any fault of theirs, for the knocking was continued with a vehemence enough to beat in the door; but so long as it did continue, it was a kind of signal that his enemies were upon the outside.

"I may escape them yet," he said, tremblingly. "Oh, yes, who shall take upon them to say that I may not escape them yet? I can find my way in the dark well—quite well. I am sufficiently familiar with this place to do so."

That was true enough; but yet, although Todd was, as he said, sufficiently familiar with the place to find his way through it in the dark, he could not make such good progress as when he had a lamp or a candle to guide him.

He heard a loud crash above.

"They have broken open the door," he said, "but yet I am safe, for I have a wonderful start of them. I am safe yet, and I am well armed, too. I hold the lives of several in my hands. They will not be so fond, from their love of me, to throw away their lives. Ha! I shall beat them yet—I shall beat them yet."

With his hands outstretched before him, so that he should not run against any obstacle, he took his way through the gloomy passages that led to the vaults beneath St. Dunstan's church. The distance was not great, but his danger was; and yet such was his insatiable desire to know what was going on in his house, that he paused more than once again to listen.

From what he heard, he felt convinced that many persons had made their way into the shop and parlour, and he anticipated a thorough search of the house.

"Let them," he said, "let them. There is nothing there now that it can interest me to keep secret—absolutely nothing. Let them search well in every room. It will give me the more time."

He struggled on in the dark a little further, and then he suddenly paused. A thought had struck him.

"Oh, what a glorious thing," he said, "if I could only now fire the old house, and so scorch some of those idiots, who are no doubt running from room to room full of mad delight at the opportunity to do so, and at the prospect that they may light upon me, and so share the money among them that is offered for my blood. It is a tempting thought."

Todd felt in his pocket for the matches that had been supplied to him by his departed friend, Mr. Lupin, and he found that he had some of them left, although all the little bits of wax ends of candles were gone.

"A match will do as well as a torch to set fire to a house. I will chance it, for afterwards I shall most bitterly repent not having done so. Oh, yes, I will go back and chance it. I know how to do it; and if that Sir Richard Blunt, whom I yet hope to see in death, has not removed the materials I placed for the firing of the house, I can do it easily. Oh, that will be most capital! I think it will make me laugh again! Ha!—ha! yes, it will make me laugh again!"

He stood for the space of time of about two minutes in deep thought, with his hands compressed upon his brow; and then he muttered—

"Yes, there is no difficulty. If I can but reach the flooring of that cupboard beneath the parlour, it will do."

He rapidly made up his mind to attempt this most perilous act of setting fire to his old house, after all; notwithstanding it was now to his knowledge filled with his enemies, and that his returning was a matter of the greatest danger to himself.

He crept back by the way he had gone, and soon reached the cellar again under his shop. That cellar run partially under the parlour likewise; and it was upon that circumstance, well known to him, that Todd based his hopes of being able, with safety to himself, to fire the old house.

He shook a little as he reached the cellar underneath the shop. It was a natural thing that he should do so; for he knew that he was doing the very reverse of what impulse would have prompted him to do, namely, fly from his enemies. The mode of getting into that cellar might, for all he knew to the contrary, be found out at the most inopportune moment for him that could be conceived, and he might find himself surrounded almost at any moment by his foes.

No wonder Todd shook a little.

He quite forgot that the bodies of the two men were there—his two latest victims; and as he went crawling along with excessive care, the first thing he did, was to fall over them both, and measure his great length upon the floor of the cellar. It was quite astonishing how Todd controlled his temper, when he had any object in view which an ebullition of rage would have had the effect of jeopardising in any way. At another time, his oaths upon the occasion of such a fall would have been rather of the terrific order; but now he uttered not a word, but gathered himself up again with all the calmness and serenity of an ancient martyr, who feels that he is suffering for some great and good cause, dear to the interests of humanity.

Sweeney Todd, however, was very anxious to discover if in his fall he had made noise enough to alarm those who were above; but he was soon satisfied that such was not the case, and that the lower part of the house was quite deserted, while they had made their way to the upper, intent upon searching in all the rooms for him (Todd). Ah! they little knew the piece of obdurate cunning that they had pitted against them there!

"I shall do it!—I shall do it!" muttered Todd, "I shall easily do it. There is no one to prevent me. Ha!—ha! I do believe that I shall smother some of them, before they can possibly find the means of getting down stairs. That would be quite a mercy of providence—oh, quite!"

CHAPTER CL.
TODD SETS FIRE TO HIS HOUSE, AND THEN HIDES IN THE CHURCH.

Immediately beneath the parlour, where a portion of the cellar went, there was a quantity of old lumber. Perhaps if that lumber had been looked very carefully over, among it there might have been found some fragments of old, and some of new coffins from St. Dunstan's; for with the rich, who had vaults of their own, it was the arrogant fashion to adorn the last sad and narrow home of humanity with silver plates and nails; and Todd had despoiled the grave of some of those costly trappings.

Upon the heap of rubbish he scrambled, and that just enabled him comfortably to reach the floor of that parlour. That portion of the floor went under a cupboard in one corner, and in the floor of it three or four coarse round holes had been drilled with a centre-bit. Todd had had his own motives for drilling those holes in the cupboard floor.

He now put his finger through one of the holes, and when he did so, he gave a chuckle of delight, for he was convinced that the contents of that cupboard had not been in any way interfered with; and that, as a consequence, he should find no difficulty in firing the house completely.

"So," he said, "this is the cleverness of your much-vaunted Sir Richard Blunt. He has left a cupboard as crammed with combustible materials as it well can be, to the mercy of the first accident that may set fire to them; and now the accident has come. Ha!"

Again Todd listened attentively, and was still further satisfied that all was profoundly still in the parlour, although he heard the racket and the banging of doors in the upper part of the house.

"This is good," said Todd. "This is capital. All is well now. The fire will have made most excellent progress before they will discover it, and I will warrant that if once it takes a firm hold of the wood-work of this old house, it is not a trifle that will stop its roaring progress."

With this, Todd ignited one of his matches and thrust it alight through one of the holes in the floor of the cupboard.

A slight cracking noise ensued immediately.

"That will do," said Todd, and he withdrew the match and cast it upon the ground. The crackling noise continued. He turned and fled from the place with precipitation.

In the lower portion of that cupboard there was a quantity of hay, upon which oil and turpentine had been poured liberally. High up upon a shelf was a wooden bowl, with eight pounds of gunpowder in it, and Todd did not know a moment when the flames might reach it, when a terrific explosion would be sure to ensue.

"It is done now," he said. "It is done, and they do not know it. More revenge—more revenge! I shall have more revenge now, and there will be more death."

He knew that there was only one thing that could by any possibility prevent the gunpowder in the wooden bowl from becoming speedily ignited, and that that would be in consequence of the hay being packed too close to do more than smoulder for a little time before bursting into a flame; but that it must and would do so eventually, there could be no possible doubt, and it was in that hearty conviction that Sweeney Todd now most fully gloried.

And now, as he had done before, he kept his arms outstretched before him to prevent him from injuring himself against any of the walls or the abrupt turnings in the passages between his own house and old St.

Dunstan's. He stooped, likewise, in order that he might not strike his head against the roof at in places where it was very low, and rough, and rugged.

Once only Todd got a little bewildered, and did not well know his way, and then he ignited one of the matches, and by its small light he saw in a moment which way he was to go.

"All is well," he said, and he rushed on; but yet he began to be a little surprised that he heard no noise from the house—no sound of the explosion; and inclining his ear to the ground, he stopped in one of the old vaults to listen.

A low moaning sound came upon his ears like the muttering of distant thunder, and then a report as though some heavy piece of timber had fallen from a great height to the earth. He fancied that the vault in which he was shook a little, and in terror he rushed forward. The gunpowder had exploded in the cupboard, and Todd's imagination was left to revel in the thought of the mischief which it had done to the house and to all within it.

In five minutes more he reached the foot of the little flight of stone-steps that led to the church. All was profoundly dark still, as he thought; but he had not got up above six of those steps when he became conscious that the light of early dawn had already found its way through the windows of the church, and was making everything within it dimly visible. Todd recoiled at this. He and daylight were decidedly not upon good terms with each other by any means.

"It is morning—it is morning!" he exclaimed. "What will become of me now? It is light."

He staggered right back into the vaults again, and there gave himself to painful thought for awhile; as he did so, he heard loud shouts in the streets—shouts that awakened echoes in the old church; and if anything could have given to Todd, at such a time as that, very great satisfaction, it was to hear that those shouts were all commingled with the one prevailing cry of—"Fire—fire—fire!" That was a joy, indeed, to him.

"It burns—it burns!" he said; "but I am here a prisoner; I dare not go out into the daylight; but the old house, with all that it contains, is wrapped in flames, and that is much—much! It is now everything. Oh, that I could hear the cries of those who find themselves wrapped up in the unappeasable element, and have no means of escape! They would, indeed, be music to my ears."

This state of mental exultation passed away very quickly, as it was sure to do, and gave place to the most lively fears for his own personal safety; for, after all, that was the great thing with Todd—at least it was while any portion of his deep revenges remained yet to be accomplished.

"What shall I do?" That was the question that he kept repeating to himself. "What shall I do?" He advanced now right up the steps into the body of the church. There, at least, he knew that he was safe for the present; and as he stood and listened, he thought that in the bustle and in the confusion that men's minds were in regarding the fire, he might emerge from the church and no one notice him, and fairly get away without observation. If he only got a few streets off it would be sufficient, and he should be able to tell himself that he had indeed and in truth escaped.

With these thoughts and feelings, he approached the church door.

The nearer he got to the old doors of St. Dunstan, the more appallingly and distinctly there came upon his ears the cries and the shouts of the people who were hurrying to the fire, and he muttered to himself—

"Ah, it must be blazing briskly now—very briskly. It must be quite a sight to the whole of London to see the old den burning so bravely."

An engine came rattling on, and with a roar and a crash went past the church door.

"Capital!" said Todd. "Upon my word this is capital!"

Another engine, with the horses at a mad gallop, went by, and Todd quite rubbed his hands at the idea of the scene of confusion that he had by his own unaided efforts succeed in making in old Fleet Street.

"They did not think," he said, "when they closed the gates of the old prison upon me, and told me I should die, that there was one half the mischief in me yet that they now find there is. Ay, and there is much more yet, that they dream not of, but which they shall know some day."

He laid his hand upon the lock of the church door. A long ray of the faint early gray light of dawn streamed through the massive keyhole, and at the moment Todd laid his hand upon the lock that ray of light vanished. It was obstructed by some one on the outside. He recoiled several steps, and then from the outside he heard a voice say—

"Lor bless us, yes, it's that old villain Todd's house, gentlemen, in course. It's come to a bad end, like its master will come to, if he hasn't. When I saw the flames and heard 'em a-roaring, I said to my missus 'Conwulsions!' says I, 'if that ain't Todd's house in a blaze.'"

"You are right, Mr. Beadle," said a voice in reply.

"Yes, gentlemen, perhaps I says it as oughtn't to say it, but I is commonly right in my way, you know, gentlemen; and so, as I says, 'Conwulsions! It's Todd's house a fire.'"

"And you think," said another voice, "we shall get a good view of it from the old church tower?"

"Yes, gentlemen," replied the beadle, whom the reader will not fail to recognise as our old acquaintance. "Yes, gentlemen. I'll warrant as you will get a capital view from the top of the old tower, where I will take you. Lor a *mussy*, how it is a *roorin*, that fire! I know'd it was Todd's house, and I said to my missus, 'Conwulsions!' says I, 'that's old villanous Todd's house a-fire!'"

Todd ground his teeth together with rage as he listened to this; but he felt that if he would provide for his own safety, there was indeed now no time to lose, and he rapidly retreated into the body of the church.

His first thought was to hide himself in one of the pews, but the divisions between them were not so high as to prevent a person of very moderate height indeed from looking over one of them, and there was quite light

enough now for any one in such a case to have seen him, if they had chosen to glance into the pew in which he might take shelter. The case was urgent, however, and he had not much time for thought, so being close to the pulpit he ran up its steps, opened the little door, and ensconced himself within it in a moment.

There, at all events, he felt that he was hidden securely from any merely casual observation.

The church door was opened almost before he could get the pulpit door shut; but he did manage to close it, and he was satisfied that he had done so without exciting the attention of those who were entering the church. Todd could, of course, from where he was, hear, with the greatest clearness and precision, every word that they said to each other, as they walked up the aisle.

Todd Sets Fire To His House, Then Hides Himself In St. Dunstan's Pulpit.

Todd Sets Fire To His House, Then Hides Himself In St. Dunstan's Pulpit.

One of the persons who were coming with the beadle to view the fire from the tower of the church went on speaking to his companions.

"And so," he said, "I think, if no one be hurt, and the fire can be kept just within the limits of Todd's house, it will be no bad thing to have a place that is such a continual reminder of atrocious guilt, swept from the face of the earth."

"Yes," said the other, "the only pity is, that Sweeney Todd is not in it to go with it. Then the good thing would be complete."

"It would, gentlemen," said the beadle. "Oh, when you comes to think of what he did and what he might have done—Oh, it makes my hair stand o' end, and my parochial blood curdle, to think of what he might have done, gentlemen."

"He could not do worse than he did."

"Not *wus*? not *wus*? Oh,—oh!"

"How is it possible? He committed a number of murders, and if you can find me anything worse he could have done, I shall indeed be very much surprised."

"Gentlemen, he might have polished *me* off. That's what he might have done, for he has actually had me hold of by the nose. Oh, conwulsions! if I had only then thought that there was a chance of his polishing off, as he used to call it, a parochial authority, I should have—I should have—"

"What, Mr. Beadle?"

"*Flewed* through the window, sir, that's what I should have done, and told the world at large what had happened."

"Well, certainly, that would have been something."

"Everything," said the other gentleman, in a tone of voice that showed how much he was inclined to enjoy a joke at the expense of the beadle. "It would have been everything. But how plain you can hear the roaring of the flames now, even in this church, with the door shut."

"You can, indeed," said the other. "Ah, there dashes past another engine. Come, Mr. Beadle, the sooner we get on this tower the better."

"In a minute, gentlemen; but now as you is here arter the blessed old church has been shut up all night, I jest ask you to say if it has the *orrid* smell as it used to have, which offended the holy nose of the bishop when he came to confirm the people."

"I smell nothing."

"Nor I."

"Very good; then that's so far satisfactory. Cos you see, sirs, only yesterday Sir Christopher Wren and two gentlemen come and left in the church a pailful of chemists, for the express purpose of taking away the smell."

"A what?"

"A pailful of chemists."

"Of chemicals, you mean, I suppose, although that would be a singularly inappropriate term. But come on, Mr. Beadle, we are very anxious to get on the tower."

"This way, gentlemen, if you pleases. This will lead you nicely and fairly up those little stairs and right on. Oh, what a world we does live in, to be sure!"

With this general philosophical remark, the beadle, opening a little door at the extremity of the south aisle, pushed his friends up a narrow staircase that led to the top of the tower of old St. Dunstan's, and from which certainly a very good view of the surrounding streets and of the Temple could be obtained; and in the clear light of early morning, before the million fires in London were lighted, that view was seen to be a tolerably distinct one.

Todd muttered the bitterest maledictions upon them, as he heard them go up the little stairs.

There he was, certainly, to all appearance, safe enough; and he might, for all he knew, be safe enough until the next Sunday; but how was he to live in a pulpit even for the whole of a day? It might be that he would have to wait there until the dim shadows of the night should come again, and wrap up the whole church in gloom; but how many weary hours must pass before that time would come, and what infinite danger there was, that he might drop into sleep after all his fatigues, and so forget his caution, and discover himself!

Already the great fatigues he had passed through, and the many hours he had been debarred from rest, began to tell upon him; and it was with difficulty that he kept himself from dropping into slumber. He began to get fearfully alarmed at his situation.

"What shall I do?" he said, "I must escape—escape! Yes. How the fire roars! I will not sleep. Oh, no—no! It is done now; the old house is gone —gone!"

Todd fell fast asleep in the pulpit.

CHAPTER CLI.
SHIFTS THE SCENE TO ONE OF QUIET GOODNESS AND SERENITY.

The necessities of our story force us for a short space of time to leave Sweeney Todd in the pulpit of St. Dunstan's Church, and his house in process of demolition by fire, while we take the reader back again to Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, where the Ingestries resided in such loving and pleasant union.

The communication that Sir Richard Blunt had made to them, had had the effect of disturbing the serenity of Mark Ingestrie to a much greater extent than he would have liked to admit, or than he was at all likely to let Johanna know.

She, too, the fair and gentle Johanna, felt an acute pang as she thought on the stern, revengeful character of Todd; and began to fancy, that if he wished to work her any woe, he would take a means of doing so which would touch her much more severely than as if he aimed at her own life, by attacking that of her husband, to whom, after so many perils, she was at length so very happily united.

"Oh, Mark," she said, "you will, you must promise me that you will depart at once from here."

"We will be gone directly, Johanna. But who have we here? Why, there is an arrival already. I will go and see who it is. It is some one in a coach."

"Oh, no—no, Mark, do not go."

"Not go?"

"No. You do not know but it may be some horrible scheme of that fiend in the shape of man, Todd, to lure you to the door, and kill you. I am full of fears, Mark, and cannot bear to let you go from my sight a moment."

"Oh, Johanna, this is unlike you, indeed. There now, look from the window, dear, and you will soon see how little you have to fear. Why, it's your father and your mother. Do you not see them, or does your tears, and your fears together, blind you?"

"A little of both, Mark," said Johanna, with a faint smile; "but I see that my dear father is there, and my mother, too. I will fly to welcome them. They have heard of the escape of Todd, and cannot endure to have us out of their sight."

As Johanna spoke, she hurried to the door to receive Mr. and Mrs. Oakley. The old man caught her in his arms, as he said—

"Oh, my own dear child! Thank God I see you safe again!"

"Safe, father?"

"Yes, my darling. You know that dreadful man?—that—that—Oh, I don't know what to call—"

"The horrid Todd," put in Mrs. Oakley, as she kissed Johanna. "He has escaped, my dear, from Newgate; but, of course, Sir Richard Blunt has been here to tell you, as he said he would; so you know all about it."

"Oh, yes—yes. Come in; I am so glad you have come."

"And so am I," said Mark Ingestrie, making his appearance in the hall; "for here is Johanna starting at every little noise, and I do believe if a mouse were now to run across the floor she would fancy that it was that old rascal, Sweeney Todd."

"Ah! but, my dear boy," said Mr. Oakley; "you really don't seem to have any idea of what a dreadful man he is—you don't, indeed."

"I don't care either, father; but I only wish one thing, and that is, that he would be so good as to trust himself, for about half a minute, within arms-length of me, that's all."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Mrs. Oakley. "My dear son, you don't know he used to—to—what did he call it, Johanna?"

"Polish people off, ma."

"Ah, to be sure."

"Well, it's no use talking," said Mark; "but if ever I get hold of him, I'll polish him off to some purpose. But you have just come in time for me to say a very serious thing to you, mother, indeed."

"Oh, what is it?" cried Mrs. Oakley.

"Don't agitate us," said old Mr. Oakley, putting on his spectacles upside-down. "Don't agitate us, my boy, but tell us at once what the dreadful thing is."

"Why, pa," said Johanna, "Mark did not say it was a dreadful thing he was going to say."

"Well, then, my dear, what is it?"

"Ah, that, indeed, I don't know; but I would wager—yes, I would wager anything, that it is something not dreadful at all. Come, Mark, what is it? —Speak out."

"Then, it's just this," said Mark. "We are going out of London, and I want you both to come with us, for I know very well if you don't, that you will be as miserable as possible, thinking of Johanna, and that Johanna will be in much the same state thinking of you, and that you will dream every night of Todd."

The old couple looked at each other with surprise and gratification. Mr. Oakley took off his spectacles, and said—

"My dear boy, do you know, I was just going to say that—that—"

"That, in fact," put in Mrs. Oakley, "we would be glad to go with you, if you would let us, for Sir Richard said he would advise you both to go out of London, and leave him to find out and hang Todd at his leisure, you know."

"Yes, that was it," said the old man. "That was the very thing that brought us over here, my dears; so if you will only be so good—"

"Come, come," said Mark, "it is, you must be so good. I asked you first, you know, so you do us the favour. Is not that it, Johanna? Of course it is."

"You are very, very good and kind, Mark."

"Oh, stuff! not at all; I say what I like, that's all, and when I say that it would please me mightily to have your father and mother with us, Johanna, where we are going, I mean it from my heart, as you know well."

"I know you do, Mark. And poor Tobias, father, is to be with us likewise. You have heard all about poor Tobias?"

"Oh, yes—yes."

"Well, then, Sir Richard Blunt told us that it would be the death of the poor lad if he should be in London and hear that Todd has escaped from Newgate. So we gladly agreed to take him with us, for he—more than any one—has suffered deeply from Todd's wickedness."

"Hilloa!" cried Mark, as he glanced from the window. "If here is not another coach at the door!"

"Oh, who is it?" said Mrs. Oakley. "It's Todd, of course, come to kill us all!"

"I hope it is," said Mark. "I'll soon set you all at rest about him. But only look! If it ain't the colonel, and Arabella, and Tobias. Well, if Todd wants to be down upon us all at once, now is his time certainly to do so."

In a few moments, the colonel and Arabella were shown into the room, and they were quite surprised to see the Oakleys there; but while Johanna and Arabella were embracing each other, Mark Ingestrie went up to the colonel, and pointing slightly to Tobias, he whispered—

"Does he know?"

"Oh, no—no."

"Very good; but he had better, I am convinced, for it will be sure to slip out in conversation, some time or another, and then the poor lad will think much more of it than as if it were told to him in a quiet manner by his friends, for he will think that there is more to conceal than there really is. I am convinced that such will be the case."

"Then we will take an opportunity of telling him, but not just now. I want to speak to Johanna."

"There she is, then."

"And what does he want to say to me?" said Johanna, as she shook hands with the colonel.

"Why, a—the fact is that—that, in fact, Sir Richard told me he would advise you to go out of town; and as I am pretty well aware that you set sufficient store by his advice to follow it, I think it is very likely you will go out of town."

"And so, dear," put in Arabella, "and so, dear, in a word, we want to go with you, if you think that such an arrangement will not be disagreeable to you."

"Now, that is the unkindest thing you have said, Arabella, for a long time. How could you suppose that it would be other than most agreeable to me to have with us such valued friends?"

"There, I told you that," said the colonel. "Of course it will be all right, and we shall make quite a merry party, I'll be bound; so that's as good as settled, and a very satisfactory thing it is, and the sooner we all set off the better. Here's Tobias quite delighted with the idea of his little excursion."

"Ah, yes," said Tobias, "and it is so kind and good of you, colonel, and of all of you; but you know I leave my heart in London still, let me go where I may."

"Never mind, Tobias," said Johanna. "I feel quite sure that you will find it in good keeping when you do come back again; so now we will make preparations at once for departure, and I hope we shall be quite

delighted with where we are going. It is one of the pleasantest places, they tell me, on the coast, and will in time be a place of great importance."

"Well," said the colonel, with a laugh, "it's quite a pleasant thing to hear that it is on the coast, for that is something towards a knowledge of where it is."

"Ah, my dear—By-the-by," said Mrs. Oakley, "I should like to know where you really intend to take us all."

"To the little fishing village of Brighthelmstone, for it is nothing more; but then it lies pleasantly between the hills, and you can see the Channel opening fairly before you, and there is an air upon the Downs that is full of life and joy. You will be sure to like it, mother, and so will you, father, and you, colonel, and you, my dear Arabella."

"You don't mention me," said Mark.

"Oh, that is because you know you are of no sort of consequence at all. You are nobody."

"Thank you!"

"Well now, my dears," said Mrs. Oakley, "don't begin to quarrel now, I beg of you, for that is the worst thing you can do; and so long as we get out of the way of having all our throats cut by that horrid Todd, I don't care where I go to or how many inconveniences I put up with, so long as it is a great way off; and I do hope that Sir Richard will soon catch him again, and regularly hang him, as he deserves, the wretch, that I do."

A complete silence followed the utterance of the indiscreet speech of Mrs. Oakley's, which, if it did not at once open the eyes of poor Tobias to the real reason of the sudden journey, nothing would. All eyes were bent upon the lad; and rising from the seat which Johanna had made him take, he looked about him with dismay.

"Oh, tell me, some one," he then said, "what does it all really mean? Believe me, my kind and dear friends, that I shall suffer less from the truth than as if I were left to make myself mad by thought. Oh, tell me

all!"

"You shall know all," said the colonel.

"Oh, mother—mother," said Johanna. "Why did you—"

Mrs. Oakley sat looking the picture of dismay, and Colonel Jeffrey added —

"This is an accident that I don't think is to be much lamented. Tobias must have known at some time, and it is better that he should know now that he is surrounded by his friends. Give me your hand, Tobias. You see that I smile, so it cannot be of great moment after all."

"Oh, tell me—tell me!"

"I will. Todd has made his escape from Newgate, that is all; but he is friendless and penniless, and it will be quite impossible that he can remain many days at large, as Sir Richard Blunt is already upon his track. Let me beg of you not to be in the least alarmed at this intelligence. It ought not to alarm you. Todd will have too much to do to look after his own affairs to enable him to give a thought to anybody else."

"You will save me?" said Tobias.

"I will. We will all stand between you and any harm; but, I repeat, I do not apprehend any danger to you."

They all spoke to Tobias cheeringly, and in the course of half an hour they got him into quite a different state of mind; and then, as he was to form one of the party, it was quite a relief to them all that they did not feel compelled to keep a guard upon their tongues in his presence. In the evening of that day they were all at Brighton.

Johanna And Company Leave Chelsea To Avoid The Vengeance Of Todd.

Johanna And Company Leave Chelsea To Avoid The Vengeance Of Todd.

CHAPTER CLII.
TODD HAS SOME FURTHER ADVENTURES IN FLEET STREET.

We left Todd in the pulpit of St. Dunstan's Church, while his old house was rapidly burning down. A perilous position for Todd!

Perhaps, if he had courage sufficient to have made the attempt, he might have escaped at several junctures, but the dread of the consequences of capture was so strong in his heart and brain, that while he felt that he was undiscovered in the pulpit, he preferred remaining there to making any precipitate means of escape.

It will be remembered how the beadle had taken up several gentlemen to the roof of the church, in order that they might get a good view of the fire; and it was during that time that Todd thought of escaping, but the rapid approach of daylight daunted him.

"Oh, that I had remained in the wood at Hampstead, or anywhere but here in London, where the hands of all men are raised against me! Oh, I was mad—mad to come here. But I am not quite lost. If I thought that, my senses would go from me this moment. Oh, no—no, I will be calm now again; I will not believe that I am quite lost yet."

Of a truth, Todd felt that if he really gave up in despair, that he might commit some extravagance which would at once draw down upon him his enemies; and there he lay in the pulpit, his gaunt form huddled up so as completely to hide himself in it, and dreading to stay as much almost as he dreaded to leave.

He heard still the loud shouts of people at the fire, and at times he thought he heard even the flames that were rapidly consuming the old den of iniquity in which he had committed so many crimes. The regular clank, clank, too, of the engine pumps came upon his ears, and he muttered—

"No, no, you may try your hardest, but you will not subdue that fire. It will blaze on in spite of you. You will not—you cannot, I say, subdue it. The house is too well prepared. I had a care for that before I left home. It will burn to the very ground—ay, and below the ground, too; and the spot of earth only will remain that held the foundation of my old house. Would that all whom I hate were at this moment writhing in the flames! Then I might feel some sort of satisfaction with myself, and even this place of peril would be for the time quite tolerable to me."

No doubt it would have been a vast satisfaction to Todd to have all that he hated in the flames of his burning house; but as yet he could only tell himself that the puny vengeance he had achieved had been upon the most inferior tools of those who had wreaked his ruin, while the principals remained untouched and most completely unscathed.

What had he yet done to Sir Richard Blunt? What to Tobias? What to Johanna? What even to the dog that had played no inconsiderable a part in his final conviction of the murder of its master? Little, indeed; and the thought that his revenges were all to do, scared his imagination, and filled him full of rage as well as terror.

He heard the sound of the footsteps of the people who had gone to the roof of the church with the beadle to see the fire, coming down again, and he shrunk still closer into the bottom of the pulpit.

"Oh," he said, "if they could but for one moment guess that I was here, what joy it would give them to drag me forth to the light of day! To once again cast me into the condemned one's cell, and then to hoot me to the gallows! But, no—no; I will not die a felon's death. Rather by my own hands will I fall, if my fortune should reach such a wretched extremity. Hush!—oh, hush! Why do I speak? They come—they come."

"Well, gentlemen, as you say, the old house is gone at last," said the beadle, "and I must say, though fires always gives me a turn, and, as a parish authority perhaps I ought not to say it, I think it is a very good job."

"A good job, Mr. Beadle?" said one. "How do you make that out?"

"Why, sir, who would have lived in it? Who would have paid rent, and rates, and taxes, and given his Christmas-box to the beadle like a Christian, in Todd's old house, I should like to know?"

"Well, you are right there."

"I know I is, sir. The fact is, that house would have been like a great blot, sirs, in the middle of Fleet Street; no one would have taken it for love or money; and it a very good thing as it's gone at last."

"You reason the matter very well, Mr. Beadle," said another, "and I for a certainty subscribe to your opinion, that it is a good thing it is gone at last, and I only hope that its late owner will soon be in the hands of justice. Somebody is trying the door of the church."

The beadle went to it, and upon opening it two persons entered the church. One of them spoke at once, saying—

"Is the beadle of St. Dunstan's in the church?"

Todd knew the voice. It was Sir Richard Blunt, and he shook so that the pulpit creaked again most ominously, so that if the attention of any one had chanced to be directed towards it, they might have felt a kind of suspicion that it was occupied. Luckily for Todd, no one looked up, nor in any way noticed the pulpit.

"Lor, sir, yes," said the beadle. "Here I is, and if I don't make a great mistake, sir, you is Sir Richard Blunt."

"I am."

"Lor bless you, sir, that's the way with me. If I sees a *indiwidal* once, and knows 'em, I knows 'em again."

"It's a capital faculty, Mr. Beadle. But my friend, Mr. Crotchet, here, will just go down with you through the vaults to make sure that the fire in Todd's house has in no way connected with this. We don't want to burn down the church."

"Burn down the church, sir? Oh, conwulsions! Me go down into the vaults with this gentleman? Bless you, sir, I should only *obstructify* him in the discharge of his duty. I couldn't think of doing it, I assure you, sir. He can go by himself, you see, and then he will have the advantage of nobody to contradict him."

"I'd rather go without him, Sir Richard," said Crotchet, who was the gentleman. "He's only a idiot!"

The beadle marched up to Crotchet, until he got within about two inches of that gentleman's nose, and then slowly shaking his head to and fro, he said—

"Did you call me a *hidiot*?"

"Yes, I did."

"You did? Now, young man, mind what you say, because if you call me a hidiot, I shall be bound to do—"

"What?"

"Nothing at all. I see you are rather a low fellow, so I shall treat you with the same contempt as I did the very common person that pulled my nose last week—Silent contempt! That's how I serve people. I despise you, accordingly."

"Werry good," said Crotchet. "That's by far the safestest way, old feller. So now I'll go down into the vaults."

"No news of Todd yet, Sir Richard?" said one of the gentlemen, walking up to the magistrate.

"Oh, Sir Christopher Wren, I beg your pardon," said the magistrate. "I did not see you at the moment. I am sorry to say that although we have some news of Todd, we have not yet been able to catch him. But we must

have him, England is not so very large a place after all, and I don't think he has any means of getting away from it."

"The sooner the rascal expiates his crimes upon the scaffold the better. I never before heard of a criminal in whose whole career there was nothing found that could excite the faintest feeling of compassion."

"He is a desperate bad fellow, indeed," said Sir Richard Blunt, "but I hope that he will not long trouble society. I have determined to give up all other pursuits until I take him, and I have a *carte blanche* from the Secretary of State to go to any expense, and to do what I please, in the way of capturing him."

Todd's heart sunk within him at these words. Had they come from any one else, he would not have heeded them much but from him they were of fearful import.

"Oh, that I could kill that man," he muttered, "then I should know some peace; but while he lives and while I live, we are like two planets in one orbit, and cannot long exist together."

"I wish you every success," said Sir Christopher Wren.

"I am obliged to you, Sir Christopher. The fact is, that Todd left his house pretty full of combustibles, and my men were unwise enough, contrary to my positive orders, to let them be there; and I am afraid that he may have contrived some mode of blowing up the church by a train or some other equally diabolical means, as he had such free and unrestrained access to it for so long."

"What!" cried the beadle. "What did you say, Sir Richard?"

"I merely said that I was apprehensive Todd might have concocted some means of blowing up the church, that is all."

"And me in it! And me in it! Conwulsions!"

The beadle did not pause for another moment, but rushing to the door, he flew out of the church as if a barrel of gunpowder had been rolling after him, nor did he stop until he got right through Temple-bar and

some distance down the Strand.

"I am afraid I have frightened away our friend, the beadle," said Sir Richard Blunt.

"And I don't wonder at it," replied Sir Christopher Wren. "I should not like exactly to be blown up along with the fragments of old St. Dunstan's Church myself, so I will go."

"Ah, I am sorry I mentioned it."

"Are you though? I am very much obliged to you for so doing. Excuse me, Sir Richard, for bidding you good-morning rather abruptly, if you please."

Sir Richard Blunt laughed as he bade Sir Christopher and his friend good-morning—by-the-by, the friend had already made his way outside the church-door, and was waiting for Sir Christopher in no small degree of trepidation.

"For God's sake," he said, "come along at once, or we may all be blown up together."

"Well," said Sir Richard Blunt, as he paced up the aisle of the old church, "I would risk a little scorching, if at the end of it I could only lay my hand upon the shoulder of Sweeney Todd. What on earth can have become of the rascal? But I must be patient—yes, patience will do it, for that we shall come face to face again, I feel to be as established a fact for the future, as that of my own existence now."

"Oh," thought Todd, "if I now only dared to shoot him! If I only dared do it! And I would if it were not for the other one in the vaults—that wretch they call Crotchet. And yet I have a pistol here. If I thought that after shooting him through the head or through the heart, I could by one bold rush get out of this church, what a glorious piece of work it would be! This Sir Richard Blunt is the only man that I dread. Were he no more, I should feel completely at peace. I could shoot him now."

Todd took a pistol from his pocket and presented it through the little crevice of the very slightly open door of the pulpit. The door would open a little in spite of him.

"Yes, oh, yes, I could shoot him now; but the report of the pistol would perhaps bring that other villain they call Crotchet from the vaults, and then who shall say what would happen? And yet I have another pistol, and could shoot him too. Oh, how glorious, if I could take the lives of both these men! It would indeed be a good work."

The magistrate paced to and fro waiting for Crotchet, and little suspecting that Todd was so near to him, and with a pistol aimed at him! If he had only guessed as much, he would have freely risked the shot, and would soon have been in the pulpit along with Todd. But it was not to be. Sir Richard Blunt had not any supernatural power by which he could tell of the proximity of Todd from no evidence of that fact at all.

"Yes," said Todd suddenly, "I will shoot him. I will risk all and shoot him now. If I die for it, I shall have, at least, had a great and glorious revenge! I will shoot him now, when he turns and walks up the aisle again."

Todd felt calm and pleased now that he had actually made up his mind to shoot Sir Richard. He projected the barrel of the pistol about an inch or so through the crevice caused by the spring of the door, and he calmly waited for the opportunity of sending its deadly contents into the heart of the magistrate.

The aisle down which Sir Richard had slowly paced was rather a long one, and he had walked down it some half-dozen times, in deep thought, and waiting for Crotchet. There was no reason on earth why he should not come up it again, and so expose himself to the deadly aim of Todd.

He did commence the walk up it. If he had taken twenty steps he would have been a dead man; but chance, or providence—it is not for us to say which—had it otherwise. After going about ten paces, he turned abruptly to the left, and made his way down a long narrow passage between the pews to the opening that led down to the vaults, where Crotchet was pursuing his inquiries.

Todd was foiled.

He drew back with a deep sigh.

"He is saved!" he said. "He is saved! It is not to be!"

Quite unconscious of the serious danger he had so narrowly escaped, Sir Richard went to the mouth of the opening to the vaults, and called out—

"Crotchet! Crotchet!"

"Here you is, sir," replied Crotchet; "I was just coming. It's all right. The old wagabone hasn't done nothing, sir, to spread the fire out of his own blessed premises, as I can see. The church isn't in danger, sir, I take it."

"Very good, Crotchet; then we need not remain here any longer. I cannot, for the life of me, think what has become of our man that we left in Todd's house. In all the riot and racket of the fire, no one seems to be at all aware of what has become of him. Is he a steady sort of a man, Crotchet?"

"Why yes, Sir Richard, he is. But if the truth must be told, he has got the fault of many. He is fond of the—"

Here Crotchet went through expressively the pantomime of placing a glass to his lips and draining it off, after which he rubbed his stomach, as much as to say—"Isn't it nice!"

"I understand, Crotchet: he drinks."

"Rather, Sir Richard."

"Ah, that is the case of all—or of nearly all—men in his class of life. I should not wonder now, at all, if he has not been taking a glass of something, in consequence of feeling lonely, and so set fire to the old house."

CHAPTER CLIII.
TODD ASTONISHES THE BEADLE, AND ESCAPES PROM ST. DUNSTAN'S.

"Oh!" groaned Todd to himself. "Oh, if I had but shot the villain before the other one came up from the vaults, and all would have been well; but I cannot shoot them both at once. It is not often that I lose anything by procrastination, but I have now—Oh, yes, I have now! It is maddening!—It is quite maddening! and I could find in my own heart almost to turn this pistol against my own life, only that I hope yet to live a little while for vengeance."

A smart tap came against the church door.

"Open the door, Crotchet," said Sir Richard. "We are alone in the church now, for the beadle was too careful of himself to remain after he found that there was some little danger."

"Oh, sir," said Crotchet, with an expression of disgust in his face, "beadles is humbugs, sir; and this beadle of St. Dunstan's is the very worst of the worst of beadles. Didn't you notice, sir, what an old humbug he was before, when we was a-coming here on the hunt about Todd and that beautiful creature Mrs. Lovett? Then, sir, we found out what sort of a beadle that was. I rather think I despises beadles, sir; I does, your worship."

Tap came the knock at the church door again.

"You forget, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, pointing to the door.

"Lor, yer worship, so I did. I begs his blessed pardon whosomever it is. Come in. There's nobody but the right sort here, whoever it is. Hilloa! it's our friend, Green."

"Ah, Green, are you looking for me?" said Sir Richard.

"I was, sir."

"Then you have news. What is it?"

"Todd is in the neighbourhood, sir, or was an hour or two ago, I am well assured."

"Todd?"

"Yes, sir. He was in his own house. A man came to the door of it to see the person minding it, and the door was opened a little way, and Todd tried to pull him in, and would have pulled him in, but his neckcloth gave way, and then the fire broke out directly after. The man has been in too great a fright till just a little while ago to venture into the street again."

"You have seen him?"

"I have, sir."

"Bring him here, Green."

Green immediately left the church, and Mr. Crotchet set up a long and melancholy whistle.

"In my heart I thought this might be," said Sir Richard, "and yet having no evidence to justify the suggestion of my fancy, I did not like to nurse the idea. Todd in this neighbourhood—Todd in his own house! Oh, what a chance!"

"Your worship," said Crotchet, shaking his head and speaking slowly, with an appearance of great wisdom. "Your worship, it's mostly always the case. There's a special providence that always brings back folks as has done a murder back again to the place where they has done it; and the next time I'm on the lay for a cove as has done a slaughtering job, I shall sit myself down, yer worship, in the room where he did it and wait

for him. It's a special thing of Providence, it is, sir, I feel as sure as though I did it myself, as isn't Providence at all, but just Crotchet, and no sort of mistake."

"You are right, Crotchet, as far as examples go. We will only just listen to what this man that Green has gone for has got to say, and then we will be off and do our best."

"Yes, yer worship, we will; and here he is."

Green, the officer, now brought into the church the very man with whom Todd had had the little adventure at the door of his shop; and notwithstanding the time that had elapsed since that little incident, the man was still in a state of terror, which was quite manifest in every feature of his face.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" said Crotchet, as he dealt the man a blow on the back that nearly took all his breath away. "You look as scared as if you had just seen a ghost, old fellow, that you do."

"It was worse than a ghost."

Sir Richard Blunt stepped up to the man, and said—

"Do you know me? I am Sir Richard Blunt the magistrate."

"Oh, yes, sir, I know you."

"Answer me then, clearly and distinctly, for much may depend upon it. Who was it opened the door of Todd's house for you, and strove, as I hear, to drag you into it?"

"Sweeney Todd, sir."

"Are you quite sure? Do you know him well by sight?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I could swear it."

"And you thought it very natural that he should be there, and if anybody there had so laid hold of you in the dark, you would, of course, at once have naturally concluded that it must be Todd?"

"Oh, dear no, sir, I hadn't an idea that it could be him, sir; and if I hadn't seen his face, that I know quite well, I couldn't possibly have believed it to be him."

"That is enough. I will not trouble you any further. I am much obliged to you for your information."

"You are very welcome, Sir Richard; and I do hope you may catch the rascal soon. I shall never forget his having hold of me, for the longest day I have to live."

Still shaking at the bare remembrance of the danger that he had run, the man left the church; and peeping over his shoulder every now and then as he went, for fear Todd should be close at hand, he took his route to quite a different quarter of the town, where he fancied he should feel more secure; for he could not make up his mind to anything but that Todd must have some special desire to lay hold of him, and add him to the already formidable muster-roll of his victims.

When he left the church, Sir Richard Blunt turned to Crotchet, and said —

"Crotchet, you may depend, now, that Todd is in London, and fancies that among its crowds will be his greatest chance of safety. I will take measures at once to discover him. Come along with me to Craven-street, and you too, Green, and I will explain to you both what I think will be the best plan to adopt."

"All's right, sir; we'll have him," said Crotchet.

"I think we shall," said Green, "for, large as London is, I rather think we know how to search it as well as most folks. I attend you, sir, and I will run any risk in the world to take the scoundrel prisoner."

"And so will I," said Crotchet.

"I know you both well," said Sir Richard, "and I cannot desire to be aided by better men than you both are. Come on. I will not speak further of any plans or projects except in my own office, where I know that there are no spies or eaves-droppers."

"This blessed church is pretty safe," said Crotchet. "It ain't very likely that anybody is on the listening lay in it. It would be rather cold work, I take it. But, howsomdever, there's nothing like being on the right side of the hedge, and in one's own crib, that one knows all the ins and all the outs of, after all."

They both followed Sir Richard Blunt from the church, and Todd felt that he was once again alone within that sacred edifice, the very atmosphere of which was profaned by the presence of such a wretch, so loaded with crimes as he was.

"Gone," said Todd, looking up put of the pulpit, "and may all—"

We cannot repeat the maledictions of Todd. They were additionally awful spoken in such a building, and from such a place in that building. It was dreadful that the roof of a place reared to the worship of God, should be desecrated by the raving curses of such a man as Todd.

He was silent after he had satisfied his first ebullition of rage, and then he was afraid that he had gone too far, and endangered his safety by making an appearance at all above the level of the pulpit, or by speaking. How did he know but that Sir Richard Blunt might, after all, have some sort of suspicion that he was not far off, and be listening close at hand?

As this supposition, wild and vague as it was, and quite unsupported by any evidence, found a home in the brain of Todd, the perspiration of intense fear broke out upon his brow, and again he shook to the extent of making the old pulpit creak dreadfully.

"Oh, hush! hush!" he moaned. "Be still—be still. I am safe yet. There is no one here. I am safe, surely. There is no one in the church. Why do I suffer more, much more, from what does not happen, than from what does?"

Still the notion clung to him for a little while, and he remained at the bottom of the pulpit quite needlessly for the next half hour, listening with all his might, in order to detect the slightest noise that might be

indicative of the presence of a foe. But all was as still as the grave, and by slow degrees Sweeney Todd got more assured.

"I breathe again," he said. "They do not suspect that I am here. It is much too unlikely a place for them to dream of for a moment. Even Sir Richard Blunt, with his utmost prescience, does not think of looking for me in the pulpit of St. Dunstan's Church. I am safe—I am safe for the present."

He agreed with this feeling that he was quite alone in the church, and he was right. He looked over the edge of the pulpit. How still and solemn the place looked!

The morning had advanced quite sufficiently now to shed a dim light into the church, and the noise in the street contingent upon the fire had nearly passed away. The fact was, that the firemen had, after making a few efforts and finding them of no use, let Todd's house burn to the ground, and turned all their efforts towards saving the edifices on either side. In that object they were successful, so that the conflagration was over, and nothing remained but the frail wall of Todd's house.

And so the clank of the engine-pumps no longer sounded in his ears, but he could yet be certain that there was a great crowd in Fleet Street, for he heard the hum of voices, and occasionally the trouble that ensued when a vehicle tried to force its way through the dense mass of people that blocked up the thoroughfare, which at the best of times was none of the clearest.

"Is there a chance now of escape," said Todd, "if I could only make up my mind to it? I do not forget that I am disguised—I ought not to forget that. Who will know me? and yet that man knew me—that man that I missed killing at the old place. Yes, he knew me. He said he could swear to me. Confound him! I wish I could have sworn to his dead body. I wonder if they have left the church-door open, or, rather, only upon the latch? I—I will descend from here, and make a bold attempt."

He opened the pulpit-door, and had got about three steps down the little ornamental flight of winding stairs that led from the pulpit to the body of the building, when the church-door was suddenly opened, and he fled back with a precipitation that made some noise, when he might have done so in perfect quietness, for it was not very likely that any one would have looked up to the pulpit immediately upon their entrance to the building.

A glance towards the door convinced Mr. Todd that it was the beadle.

"Oh, dear, I thought I heard something," said the beadle, as he closed the door after him. "But I suppose it was only fancy, after all. Now they say that all the fire is out, and that it is quite impossible for the church to be blowed up, I suppose I may come in without any danger. Lor bless us, that Sir Richard Blunt, I do believe, would think no more of blowing up a beadle, than he would of eating a penny bun, that's my opinion of him."

"Curses on your head!" muttered Todd.

"Bless me, what a world we live in," said the beadle.

"Wretch—beast," muttered Todd; "what does he want here at this time of day?"

"Yes, to-morrow's Sunday," said the beadle, as if pursuing a train of thought that had found a home in his brain. "How the weeks do run round, to be sure, and one Sunday comes after another at such a rate, that it seems as if there was weeks and weeks and weeks of 'em, without any of the other days at all. I wish I hadn't to come here."

Todd uttered faintly some dreadful imprecations, and the beadle continued talking to himself to keep his courage up, as was evident from his nervous and fidgetty manner.

"Ah, dear, me. Conwulsions! I tried to persuade my wife to come and dust the communion table and the pulpit-cushions for to-morrow, but she politely declined; she needn't have thrown the bellows at my head though, for all that."

"Dust the pulpit-cushions!" thought Todd. "The wretch is coming up here! I shall have to cut his throat, and leave him at the bottom of the pulpit for the parson to tread upon the first thing he does to-morrow, upon coming up here to preach."

As Todd spoke, he took a clasped knife out of his pocket, and opened it with his teeth. "Oh, yes, my old friend, I shall, I see, be under the painful necessity of cutting your throat, that I shall, and I shall not hesitate about it at all."

"Yes," added the beadle, "I mean to say that to throw the bellows at the man is like adding insult to injury, for it is blowing him up in a kind of way that's anything but agreeable. Lor! how cold and rum the church does feel. Rum? why did I say rum and put myself in mind of it? Oh, don't I like it, rather! If I only now had a glass of real fine old Jamaica rum at this moment, I'd be as happy as a bishop."

"Oh, I'll rum you!" growled Todd.

"Eh? Eh?"

The beadle turned round three times, as though he were going to begin a game at blind-man's-bluff, and then he said—

"I thought I heard something. Oh dear, how shivery I do get to be sure, when I'm alone in the church. I'll just get through the dusting job as quick as I can, and no mistake. Amen! Amen! I'm a miserable sinner—Amen!"

CHAPTER CLIV.
DETAILS THE PERILOUS SITUATION OF THE BEADLE.

Todd had heard all this with anger and impatience rankling at his heart. He began to have the most serious thoughts of sacrificing the beadle—indeed, if any good could have been got to himself by so doing, he would not have scrupled to do so with the greatest speed. As it was, however, he could not concoct any plan of proceedings quickly which would benefit him, and so he was compelled to remain an auditor of the beadle's private thoughts, and a spectator of what he was about, when he chose to peep over the edge of the pulpit.

"Well, it's astonishing," continued the beadle, "what a fever that fellow Todd has kept me in for I don't know how long, one way or another: me and Fleet Street have been regularly bothered by him. First of all, I was in all sorts of doubts and uncertainties about the matter before they took him and tried him, and was a-going to hang him, and then I did think that he was as—good—as done—for—"

As he uttered these last words, the beadle was banging one of the cushions of the communion-table, so that he was compelled for want of breath to utter them at intervals.

"Oh, confound you!" muttered Todd, "if I only had hold of you, I would throttle you, and then think of what to do afterwards."

Todd's great difficulty arose from the fact that he thought if he tried to descend from the pulpit, the beadle might see him and get the start of him in leaving the church, in which event the alarm that he would raise in Fleet Street would be such, that any attempt to escape would be attended by the greatest hazard.

"There is nothing for it but to wait," said Todd to himself gloomily. "I can do nothing else; but woe to him when I do catch him!"

"This dusting job on a Saturday," said the beadle, "does seem to me to be one of the most disagreeable of all that has to be done with the church. I don't mind one's duty on a Sunday, but this is horrid. On a Sunday there's lots of people, and the old place has a sort of cheerful look about it, but now I don't like it, and I've a good mind to get one of the charity-boys of the blessed parish to keep me company."

"I will kill him, too, if you do," muttered Todd.

The beadle paused upon this thought concerning the charity-boy; but as he had finished the communion-table, he did not think that for the mere dusting the pulpit and its cushions, it was worth while to make any fuss.

"It will soon be over," he said, "very soon. I'll just pop up and settle the pulpit, and then get home again as quick as I possibly can. I do wonder, now, if that old Todd will be caught soon? The old wretch!"

The beadle began the ascent of the pulpit.

"It's my opinion," he said, "that Todd—as he had other folks made up into pies—ought to be made into one himself, and then given to mad dogs for a supper—Ha! ha! That's a very good thought of mine, and when I go to the 'Pig's-eye, Tooth, and Tinder-box,' to-night, I will out with it, and they will knock their pots and glasses against the table beautifully, and cry out—'Well done, bravo!—bravo!' I rather think I'm a great man at the 'Pig's-eye, Tooth and Tinder-box.'"

By this time the beadle had got quite to the top of the pulpit stairs, and had his hand on the door. Todd was crouched down at the bottom of the pulpit, waiting for him like some famished tiger ready to pounce upon

his prey. He fully intended to murder the unfortunate beadle.

"Well, here goes," said that most unhappily-situated functionary, as he stepped into the pulpit.

Todd immediately grasped his legs.

"If you say one word, you are a dead man!"

The shock was too much for the nerves of the poor beadle of St. Dunstan's, and on the instant he fainted, and fell huddled up at the bottom of the little place.

Todd immediately stood upon the prostrate form of the parochial authority.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, "I have him now, and I shall be able to leave St. Dunstan's yet."

He trampled as hard upon the beadle as he could, and then he took the clasp knife from his pocket, and said—

"It will be better to kill him. Rise, idiot, rise, and tell me if you can, why I should not cut your throat?"

The beadle neither moved nor spoke.

"Is he dead?" said Todd. "Has the fright killed him? It is strange; but I have heard of such things. Why it surely must be so. The sudden shock has been the death of him, and it would be a waste of time for me to touch him. He is dead—he must be dead!"

Todd, full of this feeling, retreated two or three steps down the little winding staircase of the pulpit, and then reaching in his hand, he caught hold of the poor beadle by the hair of his head, and dragged him sufficiently out of the pulpit to be enabled to look him in the face. The eyes were closed, the inspiration seemed to be stopped, and there was, in truth, every appearance of death about the unfortunate functionary of the old church.

"Yes, dead," said Todd; "but it will be better for me. He will be found here, and as no violence will show upon him, the doctors will learnedly pronounce it a case of apoplexy, and there will arise no suspicion of my having been here at all. It is much better, oh, much, than as if I had killed him."

With this feeling, Todd pushed what he considered to be the dead body of the beadle back into the pulpit again, and then himself rapidly descended the little spiral flight of stairs.

The clock of St. Dunstan's struck the hour of ten, and Todd carefully counted the strokes.

"Ten," he said. "A busy hour—a hour of broad daylight, and I with such a price upon my head, and the hands of all men lifted against me, in one of the most populous streets in the City of London! It is a fearful risk!"

It was a fearful risk, and Todd might well shudder to find that his temerity had brought him into such a position; but yet he felt that if anything were to save him, it would be boldness, and not shrinking timidity. One great cause of dread had passed away from Todd when Sir Richard Blunt left the church. If in any way Todd had had to encounter him, he would have shrunk back appalled at the frightful risk.

When he gained the body of the church, he glanced again up to the pulpit, but all was there profoundly still; and the fact of the death of the beadle appeared to him, Todd, to be so very firmly established, now, as to require no further confirmation.

Although the beadle had closed the church door, he had placed the key, most probably for security, in the inner side of the lock, and there Todd found it. He thought it would be a good thing to put it in his pocket, and he did so accordingly; and when the key was removed, he placed his eye to the keyhole, and peeped out into Fleet Street.

Todd could see the people passing quickly, but no one cast a glance towards the old church, and he began to reason with himself, that surely there could be no difficulty in getting into the street quite unnoticed, if

not quite unobserved. Again he told himself that he was well disguised.

"I dread no eye," he said, "but that of Sir Richard Blunt, and he is not here to look upon me. There is not one else, I think, in London that would know me through this disguise. There was never but one who could do so, and she is dead. Yes, Mrs. Lovett might have known me, but she is no more: so I will venture. Yes, I will venture now."

His heart failed him a little as he placed his hand upon the lock of the church-door. It well might do so, for the risk he run, or was about to run, was truly fearful. He was on the point of sallying out among a population, the whole of whom were familiar with his name, and to whom he was as a being accursed, who would upon the slightest hint of identity be gladly hunted to the death.

Truly, Todd might well hesitate.

But yet to hesitate was perhaps to be lost. How could he tell now one moment from another when some one might come to the church-door? and then he would be in a worse position than before. Yes, he felt that he must make the attempt to leave, whether that attempt should involve him in destruction or not, for to stay were far worse.

He opened the door and coolly closed it again, and marched into Fleet Street.

We say he did this coolly, but it were better to say that he acted a coolness that he was far from feeling. A very tempest of terror was at his heart. His brain for a moment or two felt like a volcano, and he reeled as he felt himself in the broad open light of day in Fleet Street among the throng of the population, and yet in that throng was in truth his greatest safety.

"Ain't you well, sir?" said a man.

Todd started and placed his hand upon the knife that he had handy in his pocket; and then he thought that after all it might only be a civil inquiry, and he replied—

"Oh, yes, thank you—thank you, sir. But I am old."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

The man passed on.

"Oh, curse you! I should like to settle you," said Todd to himself as he passed through Temple Bar; but what a relief it was to pass through Temple Bar at all! To leave that now frightfully dangerous Fleet Street behind him. Oh, yes, that was a relief indeed; and Todd felt as if some heavy weight had been taken off his heart upon the moment that he set foot in the Strand.

"Am I safe?" he muttered. "Am I safe? Oh, no, no. Do not let me be too confident."

He was superstitiously afraid of pluming himself upon the fact of having got so far in safety, lest at the moment that he did so, malignant destiny might be revenged upon him, by bringing in his way some one who might know him, even though his capital disguise; so he went on tremblingly.

Todd did not like large open thoroughfares now, and yet, perhaps, if he had set to work reasoning upon the subject, he would have come to the conclusion that they were quite as safe, if not a few degrees safer for him, than by-streets but there was something in the glaring publicity of such a thoroughfare as the Strand that he shrunk from, and he was glad to get from it into the gloomy precincts of Holywell Street.

That street then, as now, was certainly not the resort of the most choice of the population of London, but Todd liked it, and he was wonderfully attracted by a dirty-looking little public-house which was then in it. A murder was committed in that house afterwards, and it lost its licence, and was eventually destroyed by fire.

"Dare I go in here?" said Todd. "I am faint for want of food, and if I do not have something soon I feel that I shall sink, and then there will be a fuss, and who knows what horrible discovery might then take place?

This house is dark and gloomy, and in all likelihood is the resort of gentlemen who are not in the habit of having any superfluous questions asked of them; so it will suit me well."

He dived in at the narrow doorway, and found himself in one of the smallest and darkest public-houses that he had ever beheld in all his life, for although he had lived so long in Fleet Street so close at hand, he had never ventured into that den.

"A nice parlour to the right, sir," said a rather masculine-looking specimen of the fair sex in the bar.

"Thank you, madam."

Todd went to the right, and opening a little door, which, in consequence of having a cord and pulley attached to it, made a great resistance, he entered a little grimy room, the walls of which were of wainscot, but so begrimed with tobacco smoke were they, that they were of the colour of the darkest rose-wood, and the ceiling in no way differed from them in tint. A fire was burning in a little wretched grate, and the floor was covered with coarse sand, which crackled under Todd's feet.

The furniture of this little den, which certainly had the name of 'Parlour' from courtesy only, consisted of the coldest-looking rigid wooden chairs and tables that could be imagined. Two men sat by the fire trying to warm themselves, for a cold wind was blowing in the streets of London, and the season was chilly and wintry for the time of the year.

Todd, when he found the parlour had some one in it, would gladly have effected a retreat; but to do so, after he had made his way into the middle of the room, would have only aroused suspicion, so he resolved to go on, and carry the affair through; and for greater safety, he put on a very infirm aspect, and appeared to be bent double by age and disease.

He coughed dreadfully.

"You don't seem to be very well, sir," said one of the men.

"Oh, dear me, no," said Todd. "When you are as old as I am, young man, you won't wonder at infirmities coming upon you."

"Young man, do you call me? I am forty."

"Ah, forty! When I was forty, and that was thirty years ago, I thought myself quite a youth. Oh, dear me, but what with the gout, and the lumbago, and two or three more little things, I am nearly done for now. Oh, dear me, life's a burthen."

"What would you like to have, sir?" said a girl who waited upon the parlour guests, and who came in for Todd's order.

"Anything, my dear, you have in the house to eat, and some brandy to drink, if you please."

"Sit by the fire, sir," said one of the men; "you will be more comfortable. We ought to make way for age."

"Oh, dear no, I thank you. I must be somewhere where I can rest my poor back at times, so I like this corner." It was a dark corner, and Todd preferred it. "It will do very well for me, if you please. Oh, dear me; don't disturb yourselves, gentlemen, on my account, I beg of you. I am an old broken-down man, and have not long to live now in this world of care and sorrow."

CHAPTER CLV.
TODD GETS THE BETTER OF THE SHARPERS, AND TAKES A BOAT.

The girl brought Todd a plate of roast-beef, a loaf, and some brandy, with which he regaled himself tolerably well; but he was uncomfortably conscious that the two men were looking at him all the while.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it's a very odd thing, but my appetite continues good notwithstanding all my infirmities. I eat well, and I drink well, and the doctors say that that is what keeps me alive."

"I should not wonder," said one of the men drily.

"Yes," said the other, with a laugh, "you are like us, old gentleman; we live by victuals and drink."

"Ah, I didn't mean that," said Todd; "you young people are so fond of your jokes. Dear me, when I was young I used to be fond of my joke, likewise, but now I am so old, that what with my winter cough, and the gout, and all that sort of thing, my joking days are long since gone by. I lost my poor wife, too, a little while ago—bless her heart! Ah, me!"

Todd had the greatest inclination in the world to make up one of his old diabolical faces at this juncture; but he restrained himself, for he felt the danger of doing so; and then affecting to wipe away a tear, he added—

"But I find my consolation in religion. There's where, gentlemen, an old man may look for comfort, and that strength of heart and soul, which in this world is denied to him."

"Very true, sir—very true."

"Ah, gentlemen, it is true; and there's nothing in all the world like an easy conscience. That's the sort of thing to make a man feel serene and happy in this world, while he is preparing for the joys of the next."

"How delightful it is, sir," said one of the men, "for us to meet with a gentleman who has the same opinion as ourselves. Will you join us in a glass, sir, if you please?"

"Oh, yes—yes, with pleasure. What a shocking bad fire, they tell me, has been in Fleet Street."

"Yes, it's the notorious Todd's house."

"In—deed!"

The man who had proposed the social glass rang the bell, and ordered three tumblers of brandy-and-water, and then he said—

"Ah, sir! if you or I could only lay hold of Sweeney Todd it would be rather a good day's work."

"Oh, dear, God forbid!" said Todd. "He would soon lay me low if I were to try to lay hold of him, with, as I may say in a manner of speaking, one foot in the grave. I am not, in the natural order of things, long for this world, gentlemen, and it is not for me to lay hold of desperate characters."

"That's true, sir; but do you know the reward that is offered for him by the Secretary of State?"

"No! Is there really a reward for him?"

"Yes, a thousand pounds clear to any one who will lodge him in any jail. A thousand pounds! Why, it makes a man's mouth water to think of it. One might retire, Bill, mightn't one, and give up all sorts of—"

Bill gave his enthusiastic comrade rather a severe cautionary kick under the table, and it seemed to have the effect of stopping the word 'thieving' from coming past his lips quite at unawares—at least that was the way

Todd translated it. He had not the smallest doubt but that the public-house was a very indifferent one, and that the two men whom he was in company with in it were two of the most arrant thieves in all London.

Todd resolved to act accordingly, and he did not let them see that he had the least suspicion of them; but he kept such a wary eye upon their movements, that nothing they did or looked escaped him. They little supposed that so keen an observer watched them as Sweeney Todd was.

The brandy-and-water that had been ordered soon made its appearance; and Todd, while perpetrating a very well-acted fit of coughing, saw one of the men just slightly wink at the other, and take a little way from his waistcoat pocket a small bottle.

"Oh!" thought Todd, "my brandy-and-water will be prepared, I see; and if I do not look sharp, these fellows will rob me of all that I have run so much risk, and took so much trouble to get out of the old house."

After a moment's thought, he rose and said—

"I will only go and pay for what I have had at the bar, and you must permit me likewise to pay for this."

"Oh, no—no!"

"Oh, yes, but I will—I will! I dare say that I have the most money, after all, for I have been very careful in my time, and saved a trifle, so you must permit me."

The two thieves were so delighted at getting rid of him for a few moments, that although they declared it was too bad, they let him go. The moment he was gone, one said to the other, with a grin—

"Bill, put a good dose into the old chap's glass. He has got a rare gold watch in his pocket, and there's a ring on his finger, that if it isn't a diamond, it's as near like one as ever I heard of. Give him a good dose."

"Well, but you know that even a few drops will settle him?"

"Never mind that. It's all right enough; pour it in."

They put enough of some deadly drug into the glass of brandy-and water that stood next to where Todd had been sitting to kill a horse; and then he returned and sat down with a groan, as he said—

"It's quite a funny thing! There's a man at the bar inquiring for somebody; and he's got a red waistcoat on."

"A red waistcoat!" cried both the the thieves, jumping up. "Did you say a red waistcoat?"

"Why, yes; and I think he is what they call a Bow Street thingamy—Lord bless my old brain! what do they call them—"

"A runner?"

"Ah, to be sure, a Bow Street runner, to be sure."

Both the thieves bundled out of the parlour in a moment, and Todd was not idle while they were gone. The first thing he did was to decant his own brandy-and-water—which had been drugged—into an empty glass. Then he filled his glass with the contents of one of the thieves' glasses. After that, he half filled that glass with the drugged spirit, and filled it up from the other thief's glass, and that again he filled up with the drugged spirit.

By this means, each of them had half from the glass they had—as they thought—so very cleverly drugged for him, to drink from; and as they had not scrupled to put in an over dose, it may be fairly presumed that there was in each of their glasses quite enough to make them very uncomfortable.

They both returned.

"There's nobody there now," said one. "Are you sure you saw him, sir? We can't see any one."

"Didn't I tell you he was going away when I saw him? It was only the latch of the door catching his top-coat that made me see his red waistcoat; and it was a wonder then that I saw it, for I am not very noticeable in those things. Oh, dear, how bad my cough is."

"Take some of your brandy-and-water, sir," said one of the thieves, as he winked at the other. "It will do you good, sir."

"Not a doubt of it," said the other.

"Do you think so? Well—well, perhaps it may. Here's my friendship to both of you, gentlemen; and I hope we shall none of us repent of this happy meeting. I am much pleased, gentlemen, to see you both, and hope the brandy-and-water will do us all a world of good. I will give you a toast, gentlemen."

"Ah, a toast!—a toast!"

"But mind gentlemen, you must take a good draught, if you drink my toast—Will you?"

"Will we? Ay, to be sure, if you will."

"I promise, gentlemen; so here's the toast—It's to the very cunning fox who laid a trap for another, and caught his own tail in it!"

"What a droll toast!" said the two thieves. They paused a moment, but as they saw their new friend drink at least one-half of his brandy-and-water in honour of the toast, they did the same thing, and looked at each other quite contented and pleased as possible that the drugged spirit, at the very first pull, had been so freely partaken of—for they had found, by experience, the victims they would have made perceived a disagreeable taste, and would not drink twice.

"Hilloa!" said Todd.

"What's the matter, old gentleman?"

"Do you know, this is very good brandy-and-water?"

"Glad you like it."

"Like it?—I couldn't be off liking it. It's capital! Let's finish these glasses, and have others at once."

As he spoke he finished his glass, and the two thieves were so delighted that he had taken it all, that they at once finished theirs likewise; and then they looked at him, and then at each other, until one said to the other, as he made a wry face—

"I say, Bill, I—I don't much like my glass. How did yours taste, eh, old fellow?"

"Very queer."

"How strange," said Todd; "mine was beautiful! I hope, gentlemen, you have not made a mistake and put anything out of the way in your own glasses instead of mine?"

"Oh, dear. Oh—oh! I am going, Bill."

"And so am I. Oh, murder! My head is going round and round like a humming-top as big as St. Paul's."

"And so is mine."

"Then, gentlemen," said Todd, rising, "I shall have the pleasure of bidding you good day, and I hope you have just sense enough left to appreciate the toast of the 'cunning fox that laid a trap for another, in which he caught his own tail,' and I have the further pleasure of informing you that I am Sweeney Todd."

The two thieves, quite overcome by the powerful and death-dealing narcotic they had placed in the liquor, fell to the floor in a state of perfect insensibility, and Todd very calmly walked out of the public-house.

Todd Turns The Tables On The Two Sharpers, And Escapes.

Todd Turns The Tables On The Two Sharpers, And Escapes.

"This will not do," he said, when he reached the west-end of Holywell Street. "I must not run such risks as this. I must now be off. But where to? That is the question. Out of London, of course. The river, I think—ay, the river. That will be the best. I will house myself until night, and then I will hire a boat and go to Gravesend. From there I shall not find much difficulty in getting on board some foreign vessel, and with what I have in my pockets I will bid adieu to England for a little while, until I can sell my watches and jewels, and then I will come back and have my revenge yet upon those whom I only live now to destroy."

Full of these thoughts, Todd went down one of the narrow streets leading to the Thames, and as he saw a bill in a window of lodgings to let, he thought he should be safer there than in a house of public entertainment. He resolved upon taking a lodging for a week at any cost, and then leaving it in the evening after he should have had some rest at it, which he might do for the remainder of the day, provided the people would take him in, which he had very little doubt of them doing, as he did not intend to object to their terms, and he did intend to pay in advance.

Todd knocked at the door.

It was answered by a woman of the true landlady species, who, upon hearing that it was the lodging Todd was after, was all smiles and sweetness immediately.

"I have come up from the country, madam," said Todd, "and my luggage is at an inn in Gracechurch Street. I intend to send for it in the morning; and as I am weary, if you can accommodate me with a lodging, as I have some business to transact for my son, the Deacon, in London, I shall be much obliged."

"Oh, dear, yes sir; walk in. We have every accommodation. The drawing-room floor, sir, at three guineas and a few extras."

"That will just do," said Todd. "Will you be so good as to show me the rooms, madam?"

Todd saw the rooms, and of course admired them very much; and then he said, in the blandest manner—

"I think the rooms very cheap, madam, and will take them at once, if you please. The reference I will give you, is to the Principal of Magdalen College, Oxford, the Reverend Peter Sly, madam. My own name is Bones, and my son is the Reverend Archdeacon Bones. I will pay you now a week in advance; and all I have to beg of you is, that you do yourself justice as to charges. I will lie down and rest for a few hours, if you please, madam."

"Oh, dear, sir! yes, certainly, Mr. Bones. There shall be no noise to disturb you, and anything you want, if you will be so good as to ring for, I will supply you with the greatest pleasure."

"Thank you, madam."

Thus then was it that Todd secured himself what appeared to be a wonderfully safe asylum until night. He got into the bed with all his clothes on; for he did not know how sudden the emergency might be that might induce him to rise; and he soon fell into a deep sleep, for he had undergone the greatest fatigues of late.

CHAPTER CLVI.
SIR RICHARD BLUNT IS VERY NEAR TAKING HIS PRISONER.

We left the poor beadle in anything but a pleasant situation in the pulpit of St. Dunstan's Church.

Now it so happened that the beadle was particularly wanted at home; and as he did not make his appearance, his wife repaired to the church to search for him; but it was locked by Todd, who had swung the door shut after him, and as he had taken the key with him, she could not make her way into the sacred edifice.

As she stood at the door, however, she distinctly heard deep groans issuing from some one within the church; and in a state of great alarm, she ran off to one of the churchwardens, who had a duplicate key, and related what she had heard.

The churchwarden not being one of the most valorous of men, rather, upon the whole, declined to go into the church with no other escort than the beadle's wife; and as he, too, upon listening at the key-hole, heard the groans distinctly, he called upon the passers-by to assist, and got together quickly enough about twenty people to go into the church with him.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I don't know what it is, but there's groans; and in these horrid times, when, for all we know, Sweeney Todd is about the neighbourhood, one can't be too cautious."

"Certainly," said everybody.

"Then, gentlemen, if we all go in together when I open the door, it will be the very best plan."

This was duly agreed to; and the churchwarden, with a trembling hand, turned his key in the lock, and opened the door. He then stepped aside, and let all the crowd go in first, thinking that, as he was a man in office, the parish could not afford to lose him, in case anything serious should happen.

"Well, gentlemen," he cried, "what is it?"

"Nothing," said everybody.

"Then I will soon let nothing see that I, a churchwarden, am not to be frightened with impunity—that is to say, when I say frightened, I don't exactly mean that, but astonished, I mean. Come, come—if any one be here, I call upon them to surrender in the king's name!"

A deep groan was the only response to this valorous speech; and the moment the churchwarden heard it, he bolted out of the church, and ran right across the way into a shop opposite.

For a moment or two, this precipitate retreat of the churchwarden had something contagious in it, and the whole of the men who had been induced to stop and go into the church with him were inclined to retreat likewise; but curiosity detained some three of four of them, and that gave courage to the others.

"What was it?" said one.

"A groan," said another; "and it came from the pulpit."

"The pulpit!" cried everybody.

"Who ever heard of a pulpit groaning?" cried a third.

"You stupid!" cried the second speaker: "might it not be some one in the pulpit?—and—Oh Lord—there's a head!"

At this they all took to flight; but at the door they encountered a man, who called out—

"What's the matter? Can't you tell a fellow what the blessed row is—eh?"

This was no other than our old friend Crotchet, who was returning from a conference with Sir Richard Blunt at his private office in Craven Street.

"Oh, it's a ghost! A ghost!"

"A what?"

"A ghost in the pulpit, and there is his head."

"You don't say so?" said Crotchet, as he peered into the church, and shading his eyes with his hand, saw the beadle's head just peeping over the side of the pulpit in a most mysterious kind of way. "I'll soon have him out, ghost or no ghost."

Courage is as contagious as fear, especially when somebody else volunteers to run all the risk; and so when Crotchet said he would soon have the somebody out of the pulpit, the whole crowd followed him into the church, applauding him very greatly for his prowess, and declaring that if he had not then arrived, they would soon have had the ghost or no ghost out of the sacred building, that they would. But they kept within a few paces of the door for all that, so that they might be ready for a rush into Fleet Street, if Mr. Crotchet should be overcome in the adventure.

That was only prudent.

But Crotchet was not exactly the man to be overcome in any adventure, and with an utter oblivion of all fear, he marched right into the middle of the church, and commenced the ascent of the pulpit stairs.

"Come—come," said Crotchet. "This won't do, Mr. Ghost, if you please; just let me get hold of you, that's all."

"Oh!" groaned the beadle.

"Oh, yer is remarkably bad, is yer? but that sort of thing won't answer, by no means. Where is yer?"

Crotchet opened the pulpit door, and reaching in his hand, he caught hold of the beadle by the leg, and fairly dragged him out on to the little spiral stairs, down which he let him roll with a great many bumps, until

he landed in the body of the church all over bruises.

"Why, goodness gracious!" cried the beadle's wife, "it's my wretch of a husband after all!"

The beadle had just strength to assume a sitting posture, and then he cried—"Murder!—murder!—murder!" until Mr. Crotchet, seizing a cushion from a pew, held it up before his mouth, to the imminent danger of choking him, and said—

"Hold your row! If you wants to be murdered, can't you get it done quietly, without alarming of all the parish? If you has got anything to say, say it; and if you has got nothink, keep it to yourself, stupid."

"Todd!" gasped the beadle, the moment the pew-cushion was withdrawn from his mouth. "Todd—Sweeney Todd!"

"What?" cried Crotchet.

"Here!—he has been here, and I'm a dead man—no, I'm a beadle. Oh, murder! murder!"

"Don't begin that again. Be quiet, will you? If you have got anything to say about Todd, say it, for I'm the very man of all the world as wants to hear it. Speak up, and don't wink."

"Oh, I've seen him. He's been here. I came to dust the bellowses, you see, after my wife had thrown the pulpit at my head, for asking her to come with me."

"Oh, he's a-raving gentlemen," said the wife. "As I'm a sinner, it was the bellowses as I throwed at his stupid head, and not the pulpit as never was."

"Go on," said Crotchet. "Confound the pulpit and the bellows too. It's about Todd I want to hear. Drive on, will you?"

"Oh, yes. I'm a coming to that; but it curdles my blood, and makes my wig stand on end. I had dusted the communion table, and banged the cushions, and up I goes to the pulpit, meaning to do for that as soon as I could, when who should be there but Sweeney Todd!"

"In the pulpit!" cried everybody.

"In the pulpit," said the beadle.

"Why didn't you nab him at once?" roared Crotchet.

"Because, my good friend, he nabbed me at once. He laid hold of me by this leg—no, it was this—no it wasn't. It was this—that is—no—"

"Confound both your legs! Where is he now?"

"Why, really I can't exactly say, for after stamping upon my inside for about half an hour, he left me for dead, and I was about half gone that way, and I have been a groaning ever since, till now. I am going fast—very fast, and there will be an election for beadle again in this here parish. Oh dear—oh dear! Murder—murder—mur—"

"What, you is coming that agin, is you," cried Crotchet, as he again caught up the pew-cushion. "I shall be obligated, after all, for to push this down your blessed throat. Hold your noise, will you, Mr. What's-your-name."

The beadle was so terrified at the idea of the pew-cushion again nearly smothering him, that despite all his injuries, he sprang to his feet and bolted out of the church.

"Well, did yer ever know sich a feller?" said Crotchet. "Why, one would think he was afraid of Todd."

The spectators thought that nothing was more probable; and as Mr. Crotchet considered that he had got all the information he was at all likely to get from the beadle, he did not at all trouble himself to go after him, but after considering for a few moments, decided upon seeking Sir Richard Blunt, and telling him that he had heard some unexpected news of Todd.

Crotchet knew where to pitch upon Sir Richard at once; and when he related to him what had taken place, a look of great chagrin came over the face of the magistrate.

"Crotchet," he said, "I have missed Todd, then, by what may be considered a hair's breadth. He must have been in the pulpit while I was in the church alone. Oh, that I could but for a moment have guessed as much! You, if you recollect, Crotchet, were in the vaults, and I was waiting for you."

"To be sure, Sir Richard."

"And so the rascal was almost within arm's length, and yet escaped me."

Sir Richard Blunt paced to and fro in an agony of impatience and regret. To be so near apprehending Todd, and yet to miss him, was truly terrific.

"Lor, sir," said Crotchet, "what's the use of fretting and pining about it? That won't bring it back, sir, I can tell you. After all, sir, you can't do better than grin and bear it, you know, which is the out and outest policy on all these here occasions, you know, yer worship. I wish as I'd a knowed he'd been in the church as much as you do; but you don't see me a *cussin* and a knocking my own head about it, no how."

"You are right, Crotchet, but in good truth it is most desperately provoking. You will proceed as I have directed you, and I will run down to Norfolk Street river, for fear Todd should try to escape us that way. You will be so good, Crotchet, as to be as vigilant as possible. You know how to find me if you want me."

"Rather, sir."

At this moment, and just as Crotchet was upon the point of leaving the room, an officer brought in a little slip of paper to Sir Richard Blunt, upon which was the word "Ben."

"Ben—Ben?" said Sir Richard, "who is Ben? Oh, I think I know. Pray show him in at once. It is my friend the beef-eater, from the Tower."

"Easy does it," said Ben, popping his head in at the door of the room. "Easy does it."

"So it does, Ben. Come in. I am glad to see you. You can go, Crotchet. Pray be seated, Ben, and tell me how I can serve you in any way, my good friend, and you may be assured that I shall have exceeding pleasure in doing so, if I possibly can in any way."

"Lord bless you," said Ben, "I hardly knows. There's ups and downs in this here world, and ins and outs."

"Not a doubt of it, Ben."

"And retreats within retreats, Sir Richard, and foxes, and laughing hyenas, as you can't concilliorate no how, if you wollop 'em till you can't wollop 'em no more."

"Precisely, Ben. If I were a hyena, I don't exactly think, do you know, that such a process would conciliate me."

"Oh, dear yes—it's the only way. But what I've come about, Sir Richard, is what I calls a delicate affair. Oh, dear yes—I tries to take it easy but I can't—I'm—I'm—"

"What, Ben?"

"I'm in love! Oh!"

"Well, Ben, there is no great wonder in that. I have been in love myself, and I believe very few indeed escape the soft impeachment. I hope your love is prosperous, Ben?"

"Thank you kindly, Sir Richard, thank you; but, you see, I thought you might tell me if there was any vice or natural kicking running in the family, and that's why I comed here."

"I tell you, Ben? Why I don't even know the name of the family."

"Yes, you does, Sir Richard. The young woman as I fell in love with, is Miss Julia Hardman, and her father is one of those chaps as nabs the bad un's for you, you know, Sir Richard."

"One of my officers?"

"To be sure he is."

"Does he reside in Norfolk Street, Strand?"

"Does he? Ay, he does; and that's how I came to know the little morsel of a cretur as has made for the first time an impression upon my heart. Oh, Ben, Ben, little could anybody think as you was a marrying sort of person, and here you is in love with Miss Julia!"

"It does seem to me a little extraordinary, Ben, for I must confess I have heard you say some rather severe things against the married state."

"I have—I have; and if it hadn't a been for all the marrying set-out with those two girls, Johanna and Arabella, I never should have got sich a idea in my head. Howsomedever, there it is, and there it is likely to remain. It's a agravation, but there it is!"

"And how did you get acquainted with Julia Hardman?"

"Oh, dear! There's a public house at the corner of her street, and after I had been to Cousin Oakley's, I used to go there at times and get a drain of something, you see, and then she used to come tripping in with a mug for the family beer, you see; and once it rained, so I took her up and carried her home beer and all, and that was how we got acquainted, you see, Sir Richard."

"A very natural way too, Ben. All I can say is, that I know her father to be a very worthy man indeed, and I believe the daughter is a good and virtuous girl."

"You don't say so? Then as there's no vice and kicking, I do believe I shall have to marry her out of hand."

CHAPTER CLVII.
TODD FINDS THAT HE HAS GOT OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE.

After this little explanatory conversation between Ben and Sir Richard Blunt, the reader will probably guess that Todd's evil fortune had actually carried him to that very house in Norfolk Street, Strand, occupied by the Hardman family, to which he, Sir Richard, talked of going to, to give instructions to his officer, and in which resided the identical Julia, that Ben had carried home, beer and all, in the shower, and to whom his large heart had become so deeply attached.

Todd could hardly have fairly expected to be way-laid by such a conjunction of events; and certainly when he laid himself down so comfortably and easily in the bed at the lodging-house for the luxury of a few hours' sleep, for which, if sleep he could, he had paid the moderate price of three guineas, he little dreamt that his enemies were rallying, as it were, around that house, and that in a short time their voices would be actually within his hearing.

Truly it seemed as though there were henceforth to be no peace in this world for Todd; although, by circumstances little short of absolutely miraculous, he did continue to avoid absolute capture, near as he was to it at times.

The great fatigue he had undergone, combined with the little refreshment he had taken at the public-house in Hollywell Street, induced a feeling of sleep in Todd's frame; and after he had lain in the

bed at the lodging-house for about a quarter of an hour, and found the house perfectly still, and that the bed was very comfortable, he pulled the clothes nearly right over his face, and fell fast asleep.

Nothing but sheer fatigue could have given Todd so unbroken a repose as he now enjoyed. It was for an hour or more quite undisturbed by any images calculated to give him uneasiness; and then he began—for there was some noise in the house—to dream that he was hunted through the streets of London by an infuriate mob; and by one of those changes incidental to dreams, when the reason sleeps and imagination ascends the mental throne, he thought that the heads of all the mob were armed with horns, like those of cattle, and that they come raging after him with a determination to toss him.

This was not a dream upon which any one was likely to be very still for any length of time, and Todd groaned in his sleep, and tossed his arms to and fro, and more than once uttered the word—"Mercy!—mercy!"

Suddenly he started wide awake as a knock came at the door and roused him. Todd blessed that knock at the moment; for by waking him it had rescued him from the dream of terrors that had been vexing his brain.

He sat up in bed, and for a moment or two could hardly collect his scattered senses sufficiently to assure himself that it was all a dream, and that he was in the lodging-house in Norfolk Street; but the brain rapidly recovers from such temporary confusions; and Todd, with a long breath of immense relief, gasped out—

"It was, after all, but a dream—only a dream! Oh, God! but it was horrible!"

He fell back upon the pillow again; but sleep did not again come to him, and he began to feel a vague kind of curiosity to know who it was that had knocked at the door; and yet, he told himself, that it could not matter to him, for that in a house like that, of course, there must be plenty of people coming and going, and that, although the persons who kept it might control noises within the house, they could not possibly have any influence upon the knocker.

"Oh, it's all right," said Todd. "It's all right. I will sleep again—I must sleep again; for it yet wants hours and hours to the night, when I may, at least, make the attempt to get off from—from England for ever!"

A faint sort of doze—it could not be called a sleep—was coming over Todd, when he suddenly heard the sound of voices; and he was startled wide awake by hearing his own name pronounced. Yes, he clearly heard some one say—"Todd!"

In a moment he sat up in bed, and intently listened. He held his breath, and he shook again, as his imagination began to picture to him a thousand dangers.

There were footsteps upon the staircase, and in a few moments he heard persons go into the next room—that is to say, the front one to that in which he lay, the room that he had paid for a few weeks' occupation of, and which was only divided from that in which he lay by a pair of folding-doors, that he knew were just upon the latch, and might, at any moment, be opened to discover him.

He then heard a female voice say—

"I do wish you would be quiet, Mr. Ben."

"Ah," said another voice, "keep him in order, Julia, for he has been quite raving about your beauty as we came along the street, I can tell you. Do you think the servant will be able to find your father?"

"Oh yes, Sir Richard. If ma were at home she could have said at once where he was; but Martha will find him, I dare say."

Todd threw the bed-clothes right over his head. It was no other than Sir Richard Blunt who was in the front-room of that diabolical lodging-house, and Todd looked upon himself as all but in custody. His sense of hearing seemed to be preternaturally acute, and although the bed-clothes covered up his ears, and he could not be said to be exactly in his usual state, inasmuch as terror had half deprived him of his reasoning powers, yet he heard plainly, and with what might be called a perfect distinctness, every word that was spoken in the front room.

Perhaps, even in the condemned cell of Newgate, Todd did not suffer such terrors as he was now assailed with in that lodging, where he thought he was so safe, and which he had, as he fancied, managed so cleverly.

"Will you be quiet, Ben!" said the girl's voice again.

"Make him—make him, Julia," said Sir Richard.

"Lor bless your little bits of eyes," said Ben. "Do now come and sit in my lap, and I'll tell you such a lively story of how the leopard we have got at the Tower lost a bit off the end of his tail?"

"I don't want to hear it."

"You don't want to hear it? Come—come, my lambkin of a Julia—when shall we be married? Oh, do name the day your Ben will be done for for life. I want it over."

"Well, I'm sure," said Julia, "if you think you will be done for, you had better not think of it any more, Mr. Benjamin."

"It won't bear thinking of, my dear. It's like a cold bath in January: you had better shut yer eyes and tumble in."

"Upon my word, Ben," said Sir Richard, laughing, "you are anything but gallant; and if I were Julia, I would not have you."

"Not have me? Lord, yes, she'll have me. Only look at me."

"Ah," said Julia, "you think, because you are a great monster of a fellow, that anybody would have you; but I can tell you that a husband half your size would be just as well, and I only wonder, after you have made all the neighbours laugh at me, that I have a word to say to such a mountain of a man, that I do, you wretch!"

"Laugh!" cried Ben, "Why, my duck, what do they laugh at? I should like to catch them laughing."

"Why, you know, you wretch, that that day it rained as if cats and dogs were coming down, you took me up as if I had been a baby, you did, and carried me home, and me with a jug of porter in my right hand, and the

change out of a shilling in my left, so that I could not help myself a bit, and all the street laughing. Oh, I hate you!"

"She hates me!" said Ben. "Oh!"

"But she don't mean it, Ben," said Sir Richard.

"Do you think she doesn't, sir?"

"I am sure of it. Do you, now, Julia?"

"Yes, Sir Richard, indeed I do, really now, for he is quite a horrid monster, and I only wonder they don't put him in one of the cages at the Tower along with the other wild beasts, and make a show of him. That's all that he is fit for."

"Oh, you aggravating darling," said Ben, making a dart at Julia, and catching her up in his arms as you would some little child. "How can you go on so to your Ben?"

"Murder!" cried Julia.

"Oh, if you are going to have a fight for it," said Sir Richard, "I will go and wait down stairs, Julia."

Bang came a knock at the street-door.

"Oh, Ben, there's ma or pa," said Julia. "Let me down directly. Do Ben—oh, pray do. Let me down, Ben."

"Do yer love your Ben?"

"Anything you like, only let me down."

"Very good. There yer is, then, agin on yer little mites of feet. Lor bless you, Sir Richard, that girl loves the very ground as I walks on, she does, and she has comed over me with her fascinations in such a way as never was known. Ain't she a nice 'un?—sleek and shiny, with a capital mane. But you should see her at feeding-time, Sir Richard, how nice she does it—quite delicate and pretty; and you should see her—"

The door of the room opened, and Hardman, the officer, made his appearance.

"Your humble servant, Sir Richard. I hope I have not kept you waiting long? I was only in the neighbourhood."

"No, Hardman, thank you, it's all right. I have not been here above a quarter of an hour."

"I am glad of that, sir. How do you do, Mr. Ben?"

"Pretty well," said Ben, "only a little hungry and thirsty, that's all; but don't trouble yourself about that, Mr. Hardman; I always do get hungry when I look at Julia."

"I hope, Mr. Ben, that don't mean that you will dine off her some day when you are married?"

"Oh, lor, no. Bless her heart, no. She loves me more and more, Mr. Hardman."

"I am glad to hear it, Ben—very glad to hear it. But I presume, Sir Richard, that you have some orders for me?"

"Why, yes, Hardman. There's that rascal Todd, you know, still continues to elude us. What I want you to do is, to take charge entirely on the river, and to make what arrangements you like at the various quays and landing-places, and with all the watermen, so that he shall not have a chance of escaping in that way."

"Certainly, sir; I will set about it directly."

"Do so, Hardman. Expense in this case is of no object, for the Secretary of State will guarantee all that; but of course I don't wish you to be extravagant on that account."

"I quite understand you, Sir Richard, and will do my best."

"That I am sure you will, Hardman; and now I will go. I shall feel no peace of mind until that man is dead, or in the cell again at Newgate."

Todd popped his head out from under the clothes, and making the most hideous face, he shook one of his clenched fists in the direction of the front room. It would have been some satisfaction to him to have given a

loud howl of rage but he dared not venture upon it; so he was forced to content himself with the pantomime of passion instead of its vocal expression.

"I do hope, sir, we shall soon have him," said Hardman. "It seems to me to be next thing to impossible he should escape us for long. Do you think he has any money, sir?"

"He cannot have much, for all he has, if any, must be but the produce of depredation since his escape from Newgate. He certainly has not extensive means, Hardman."

"Then he must fall into our hands, sir. Julia, is that your mother just arrived, do you think?"

"Yes, pa, it is ma's step. She has been out to get something or another, but I don't know what, as I was out myself all the morning; but it is ma, I know."

Mrs. Hardman came into the room, looking very red and flushed, and with a large basket on her arm. She looked from one to the other of the assembled guests with surprise and horror.

"What's the matter?" said her husband. "Why wife, you look panic-stricken. What has happened?"

"Oh, gracious! where's the gentleman?"

"The gentleman?" cried everybody.

"Yes, the lodger. The highly respectable gentleman who took the first-floor only a couple of hours ago. Oh, gracious, where is he? and a capital lodger too, who paid in advance, and didn't mind extras at all."

"But what lodger, mother?" said Julia.

"Oh, mum, I forgot—I forgot," said Martha, suddenly coming into the room, "I forgot to tell Miss Julia, mum, that an old gentleman had taken the first floor, mum, and gone to bed in the next room."

"In bed in the next room?" said Sir Richard Blunt.

"I am lost!" thought Todd. "I am lost now, I am quite lost! and the only thing I can do is to kill as many of them as possible, and then blow my own brains out."

"Do you mean to say, ma," said Julia, "that there's a gentleman asleep in the next room in the bed?"

"Lor!" said Ben, "you don't mean to say that, Mrs. Hardman?"

"He may be in bed, but if he is asleep," said Sir Richard, "he is a remarkable man; of course if we had had the least idea of such a thing, we should not have come up here; but here we were shown by the servant."

"Oh, yes, it's all that frightful Martha's fault. I'll—I'll kill—no—I'll discharge that odious hussy without a character, and leave her to drown herself! For Heaven's sake go down stairs all of you, and I'll go and speak to the old gentleman, and apologise to him."

"Let me go," said Ben, "and roll on him on the bed, and if that don't settle him I don't know what will."

"Shall I apologise to him?" said Sir Richard.

Todd nearly fainted when he heard this proposition; but when Mrs. Hardman rejected it, and insisted upon going herself, he felt quite a gush of gratitude towards her, and breathed a little more freely once again.

CHAPTER CLVIII.
TODD'S FEARFUL ADVENTURES ON THE RIVER.

"Shall I lay hold of her," thought Todd, "and choke her the moment she comes into the room, or shall I answer her, and let her go again? Which will be the safest course? I suppose I must let her go, for she might possibly make a noise. Ah! how I should like to have my hand upon all their throats!"

Mrs. Hardman came into the room on tip-toe, leaving the folding-door just a little ajar.

"My dear sir," she said, "are you awake?"

"Oh, go to the deuce," said Todd.

"What did you remark, my dear sir?"

"Go along—go along—Eugh!—eugh! Oh, dear, how bad my cough is. I dreamt that no end of people were talking and talking away in the next room; but that can't be, as I have paid for it. Oh, dear!—oh!"

Mrs. Hardman took her cue from this; and she was at once resolved to pass off the disturbance in the next room as merely a dream of her new lodger.

"Dear me, sir," she said in the blandest possible accents; "have you indeed had a dream? What a singular thing!"

"Eugh! Is it? I don't think so."

"Well, sir, when I say singular, of course I mean that it's very natural. I always dream when I sleep in a strange bed, do you know, sir, and sometimes the most horrid dreams."

"Oh, go along."

"Yes, sir, directly. Would you like anything got for you, sir? A nice mutton chop for instance, or—or—"

"No—no! Good God, why don't you go?"

"I am going, sir. Thank you. There will be a very quiet house here, I assure you, sir."

With these words, Mrs. Hardman was about to leave the room, flattering herself that it was all passing off quite comfortably as a mere dream, when Ben, thinking it incumbent upon him to do something civil, suddenly popped his head into the room, and in a voice that sounded like the growl of some bear for his food, he said—

"Take it easy, old gentleman. You'll find that easy does it all the world over; and if so be as you ever comes near the Tower, just you ask for Ben, and I'll show you the beasteses, all gratis, and for nothing. Feeding time at four o'clock."

"Oh, you great ugly wretch!" cried Mrs. Hardman, dealing Ben a sound box on the ear. "How dared you interfere, I should like to know, you monster in inhuman shape?"

"Oh, lor!" said Ben, "I only hope another of the family ain't so handy with her front paws."

"Oh—oh!" said Todd. "No peace!—no peace!"

Mrs. Hardman at once closed the door of communication between the two rooms; for she quite despaired now of being able to make any apology to her lodger, and she seemed much inclined to execute further vengeance upon Ben, but Sir Richard Blunt interfered, saying—

"Come—come, Mrs. Hardman, you should recollect that what Ben said was with the very best of motives, and any one, you know, may go wrong a little in trying to do good. Let us all adjourn down stairs, and be no further disturbance to this old gentleman, who, taking everything into consideration, has, I think, shown quite an exemplary amount of patience."

Todd heard those words. They seemed to him quite like a reprieve from death.

"I will come down stairs, of course," said Mrs. Hardman, in an under tone; "but for all that, this great monster of a Ben ought to be put in one of his own cages, at the Tower, and there kept as a warning to all people."

"A warning o' what, mum?" said Ben.

Mrs. Hardman was not very clear about what he would be a warning of, so she got out of the difficulty by saying—"What's that to you, stupid?"—and as Ben was rather slow in explaining that it did rather concern him, she walked down stairs with a look of triumph that was highly amusing to Sir Richard Blunt, as well as to Mr. Hardman, the officer.

How Todd listened to the footsteps as they went down the stairs! How his heart beat responsive to every one of them! and when he felt for certain that that immediate and awful danger had passed away, he peeped out from amid the mass of bed-clothes, with his eyes almost starting from his head.

"Gone! gone!" he gasped. "He has really gone. My mortal enemy—the only man who can make me tremble, that terrible Sir Richard Blunt! That he should be within half-a-dozen paces of me; that he should hear me speak; that he should only have to stretch out his hand to lay it upon my shoulder, and yet that I should escape him! Oh, it cannot be real!"

Todd heard some accidental noise in the house, and he immediately dived his head under the bed-clothes again.

"They are coming again!—they are coming again!" he gasped.

The noise led to nothing, and after a few moments, Todd became convinced that it had nothing to do with him, so he ventured, half-suffocated, to look up again.

"I must listen—I must listen," he said, in a low anxious tone. "I must listen until he has gone. When I hear the street-door of the house shut, I shall think that they have let him go and then I shall be able to breathe again; but not before. Oh, no—no, not before—hush—hush! What is that?"

Every little accidental sound in the house now set the heart of Todd wildly beating. If one had come into the room, and said—"You are my prisoner,"—the probability was, that he would have fainted; but if he did not, it is quite certain that he could not have offered any resistance. A child might have captured him then, during the accession of terror that had come over him in that house, whither he had slunk purposely for safety and for secrecy.

At length he heard a noise of voices in the passage, and then the street-door was opened. As he lay, he could feel a rush of cold air in consequence. Then it was closed again, and the house was very still.

"He has gone! He has gone!" said Todd.

The manner in which Todd pronounced these few words it would be impossible to describe. No shivering wretch reprieved upon the scaffold, with the rope round his neck, could feel a greater relief than did Todd, when he found that the door of that house was really closed upon Sir Richard Blunt.

And then he began to felicitate himself upon the fact that, after all, he had come to that place; "for now," he thought, "I know that, although I have been in great danger, it has passed away; and as Sir Richard Blunt has transacted all his business in this house, he is not likely to come to it again."

That was a pleasant thought, and as Todd dashed from his brow the heavy drops that intense fear had caused to assemble there, he almost smiled.

A very profound stillness now reigned in the house, for Mrs. Hardman was resolved to make up to her lodger—as well as she could—for the noise and disturbance that had been so unwittingly caused in her front room. She had made Ben go away, and as her husband had likewise gone, in pursuance of the orders of Sir Richard Blunt, to take measures lest Todd should make an escape by the Thames, the place remained as calm and still as if no one were in it but herself.

Todd closed his eyes, and wearied nature sought relief in sleep. Even Sweeney Todd, with more than twenty mortal murders on his conscience, slept calmly for no less than six hours of that, to him, most eventful day.

Twice during this long sleep of her lodger's had Mrs. Hardman stolen into the front-room to listen, and been quite satisfied by the regular breathing, that, at all events, her lodger was not dead; and she kept herself upon the alert to attend to him whenever he should awake from that deep sleep.

The long shadows of the houses on the other side of the street had fallen upon the windows of the Hardmans' abode, and a slight fog began to make itself perceptible in London, when Todd awoke.

"Help—help! Oh, God, where am I?" he cried.

He sprang half out of the bed, and then the full tide of recollection came back to him, and he fully comprehended his situation in a moment.

"Hush!—hush!—hush!" he said; and he listened most intently to hear if his sudden exclamation had attracted any attention.

He heard a footstep on the stairs.

"Hush!—hush!" he said again, "hush—who is it? I must be very careful now!—Oh, very!"

The footstep paused at his door, and then he heard it in the next room, and Mrs. Hardman advancing to the folding doors, said, in the blandest of accents—

"Are you awake, sir, if you please?"

Todd at once assumed the tone in which he had formerly addressed her, and replied—

"Yes, madam, yes. I am awake!"

"And how do you feel now, sir, if you please?"

"Oh, a great deal better, ma'am, a great deal better. Indeed, I feel quite refreshed. I will come out directly, my dear madam. Pray have the goodness to take this guinea. I shall want a cup of tea at times, and I think I could take a cup now, my dear madam. You can get it out of that, and keep the change, you know, till I want something else."

"Oh, really, sir," said Mrs. Hardman, as she put her hand through a small opening of one of the folding doors and took the guinea. "It is quite delightful to have so pleasant a lodger as yourself—oh, quite.—I will get the tea directly, my dear sir, and pray make yourself quite at home, if you please."

"Yes, ma'am, I will—I will."

"Do, sir. I should be really unhappy now, if I did not think you were comfortable."

"Oh it's all right, ma'am. Eugh! Oh, dear! I do think my cough has been better since I have been here."

"How delightful to hear you say that!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardman, speaking in quite a tremulous voice of sympathetic emotion. "I will get the tea, directly, sir."

She left the room, and as she went down the stairs, she said to herself—

"What a pearl of a lodger, to be sure! He pays for everything over and over again. I should not, now, in the least wonder but the dear old gentleman will quite forget the change out of this guinea; if he does, it is

not for me to vex him by putting him in mind of it. I know well, that old people never like it to be supposed that their memory fails them; so if he says nothing about it, I am sure I shall not. Oh, dear, no!"

"Wretch!" muttered Todd, as he crept out of the back room into the front. "Wretch, I find that money will purchase anything in this house; but am I surprised at that? Oh, no—no. Will not money purchase anything in this great world? Of course it will. Why, then, should this house be an exception to the rule so general? No—no. It is no exception; and I may be very safe for a few guineas well spent; and they are well spent, indeed. Oh, so well!"

Todd then, as he flung himself into the depths of an easy chair, that was really easy for a wonder, considering that it was in a lodging-house, began to arrange in his own mind his course of proceeding for the night.

"Let me think—let me think," he muttered. "I am now very much refreshed indeed, and feel quite strong and well, and equal to any emergency. That sleep has done me a world of good, and it is strange, too, that it has been the calmest and the quietest sleep I have enjoyed for many a month. I hope it is not prophetic of some coming evil."

He shuddered at the thought. Todd was each day—ay, each hour, becoming more and more superstitious.

"No—no. I will not think that. I will not be so mad as to disarm myself of my courage, by thinking that for a moment. I will take my tea here, and then I will sally forth, telling this woman that I will soon return, and then, after a dose of brandy, I will hire a boat and take to the river. What is that?"

The wind with a sudden gust came dashing against the windows, giving them such a shake, that it seemed as if it were intent upon getting into the room to buffet Todd.

He immediately rose, and going to the window, he placed his hideous face close to one of the panes, and looked out.

The sky was getting very black, and huge clouds were careering about it. The wind was evidently rising, and there was every appearance of its being most squally and tempestuous. Todd bit his lips with vexation.

"Always something!" he said. "Always something to annoy me, and to cross me. Always—always!"

"The tea, sir, if you please."

Todd turned round so suddenly, that he almost upset the servant with the tea equipage.

"Oh, very well. That will do—that will do. You are the servant of the house?"

"If you please, sir."

"Ah, you will then have to attend upon me while I am here, my dear, I presume?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Very good—very good. You are a very nice young woman, and there's half-a-guinea for you. Eugh! I shall give you that sum every week while I stay here, you know."

"Lor, sir, will you?"

"Yes, yes. You can go now. Is the tea all right?"

"Oh, dear, yes, sir. You are very good indeed. Misses said as you was a very good lodger, which I knowed to mean as you didn't be *petikler* about your money, and now I sees you ain't. Thank you, sir, for me. I'll get up in the night if you want anythink."

CHAPTER CLIX.
TODD MAKES A VIGOROUS ATTEMPT TO REACH GRAVESEND.

The servant was so profuse in her acknowledgments for the half-guinea, that she seemed as if she would never get out of the room, and Todd had to say—

"There—there, that will do. Now leave me, my good girl—that will do," before she, with a curtsey at every step, withdrew.

"Well," she said, as she went down stairs. "If I tell misses of this, I'm a Prussian. Oh, dear, I keeps it to myself and says nothing to nobody, excepting to my Thomas as is in the horse-guards. Ah, he is a nice fellow, and out o' this I'll make him a present of a most elegant watch-ribbon, that he can put a bullet at the end of, and let it hang out of his fob all as if he had a real watch in his pocket."

"Humph!" said Todd. "I have bought her good opinion cheap. It was well worth ten-and-sixpence not to have the servant watching me, with, for all I know to the contrary, eyes of suspicion—well worth it."

It was not very often that Todd indulged himself with a cup of tea. Something stronger was commonly more congenial to his appetite; but upon this occasion, after his long sleep, the tea had upon him a most refreshing effect, and he took it with real pleasure. Mrs. Hardman, in consideration of the guinea she had received beforehand, had done him justice, as far as the quality of the tea was concerned, and he had it good.

"Well," he said, after his third cup, "I did not think that there was so much virtue in a cup of tea, after all; but of a surety, I feel wonderfully refreshed at it. How the wind blows."

The wind did, indeed, blow, for all the while that Todd was taking his tea it banged and buffeted against the window at such a rate, that it was really quite a fearful thing to listen to it.

A couple of candles had been lighted and brought into the room, but the gale without soon laid hold of their little flames, and tossed them about so, that they gave but a dim and sepulchral kind of light.

Todd rose again, and went to the window—again he placed his face close to the pane of glass, and shading his eyes with his hands, he looked out. A dashing rain was falling.

"They say that when the rain comes the wind moderates," he muttered; "but I see no signs of that, yet, it is almost a gale already."

At that moment there came such a gust of wind howling down the street, that Todd mechanically withdrew his head, as though it were some tangible enemy come to seek him.

"Always something to foil me here," he said; "always something; but out I must go. Let it look as strange as it may, I cannot stay a night in this house, for if I were to do so, that would involve the staying a day likewise; and it would be this time to-morrow before I dared venture abroad; and who knows what awful things might happen in that space of time? No, I must go to-night. I must go to-night."

He could not help feeling that his going out while the weather was in such a state would excite a great amount of wonder in the house; but that was a minor event in comparison to what might possibly ensue from remaining, so he put on his hat.

Tap—tap! came against the panel of his door.

Todd muttered an awful oath, and then said,—

"Come in."

Mrs. Hardman entered the room.

"I hope I don't intrude upon you, sir, but I was so very anxious to know if the tea was just as you like it, sir?"

"Oh, yes—yes. I am going out a little way, my good madam. Only a little way."

"Out, sir?"

"Yes, and why not?—why not? Oh, dear me! How bad my cough is to be sure, to-night. Eugh!—eugh!"

"Goodness gracious! my dear sir, you will not think of venturing out to-night? Oh, sir!"

"Why not, madam?"

"The wind, sir—the rain, sir—and the wind and the rain together, sir. Oh, dear! It isn't a night to turn out a dog in, not that I like dogs, but I beg, sir, you won't think of it. Only listen, sir. How it does blow, to be sure!"

"Madam!" said Todd, putting on a solemn look, "I must go. It is my duty to go."

"Your duty, sir?"

"Yes. Whenever the wind blows and the rain comes down, I put a quantity of small change in my pocket, and I go out to see what objects of distress in the streets I can relieve. It is then that I feel myself called upon in the sacred name of heavenly charity to see to the wants of my poorer fellow-creatures. It is then that I can find many a one whom I can make happy and comfortable for a brief space, at all events; and that's the way that I am always, you see, madam, with a bad cold."

"Generous man!" said Mrs. Hardman, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Not at all, madam, not at all. It is one's duty, and nothing else. I feel bound to do it. But I shall want a little something for supper. A nice boiled chicken, if you please, and you will be so good as to get it for me,

madam. Take this guinea, if you please, and we can talk about the change, you know, when I want anything else, my good madam."

"My word!" thought Mrs. Hardman. "He is a wonderful lodger, for he forgets all about his change. I feel that it would only vex the poor old gentleman to remind him of it, and that I do not feel justified in doing. A-hem! yes, sir. Oh, certainly, I will get the finest chicken, sir, that can be had."

"Do so, madam, do so. Now I'm going."

"Oh, Lord! there's a gust of wind!"

"I like it—I like it."

"And there's a dash of rain!"

"So much the better. Delightful, delightful, my dear madam, I shall find plenty of poor objects to relieve to-night. Under gateways, I shall find them, crouching upon door-steps, and shivering on spots where a little shelter can be found from the inclemency of the weather. This is my time to try and do a little good with that superfluous wealth which Providence has given me."

Mrs. Hardman made no further opposition to the benevolent intentions of a lodger who continually forgot his change, and Todd fairly left the house.

Little did the landlady think, while she was grasping at the guineas, that there was a reward of a thousand pounds for the apprehension of her lodger, and that it would every penny-piece of it have been duly paid to her at the Treasury, if she could but have managed to lock him in a room until the officers of justice could be sent for, to pounce upon him and load him with irons, and take him off to prison.

But poor Mrs. Hardman had really no idea of how near she was to fortune; and when the street-door closed upon Todd, she little suspected that she shut out such a sum as one thousand pounds sterling along with him.

"That is managed so far," said Todd, as he shrank and cowed before the storm-laden gale that dashed in his face the rain, as he reached the corner of the street.

There Todd paused, for a new fear came across him. It was that no waterman would venture upon the river with him on such a night; and yet after reasoning with himself a little time, he said—

"Watermen are human, and they love gold as much as any one else. After all, it only resolves itself into a question of how much I will pay."

Full of this idea, which, in its way, was a tolerably just one, he sneaked down the Strand until he got right to Charing Cross. He had thought of going down one of the quiet streets near that place, and taking a boat there; but now he considered that he would have a much better chance by going as far as Westminster Bridge; and, accordingly, despite the rain and the wind, he made his way along Whitehall, and reached the bridge.

A few watermen were lounging about at the head of the stairs. They had little enough expectation of getting a fare at such a time, and upon such a day. One of them, however, seeing Todd pause, went up to him, and spoke—

"You didn't want a boat, did you, sir?"

"Why, yes," said Todd, "I did; but, I suppose, you are all afraid to earn a couple of guineas?"

"A couple of guineas?"

"Yes, or three, for the matter of that; one more or less don't matter to me; but it may to you."

"Indeed, it does, sir. You are right enough there. But where do you want to go to sir? Up or down?"

"To Greenwich."

Todd thought if he mentioned Gravesend, he might frighten the man at once.

"Greenwich? Whew!" The waterman perpetrated a long whistle; and then, shaking his head, he said—"I'm very much afraid, sir, that it isn't a question of guineas that will settle that; but I will speak to my mate. Halloa Jack!—Jack! I say, old boy, where are you?"

"Here you are," said an old weather-beaten man coming up the steps. "I've only been making the little craft fast. What is the row now, Harry—eh?"

"No row, old mate; but this here gentleman offers a matter of three guineas for a cruise to Greenwich."

"Ay, and why not, Harry?"

"Why not? Don't you hear how it's blowing?"

"Yes, I do, Harry; but it won't blow long. I've seen more gales than you have, lad, and I tell you that this one is all but over. The rain, in another quarter of an hour, will beat it all down. It's fast going now. It will be a wet night, and a dark night; but it won't blow, nor it won't be cold."

"If you say as much as that, Jack," said the younger waterman, "I will swear to it."

The old man smiled, as he added—

"Ah, dear me, yes, and so you may, Harry. I haven't been so long out of doors that I don't know the fancies of the weather. I can tell you a'most what it's a going to do beforehand, better than it knows itself. There, don't you hear how it's coming in puffs, now, the wind, and each one is a bit fainter nor the one as comed afore it? Lord bless you, it's nothing! We shall get a wet jacket, that's all; and if so be, sir, as you really do want a cruise down to Greenwich, come on, and Harry and me will soon manage it for you."

These words were very satisfactory to Todd. He had no objection in the world to its being rather a bad night on the river; but he certainly had a great objection to risking his life. Discomfort was a thing that gave him no concern. He knew well that that would pass away.

"If you are willing," he said, "let us, then, start at once, and I will not hold you to your bargain if the weather should happen to turn very bad. We can, in such a case, easily, I dare say, put in at some of the numerous stairs on one side or other of the river."

"There will be no need of that, sir," said the old waterman. "If you go, and if you choose to go all the way, we will put you on shore at Greenwich."

"How about London Bridge?" said the younger man, in a tone of some anxiety.

"Better than usual," said Jack. "It is just the time to shoot it nicely, for the tide will be at a point, and won't know exactly whether to go one way or the other."

"It's all right, then?"

"It is."

Todd himself had had his suspicions that the passage of old London Bridge would be one of no ordinary difficulty on such a night as that, but he knew that if the tide was at that point which the old man mentioned, that it might be passed with the most perfect safety, and it was a matter of no small gratification to him to hear from such a competent authority that such was the fact just then.

"Let us go at once," he said.

"All's right, sir. Our wherry is just at the foot of the stairs, here. I will pull her in, Harry."

The old man ran down the slippery stairs with the activity of a boy, and as Todd and Harry followed him, the latter said, in quite a confidential tone of voice—

Todd Encounters Great Perils On The River Thames.

Todd Encounters Great Perils On The River Thames.

"Ah, sir, you may trust to his judgment on anything that has anything to do with the river."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Yes, sir, and so am I. Now I thought I knew something, and I shouldn't have ventured to take you, or if I had, it would have been with rather a faint heart; but now that the old man, sir, says it's all right, I feel as comfortable as needs be in the matter."

By this time they had reached the foot of the steps, which was being laved by the tide, and there the old man had the boat safely in hand.

"Now for it, sir," he said. "Jump in."

Todd did so, and the younger waterman followed him. He and his aged companion immediately took their places, and Todd stretched himself in the stern of the little craft.

The rain now came down in absolute torrents as the boat was pushed off by the two watermen into the middle of the stream.

CHAPTER CLX.
THE POLICE-GALLEY ON THE THAMES.

What an anxious and protracted glance Todd cast around him when he found that he was fairly upon the river. How his eyes, with fox-like cunning, glistening like two lead-coloured stars, were here, and there, and everywhere, in the course of a few moments. Then he contrived to speak, as he thought, craftily enough.

"There are but few boats on the river."

"No, sir," said the young waterman. "It isn't everybody that cares to come on the water in such weather as this."

"No—no. But I have business."

"Exactly so, sir. That's it."

"Yes," added Todd, in quite a contemplative tone of voice, "the fact is, that I have just heard that at Gravesend there resides a family, with whom I was once intimate, but had lost sight of. They have, as I hear, dropped into poverty, amounting to destitution, and I could not rest until I had gone after them to relieve them."

"Did you say Gravesend?" said the old man.

"Why, yes; but I don't ask you to go so far. I will try and find a conveyance on land at Greenwich; but—if—you like to pull all the way to Gravesend, I don't mind paying, for I prefer the water."

"Couldn't do it," said the old man.

"Certainly not," said the young one.

Todd felt mortified that his plan of getting to Gravesend, by the aid of the boat, was thus put an end to; but he could not help feeling how very impolitic it would be to show any amount of chagrin upon such a subject, so he spoke as cheerfully as he could, merely saying—

"Well, of course, I don't want you to do it; I merely offer you the job, as I am so fond of a little boating, that I would not mind a few guineas more upon such an account."

"No use trying it," said the old man, sententiously. "There's several turns in the river, and we should be down one at this time before we could get there. Gravesend is quite another thing."

"So it is," said Todd.

He felt perfectly certain by the tone and the manner of the old man, that it would be of no use urging the matter any further; and the great dread he had of exciting suspicion that he was a fugitive, had the effect of making him as cautious as possible regarding what he said. In stern and moody silence, then, he reclined in the stern of the boat, while it cleaved through the black water; and, as the old boatman prophesied, the wind each moment went down until it left nothing but a freshness upon the surface of the water, which, although it was bitterly cold, in no way effected the progress of the boat.

But a slight rain now began to fall, and every moment the night got darker and darker still, until the lights upon the banks of the river looked like little stars afar off; and it was only when they got quite close to it, that they became aware of the proximity of Blackfriars Bridge. It was Todd that saw it first appearing like some gigantic object rising up out of the water to destroy them. He could not resist uttering an exclamation of terror, and then he added—

"What is it? Oh, what is it?"

"What—what?" said the young waterman, shipping his oars and looking rather terrified.

The old man gave his head a slight jerk as he said—

"I fancy it's Blackfriars."

"Oh, yes, yes," said Todd, with a feeling of great relief. "It's the bridge, of course—it's the bridge; but in the darkness of the night, it looked awful and strange; and as we approached it, it had all the effect as if it were something big enough to crush the world rising up out of the water.

"Ay—ay," said the old man. "I have seen it on all sorts of nights, and was looking out for it. It's all right. Easy with your larboard over there. That will do—there we go."

The boat shot under one of the arches of the old bridge, and for a moment, the effect was like going into some deep and horrible cavern, the lower part of which was a sea of ink.

Todd shuddered, but he did not say anything. He thought that after his affected raptures at sailing, that if he made any sort of remark indicative of his terrors at the passage of the bridge, they would sound rather inconsistent.

It was quite a relief when they had shot through the dim and dusky arch, and emerged again upon the broad open water; and owing to the terrible darkness that was beneath that arch, the night upon the river, after they had passed through it, did not seem to be nearly so black as it had been before, thus showing that, after all, most of our sensations are those of comparison, even including those dependant upon the physical changes of nature.

"This is cheering," said Todd. "It is lighter now upon the river. Don't you think it is?"

"Why," said the old man, "perhaps it is just a cloud or two lighter; but it's after coming through the arch that it makes the principal difference, I take it."

"Yes," said the other, "that's it; and the rain, to my thinking, will be a lasting one, for it comes down straight, and with a good will to continue. Don't you think so?"

The question was addressed to the old man, who answered it slowly and sententiously, keeping time with his words to the oars as they made a slight noise jerking in the rollocks.

"If it don't rain till sun-rise, just ask me to eat the old boat, and I'll do it!"

"That's settled," said the young waterman.

The weather, in so far as rain or not rain was concerned, was not to Todd a matter of much concern. So long as there was no stormy aspect of the elements to prevent him from speeding upon his journey, he, upon the whole, rather liked the darkness and the rain, as it probably acted as a better shield for his escape, and he rather chuckled than not on the idea that the rain would last. Besides, it was evident that as it fell, it smoothed the surface of the river, so that the oars dipped clear into the stream, and the boat shot on the better.

"Well—well," he said, "we can but get wet."

"That's all," said the old man, "and I hold it to be quite a folly to make a fuss about that. If you sit still, the rain will, of course, soak into your clothes; but if you go on sitting still, it will in time give you up as a bad job, and begin to run out again. So you have nothing, you see, to do, but take it easy, and think of something else all the while."

"That is very true, my friend," said Todd, in a kind and conciliatory tone; "but you get wet through in the process."

"Just so. Pull away."

The younger man, for the last five minutes, had glanced several times through one of his hands along the line of the surface of the river, and the injunction to pull away was probably on account of his having been a little amiss in that particular. The old man had spoken the words rather sharply than otherwise.

"Yes—yes," said the other. "I'll pull away; but there's another craft upon the river, in spite of the rain, and they are pulling away with a vengeance rather. Look, they're in our wake."

"It's no use me looking. You know that well enough. I ain't quite so good with my eyes as I was a matter of twenty years ago. I suppose it's the police-craft. Of late, you know, they have taken to cutting along at all times."

"Yes, it's them!"

Todd stooped in the boat, until his eyes went right along the line of the water's edge, and there he saw coming on swiftly a biggish bulky object, and as the oars broke the water, he could see that there were five or six of them on each side. It looked altogether like some great fish striking through the water with a number of strange-looking fins.

The coward heart of Todd smote him, as well it might, when he saw this sight. For a moment or two he sat bewildered, and he thought that he should faint in the stern of the boat, and then that nothing in the world could save him from capture, if that were in reality the police-boat. It was, perhaps, only the rain falling upon his face that revived him, as it came upon him with its cold, refreshed splash. To be sure he was well armed for one individual, but what could he do against some dozen of men? Suppose that he did shoot two or three of them, that would be but a poor recompense for his capture by the others. He was bewildered to know what to do. He spoke in a low, anxious tone,—

"Are you, from your knowledge of the river, quite sure that that is a police-boat?"

"Ah, to be sure."

"Do you, then, think likewise that that is upon our track? Answer me that. Answer it fairly."

"Our track!" said the old man, as he almost ceased rowing. "Hilloa! There's something more in this affair than meets the eye. It won't exactly pay us to be overhauled by the police, after a chase. Who and what are you, my friend? If you are afraid of the police-boat, we are not, and you ain't quite the sort of customer to suit us exactly, I should say."

"I have both their lives," thought Todd, as in the dark he felt for his pistols. "I have both their lives, and if they show any disposition to give me up, they shall not live another five minutes. I will shoot them both—cast their bodies into the river, and land myself at the first stairs I come to."

"Listen to me," he said, in a mild tone of voice. "It would only tire you, and, besides, it would take too long to tell why I have a fear of the police. But I have such a fear. I assure you, that I am quite innocent of what they accuse me. But until I can get from Hamburgh the only witness who can prove my innocence, I do not want to fall into the hands of my enemies. I implore you not to sacrifice me!"

"Humph!" said the old man, "What have you done?"

"Nothing—nothing! as Heaven is my witness!"

"But what do they say you have done?" said the young waterman.

"Ay!" said the other, "that's the question!"

"Why, they say that I was wrong in helping a poor lad, who certainly had done some wrong thing, to escape from the country; but then it would have broken his poor mother's heart if they had hanged him. It was for forgery only, and it was all owing to bad company he did it. Alas! I did not think it a crime to aid the poor boy to get away. What good would his death have done to any one?"

"Was that all?"

"Yes; that was all. But it appears in law, you see, a very serious offence to aid and abet, as they call it, a felon. Poor boy!—poor mother!"

"Oh, hang it, we won't give you up to the bloodhounds of the law for that," said the old man; "but, hark you, sir, it's out of the question that we two should be able to hold our way against the police-galley, with six young fresh rowers; so all we can do is to put you ashore somewhere, and then you can shift for yourself the best way you may. I don't see what else we can do for you."

"Nor I," said the young waterman; "and in a few moments it will be best to do that. Is there a stairs close at hand?"

"Not one," said the old man. "It's a done thing. We can't land you, except in the water, if that can be called landing you at all. I don't know what to be at."

"Oh, save me!" said Todd.

"But how can we?"

"Yes," said the young waterman, "there's one way of managing that, I think, will do it, and do it well, too."

"Oh, how can I thank you?"

"Don't mention it. Suppose we put him on to the first craft we come along-side of in the river, that is moored, and has got no one on board? It won't be noticed, like our putting into a landing would, you know. They would be sure to say we had put some one on shore. But if we just ease the boat for a moment as we pass some craft, our fare can scramble on board, and we can go right on, and let the police overtake us, and overhaul us in due course. I'll be bound that by this light there's not a man on board of yonder craft can take upon himself to say whether there's one, two, or three people in our wherry."

"Yes," said the old man, "that will do if anything will, and if that don't do, nothing will."

"It will do," said Todd; "it will do. I thank you from my heart for the suggestion. It will do well. All you have to do is to let me board the craft in the river, upon the side furthest removed from the police boat. Oh! you will have the prayers of the widow and the fatherless, for this kind act."

"Never mind about that. Pull away."

"And—and when the police-boat is past, will you then come and take me off again?"

"That's awkward," said the old man.

"We will, if we can," said the young one; "but don't depend upon us. We don't know, as yet, what the police may say to us. For all we know, they know more than we would wish them, of your being in our boat; and all we can say, then, is, that we put you ashore; but they may keep a watch upon us after that, and if they do, it will be only to give you up to them that we could push off to you."

"Yes—yes, I understand," said Todd. "I thank you, and will take my chance of all that may happen."

"You must."

"There's something a-head," said the old man. "What is it?"

"It's the pile-driving barge. They are mending up the bank of the river. I know that the men leave that all night, as there is nothing to take from it that any one can lift. Will you go on board that, sir?"

"Yes, yes," said Todd, "That will do."

"Be quick, then, about it," said the old man, "for they gain upon us."

"Boat a-hoi!" cried a voice over the river.

CHAPTER CLXI.
THE POLICE-GALLEY'S FATE.

Todd, when he heard that voice, quite sank down into the bottom of the boat, and felt as though his last hour were come.

"Don't answer," said the old man. "Pull away for the pile-driving barge as hard as you can."

"Oh, yes, pull—pull!" cried Todd. "Save me!"

"If you make that noise," added the old man, "we may as well be off at once, for the river, when it is as smooth as it is now, carries voices well."

"Boat a-hoi!" cried the voice again.

"We must answer them now," said the old waterman. "Ay, ay! Is it here? Boat a-hoi!"

"Ay, ay!" came the voice from the police-galley.

At that moment the two watermen succeeded in reaching the broad stern of the barge, in which was centred the pile-driving machinery, and the young man said to Todd—

"Now clamber in, and good luck attend you. If we don't come to you in the course of an hour, don't expect us, that's all."

Todd was not very young and supple in his joints, but the sense of present and serious danger has an effect upon every one, and in a moment he seized the side of the pile-driving barge, and drew himself in.

"All right," said the old man.

"Oh, yes—yes," said Todd, as he crouched down with his chin touching the side of the barge.

"Good-night, then."

"Good-night! You will come for me if you can?"

"Yes, but don't expect us. Pull, now, as hard as you can, and get out into the stream. Pull! pull!"

By the strenuous united exertions of the two men, the boat shot along at good speed, and soon got to a considerable distance from the barge in which Todd had taken refuge. It was then that the police-galley hoisted a strong light that shed a bright glare through the rain, and over the surface of the river.

"Am I saved?" said Todd. "Am I saved, or am I not?"

He sank quite down into the body of the barge. There was a sort of platform over one-half of it, and upon that platform he felt the mass of iron, weighing about a couple of hundredweight, or more, which was used for driving piles into the bed of the river, and which, when liberated from a height, and allowed to fall upon the end of the pile, comes with a most tremendous force.

That piece of metal so used is called "the monkey."

"They come—they come!" said Todd. "Oh, if they only chanced to see the boat place me here, I am lost. Quite lost! What will become of me, then, with nothing but the cold, cold river all round me? Death, indeed, now stares me in the face!"

Truly, the situation of Todd now was rather a critical one. There was no saying how far the men on board the police-galley might not think themselves justified in boarding any craft that was moored upon the river; and, indeed, if they were searching for him, and had really any idea that he was trying an escape by the Thames, it was highly improbable that they would omit to have a good look in the barge where he was. There was another great danger, too, that suddenly flashed across his mind, and drove him nearly mad.

"If the police, when they overtake the wherry," he thought, "should mention who it is they are in pursuit of, may not the two watermen at once, upon finding that their sympathy has been excited for me, declare where I am, and even aid in my apprehension?"

This idea, either because it was the last one that came into his head, or because it really was the one that seemed most full of real dangers, clung to him with desperation; and more than once the thought of ending all his miseries by a plunge into the river, crossed his mind. But it is not such men as Sweeney Todd who commit suicide.

"They come—they come!" was all he could now say.

The light from the police was, by the aid of a revolving reflector, capable of being cast pretty strongly in any direction that those who had the care and control of it chose; and for a moment it rested upon the barge where Todd was. He felt as if, at that moment, he could have crept right through the bottom of the barge, and taken refuge in the Thames.

The broad beam of light was then shifted off the barge on to the little wherry, which was at rest upon the water waiting for the approach of the police-galley.

And now, with vigorous sweeps of its six oars, that galley made its way right past the barge. Oh! what a relief it was that it went past! It did not follow that all danger was gone because the police-barge had gone past; but it was a sufficient proof that the glare of light they had sent in that direction, by the aid of the reflector, had not had the effect of discovering him to them.

"That is something," muttered Todd.

He then slowly permitted his eyes to peer over the side of the barge in order, as far as he could, to watch the interview that was about to take place between the police and the two watermen in the wherry where he had been so lately a passenger. Upon that interview, now, he thought that his fate depended.

"Hilloa!" cried one of the police. "Why did you not wait for us when we first called to you?"

"We did," said the old man, "as soon as we saw your light, and knew what you were; but there are so many jokes played off upon the river, that if we were to rest-oars to everybody who call—'Boat a-hoi,' we should have enough to do."

"Who are you?"

"A couple of regestered watermen. Here we are. You can overhaul us at once, if you like."

"You have no passenger?"

"No. I only wish we had. Times are very bad."

"Well, it's all right. But we are placed here by the orders of Sir Richard Blunt the magistrate, who suspects that the notorious murderer, Sweeney Todd, may try to escape by the Thames."

"Sweeney Todd!" cried the young waterman in a tone of horror. "What, the fellow that killed all the people in Fleet Street, and made them into pies?"

"The same."

"It's coming now," thought Todd. "It's coming now. They will tell him where I am."

The next words that were spoken, were uttered in a tone of voice that did not reach his ears. It was the old man who had spoken, and he did not utter his words so clearly as his younger companion; and although he tried his utmost to hear what he said, he could not possibly make it out, and he remained in a perfect agony of apprehension.

"Very well," said the officer in the police-barge, who had conducted the brief conversation. "It is a miserable night. Give way, my men. Steady there. Put the light out."

In an instant the light was lowered and extinguished, and the darkness that reigned upon the surface of the Thames was like a darkness that could be felt. It was difficult to conceive that it was not really tangible.

"Are they coming back?"

That was the question that Todd asked of himself, as he grasped, to steady himself, the heavy piece of iron that belonged to the pile-driving machine. He listened most intently, until it was positively painful to do so, and he began to fancy all sorts of strange noises in the air and from the water. In a few moments, though, an actual splashing sound put to route all imaginary noises, and he felt convinced that the boat with the police was slowly returning towards the barge in which he was concealed.

There was, to be sure, still a hope that they would pass it; but it was only a hope.

Oh, how awfully full of apprehension was each passing moment now. It might be that the police-galley was only going quietly back to its proper station, after overtaking the wherry; but then it might be quite otherwise, and the doubt was terrific. While that doubt lasted, it was worse than the reality of danger.

And now it was quite evident to the perception of Todd that the police-boat was close to the barge, and he heard a voice say—

"Is that the pile-driving barge?"

"Yes, sir," replied some one.

"And they leave it, I suppose, as usual?"

"No doubt, sir."

"Well, pull alongside, and a couple of you jump in and see if all is right. People leave their property exposed to all sorts of depredations, and then blame us for not looking after it. Mind how you go, my men. Don't run foul of the barge."

"No, sir. All's right."

From the moment that this conversation had begun, Todd had remained crouching down in the barge, like a man changed to stone. He heard every word—those words upon which hung, or seemed to hang, his life, and his grasp upon the massive piece of iron tightened.

The police-boat gradually advanced, and finally just grated against the side of the barge.

A sudden thought took possession of Todd. With a yell, like that of a mad-man, he, with preternatural strength, moved the heavy mass of iron, and in one moment toppled it over the edge of the barge.

Crash it went into the police-galley. There was then a shriek, and the men were struggling in the water. The piece of iron had gone right through the boat, staving to pieces. It filled and sank.

Todd And The Police Galley.

Todd And The Police Galley.

"Help—help!" cried a voice, and then all was still as the grave for a few moments.

"It is done," said Todd.

"Help! mercy!" said a voice again, and a dark figure rose up by the side of the barge, clinging to it.

Todd drew one of his pistols. He levelled it at the head of the figure. He was upon the point of pulling the trigger, when it struck him that the flash and the report might be seen and heard from the shore. The pistol was heavily mounted with brass at the butt-end of it.

"Down!" said Todd. "Down!"

He struck the clambering, half-drowned man upon the head, and with a shriek he fell backwards into the water and disappeared. In another moment Todd felt a pair of arms twining round him, and a voice cried—

"Murderer, I have you now! You cannot shake me off!"

Todd made an effort, but, in truth, those wet and clinging arms held to him like fate.

"Fool," he said. "You will find drowning the easiest death for you to meet."

The Murder On The Thames—Todd's Narrow Escape.

The Murder On The Thames—Todd's Narrow Escape.

"Help—help! murder!" shouted his assailant.

The pistol was still in Todd's grasp. With a devilish ingenuity, he thrust the barrel of it under his arm and felt that it touched his assailant. He pulled the trigger, and then he and the man who held him fell to the bottom of the barge together.

Todd kicked and plunged until he got uppermost, and then he felt for the throat of the other, and when he got a clutch of it he held it with a gripe of iron.

"Fool," he said. "Did you think that one driven to such desperation as I am, would be conquered so easily?"

There was no reply. Todd lifted up the head of the man, and it hung limply and flaccidly from the neck. He was quite dead. The pistol-bullet had gone through his heart, and death was instantaneous.

"Another one," said Todd, as he sprang to his feet and stood upon the dead body. "Another one sacrificed to my vengeance. Let those only interfere with me who are tired of life."

He placed his hand to his ear now, to listen if there were any indications of others of the boat's crew stirring; but all was still. No sound, save the lazy ripple of the tide past the old barge on which he was, met his ears.

"It is over," he said. "It is quite over now. That one great danger is past now."

The rain began to fall quicker, and splashed upon the half deck of the barge. Todd felt that he was thoroughly wet through; but all minor ills he could now laugh at, that he had escaped the one great peril of capture. He felt that his life had hung upon a thread, and that only the recent accident had saved him; for to be captured, was to him equivalent to death.

"All gone!" he whispered. "They are all gone! Well—well! They would have dragged me to a prison, and then to a scaffold! Self-defence is a sound principle, and for that I have fought!"

A sudden gust of wind got up at that moment, and came howling past Todd, and ruffling upon the surface of the river; but all was still around the barge. There was now no cry for mercy—no shout for help—no bubbling shriek of some swimmer, who was yet sinking to death, as the waters closed over him.

"Yes," said Todd, as his long hair blew out like snakes in the wind, "I am alone here now. They are all dead, and I could do it again if it had to be done."

CHAPTER CLXII.
ANOTHER BOAT.

It seemed now as though the lull in the weather was over; for after that one gust of wind, there came others; and in the course of a very short time, indeed, the surface of the water was much agitated, and such a howling noise was kept up by the wind, that Todd thought every moment that he heard the voices of his foes.

"What am I to do now?" he said. "Oh, what am I to do? I dare not wait here until daylight. That would be destruction. What is to become of me?"

He came round the sides of the barge with the hope that some wherry had been moored to it, but he found that that hope was a fallacious one indeed. There was the gloomy-looking vessel moored far out in the stream, with him as its only passenger.

Any one without Todd's load of guilt upon his soul, and upon better terms with human nature, could soon have got assistance, for the distance from the shore was by no means so great but that his voice must have been heard had he chosen to exert it; but that would not do for him. He dreaded that his presence upon the barge should be known, and yet he alike dreaded that the morning's light should come shiningly upon him, without any boat coming to take him off.

To be sure, the two men who had brought him there had made a half-promise to come to his aid, but he felt certain he could not depend upon their doing so. The look with which they had regarded him upon the

doubt, even, that he might be so frightful a criminal as he really was, was sufficient to convince him that while that doubt remained they would not return.

"And what," he said, "is to dissipate the doubt? Nothing—nothing! But anything may confirm it. Accidents always tell for the truth—never to its prevention, and so I am lost—lost—quite lost."

The bitterness of death seemed almost to be upon the point of assailing Todd. He could fancy that spirits of the murdered shrieked and wailed around him, as the wind whistled by his trembling frame.

In this wretched state an hour passed, and then Todd thought he heard a voice.

"What is that?" he said. "Oh, what is that?"

He inclined his head as low down to the edge of the water as he could get it, and heard distinctly some one singing to the stroke of a pair of oars, as they were deliberately dipped into the stream. The voice sounded like that of some young lad, and a hope of succour sprung up in the breast of Todd.

In the course of a few moments he became perfectly convinced that the boat was approaching the barge, and he shrunk down so that by being prematurely seen he might not alarm the boy who was rowing down the stream. The song continued, and it was quite evident from the manner in which the boy sung it, that he was quite delighted with his own powers in that line.

"I must speak to him," thought Todd. "If I let him pass there may not be another chance, now. I must speak to this boy, and speak to him freely too. He comes—he comes."

It was not so dark but that Todd could see pretty well the surface of the river, and presently in dusky outline he was conscious of the approach of a wherry in which was a boy, and he could see how the boy moved his head to and fro to the tune that he was amusing himself with.

"Hilloa!" cried Todd.

Now Todd in this "Hilloa!" had for once in a way tuned his voice to such a gentle pleasant sound, that it was quite a wonder to hear it, and he was rather himself surprised at the manner in which he managed it so as not to be at all alarming.

The boy stopped rowing and looked about him. It was evident at the moment that he could not tell where the sound came from.

"Hilloa!" said Todd, again.

"Ay—ay!" said the boy; "where are you?"

"Here, my dear," said Todd, "on board of the barge, bless you. How are you, my fine fellow—eh?"

"Oh, I'm pretty well. Who are you?"

"Why, don't you know me? I'm Mr. Smith. How is your father, my lad—eh?"

"Oh, father's all right enough; but I didn't know as he knowed a Mr. Smith at all."

"Oh, yes, he does. Everybody knows a Mr. Smith. Come on, you can give me a lift to shore off the barge here. This way. Just step up to the side and I'll step into your pretty little wherry. And so your father is quite well—eh, my fine lad? Do you know I was afraid he had caught a little cold, and really have been quite uneasy about him."

"Have you?" said the boy, as he pulled up to the side of the barge. "Where do you want to go to?"

"Oh, anywhere you happen to be going, that's all, my fine lad. How you do grow, to be sure!"

"But how came you here, out in the river on the dredging-barge? Do you belong to her?"

"To be sure I do. I am Mr. Deputy Inspector Dredger Smith, and am forced to come and superintend the barge, you see; but my boat that I sent to shore for something, has not come back, and I am getting cold, for I am not so young as you are, you know."

"Why, I don't suppose you is, sir," said the boy; "but I'll put you ashore, if you like."

"Thank you, I should like."

"Get in, then, sir. All's right. I'll hold on to the barge. Easy—easy with you, sir. That will do. Which side of the river, sir, would you like to be put ashore at, if you please?"

The boy was evidently deeply impressed with the importance of the title of Deputy Inspector Dredger, and was quite deferential to Todd.

How delighted was Todd to get off the barge! It seemed to him like a reprieve from death.

"Which way is the tide, boy?" he said.

"Running down, sir, but not fast."

"That will do. I will trouble you, then, to row with it as comfortably and as fast as you can.

"But I'm going, sir, to Westminster, to meet father. I can't go down the river, please sir. I would if I could. I said I would put you on shore on either side you like, and that's a waste of time, for the tide is getting fuller every minute, and it will be a hard pull against it, as it is. I can't go down the river, so don't ask me, sir; indeed I can't."

"Indeed?"

"No, sir. If I put you ashore, you will find lots of watermen who will be glad enough of the job."

"What's your name?"

"Bill White, sir."

Todd Compels Bill White To Assist His Escape From The Thames Police.

Todd Compels Bill White To Assist His Escape From The Thames Police.

"Very well, Bill White. I dare say you have ears at your age, and guess that to have one's brains blown out is not one of the most agreeable things in the world, and perhaps you know a pistol when you see one. This that I take from my pocket and hold at your head is carefully loaded, and if you don't pull away at once with the tide down the river, I will scatter your brains into the river, and throw your lifeless carcass after them. Do you understand that, Mr. Bill White?"

Todd uttered these words in such a tone of fiendish malignity, and glared into the eyes of the poor boy so, that he nearly drove him out of his wits, and it was as much as his trembling hands could do to hold the oars. For the space of about half a minute he could only glare at Todd with his eyes and mouth as wide open as they could be.

"Speak, devil's whelp!" cried Todd. "Why do you not answer me?"

"Murder!" cried the boy.

Todd caught him by the throat, and if the oars had not been well up in the rollocks, they must have gone overboard.

"Another such cry," said Todd, "and it is the last you shall have the opportunity of making in this world."

"Oh, no—no—"

"But I say yes. Listen to me! If you row me as I direct you, I will not only do you no harm, but I will pay you well. If you still obstinately refuse, I will murder you, and murder your father likewise, upon the first opportunity."

"I will row you down the river, sir. Oh, yes, I will do it. Indeed I will, sir."

"Very well. Take your oars, and pull away."

The boy was in such a state of trembling, that although it was quite evident he did his best to obey Todd, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could pull a stroke, and it took him some minutes to get the boat's head round to the tide.

"Be careful," said Todd. "If I see you willing, I make any allowance for you; but if I fancy, for a moment, that there is any idea of not obeying me, I will kill you!"

"I am obeying you, sir."

"Very well. Now, listen attentively to what I am about further to say to you, Bill White. You can pull away while you listen. We are going now very well with the stream."

"Yes, sir."

"We shall, no doubt, pass many wherries, and you may think it a very good thing to call out for help, and to say that I threatened to murder you, and all that sort of thing; but so soon as you do, you die. I will hold this pistol in my hand, and whenever we come near a wherry, my finger will be upon the trigger, and the muzzle at your head. You understand all that, I hope, Bill White?"

"Of course I do, sir."

"Go on then."

Todd reclined back in the stern of the boat, and kept his eyes fixed upon the boy, down whose cheeks the tears rolled in abundance, as he pulled down the stream. Having the tide fully in its favour, the wherry, with very little labour, made great way; and Todd, as he saw the dawn slowly creeping on, began to congratulate himself upon the cleverness with which he had escaped from the barge.

The river began to widen—the pool was left behind, and the dull melancholy shore of Essex soon began to show itself, as the tide, by each moment increasing in strength, carried the light boat swiftly along its undulating surface, with its frightfully wicked load.

Todd thought it would be as well now to say something of a cheering character to the boy. Modulating his voice, he said—

"Now, you see, my lad, that by obeying me you have done the very best thing you possibly could, and when I think proper to land, I will give you a guinea for yourself."

"I don't want it," said the boy.

"You don't want it?"

"No; and I won't have it."

"What do you mean by that, you idiot of a boy? How dare you tell me to my face that you won't have what I offer you?"

"I don't see," said Bill White, "how that ought to put you in a passion. All you want is to make me row you down the river. Well, you have made me, cos I don't want to be shot down like a mad dog, of course; but I won't be paid for doing what I don't like—not I."

"Well, it don't matter to me. You may please yourself about that; I am just as well pleased at being rowed for nothing as if I paid for it. You can please yourself in that particular; but it would have been better for you to have taken what I chose to give you than to have refused it."

The boy made no answer to this speech, but rowed on in sullen silence. He no longer wept now, and it was evident to Todd that indignation was rapidly taking the place of fear in his heart. Todd even began to debate with himself whether it would not be better to throw him into the river and take the oars himself, and trust to his own skill to conduct the boat with the stream to Gravesend, than was the risk of any sudden act of the boy's that might bring danger upon him.

It would have been but a poor satisfaction to Todd to have shot the boy at the moment possibly of his calling for help, when the sight of such an act would be sufficient to insure his capture, without people troubling themselves about what he had done or not done before.

These were considerations that began to make Todd very unhappy indeed.

"Well, Bill White," he said; "as your father, no doubt, expects you by this time, and I daresay you will be glad enough to go back and forget all about the little disagreement that we have had, I will get you to land me at once at those stairs yonder, and then we will shake hands and part."

"No we won't."

"Ah?"

"I say we won't shake hands. I'm willing enough that we should part, but as for the shaking hands, I won't do it; and I'm quite willing to pull in to the stairs."

As he spoke he inclined the head of the boat to a little landing-place, where a few wherries were moored.

CHAPTER CLXIII.
ANOTHER POLICE-GALLEY.

"Bill White," said Todd.

"Well, what now?" said the boy, in a sulky tone.

Todd pointed to the pistol, and merely uttered the one word —"Remember!" and then, with a horrible misgiving at his heart, he let the lad pull into the landing-place. Some half-dozen lazy-looking fellows were smoking their pipes upon the dirty beach, and Todd, concealing the pistol within his capacious cuff, sprang on the shore. He turned and looked at the boy, who slowly pushed off, and gained the deep water again.

"He is afraid," thought Todd, "he is afraid, and will be too glad to get away and say nothing."

Bill White's actions were now not a little curious, and they soon attracted the observation of all the idlers on the beach, and put Todd in a perfect agony of apprehension. When the boy was about half a dozen boats' length from the shore, he shipped one of his oars, and then, with his disengaged hand, he lifted from the bottom of the boat an old saucepan, which he held up in an odd, dodging kind of way before his face, with an evident idea that if Todd fired the pistol at him, he could interrupt the bullet in that way. Then, in a loud clear voice, he cried—

"Hilloa! Don't have anything to do with that Mr. Smith. He has been threatening to shoot me, and he has got a pistol in his hand. He's a bad 'un, he is. Take him up! That's the best thing you can do. He's well-nigh

as bad as old Todd the murderer of Fleet Street, that they can't catch. Take him up. I advises you. Blaze away, old curmudgeon."

Todd's rage was excessive, but he thought that the best plan would be to try to laugh the thing over, and with a hideous affectation of mirth, he cried out—

"Good-by, Bill—good-by. Remember me to your father, and tell him all the joke."

"It wasn't a joke," said Bill White.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Todd. "Well—well, I forgive you, Bill—I forgive you. Mind you take my message to your aunt, and tell her I shall be at the chapel on Wednesday."

"Oh, go to the deuce with you," said Bill, as he put down the saucepan upon finding that his late fare was not disposed to carry his threat of shooting him into effect. "You are an old rogue, that you are, and I daresay you have done something that it would be well worth while to take you up for."

With this, Bill began vigorously to pull away against the stream, puffing and blowing, and looking as indignant as he possibly could. Todd turned with a sigh to the men at the little landing, and affecting to wipe a tear from his left eye, he said—

"You would not believe, gentlemen, that that boy could say such things to his poor old uncle, and yet you wouldn't believe if I were to tell you the pounds and pounds that boy has cost me and his poor aunt. He don't behave well to either of us; but we are as fond of him as possible. It's in our natures to love him, and we can't help it."

"Lor!" said one of the men.

"You looks tender-hearted," said another.

The others all laughed at this, and Todd thought it was as well to seem as if he thought that some very capital joke was going on, so he laughed too.

"I was thinking," he said, when the merriment had a little subsided, "I was thinking of going right on to Gravesend. What do you say to taking me now, a couple of you? There's the tide nicely with you all the way, and I am always a liberal enough paymaster."

"What will you give?" said one with a voice like a cracked trumpet with a bad cold.

"Why, name your price, and I shall not say no to it."

"What shall we take the gemman for, Bill?" said this man to another, who was smoking a short pipe.

"A rum 'un," was the reply of Bill.

"Don't be a *hass*. I didn't go for to ask you what sort of *indiwiddle* he was, but what we'd take him to Gravesend for."

"Oh, that's the caper, is it?"

"Yes it is, idiot."

"Well—fifteen bob and a tanner."

"Will that do, sir?" said the other to Todd, who thought that it would look bad to acquiesce too readily in the amount, so he said—

"I will give the fifteen shillings."

"Very good. We won't go to loggerheads about the tanner; so come along, sir, and we'll soon get you to Gravesend, with this tide a-running all the way there, as comfortably as it can, all of a purpose."

Todd was well enough pleased to find that these two men owned the longest and strongest-looking wherry that was at the landing-place. He ensconced himself snugly enough in the stern of the boat and they put aside their pipes, and soon pushed off into the middle of the stream.

"Once more," thought Todd, "once more I am on the road to escape; and all may yet be well."

The two men now set to work with the oars in earnest. They felt, that as they were paid by the job, the best way was to get it over as quickly as possible; and, aided by the tide, it was perfectly astonishing what progress they made down the river.

Todd every now and then cast a long and anxious glance behind him; and presently he saw a boat shooting along, by the aid of six rowers, at great speed, and evidently turning into the little landing-place from where he had just come. His eyesight was either sharpened by the morning light, or fancy deceived him, for he thought he saw the boy, Bill White, seated in the stern of the boat.

Todd was in an agony. He knew not whether to attract the attention of the two watermen to the large boat with all its rowers, so that he might get an opinion from them concerning it or not; and then again, he thought that at the moment, there would be a good chance of working upon the cupidity of the men, if any real danger should befall him of capture.

"I say, Bill," said one.

"Well, say it."

"There's one of the police officer's gone into the Old Stairs. There's something afloat this here morning."

"Ah! They are always at some manoeuvre or another. Pull away. It ain't no business of our'n."

Todd could almost have hugged the man for the sentiment he uttered; and how he longed to echo those two words, "pull away;" but he was afraid to do so, lest, by any seemingly undue anxiety just then for speed upon his part, he should provoke the idea that the police-boat was as interesting to him as it really was.

Poor, wretched, guilty Todd surely suffered a hundred times the pangs of death during his progress down the river; and now he sat in the stern of the boat, looking as pale as death itself.

"You don't seem very well," said one of the men.

"Oh, yes—yes, I am quite well, I thank you."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it; for you look just as if you had been buried a month, and then dug up again."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Todd,—what a hideous attempt at a laugh it was! —"that is very good."

"Oh, lor! do you laugh that way when you are at home? 'cos if you do, I should expect the roof to tumble in with fright, I should."

"How funny you are," said Todd. "Pull away."

He did venture to say, "pull away!" and the men did pull with right good-will, so that the landing-place, and the long police-boat that was at it, looked just like two specks by the river-side; and, indeed it would have been a long pull and a strong one to catch Todd's wherry.

The murderer breathed a little more freely.

"How far have we got to go now?" he said.

"Oh, a matter of nine miles yet."

"And how long will it take you?"

"About one hour and a quarter, with the tide running at such a pace as it is. There's some wind, too, and what there is, is all with us, so we cut along favourably. What are they doing away yonder, Bill?"

"Where?" said Bill.

"Right in our wake, there. Oh, they are getting up a sail. I'll be hanged if they ain't, and pulling away besides! Why, what a hurry they must be in, to be sure, to get down the river. I never knew them do that before."

Todd looked along the surface of the water, and he saw the police-boat coming along at such a rate, that the spray was tossed up in the air before her prow in millions of white particles.

A puff of smoke came from her side, and a slight sharp report rung upon the morning air. A musket or a pistol had been discharged on board of her.

"What's the meaning of that, Bill?"

"I can tell you," said Todd, sharply, before Bill had done moving his head from side to side, which was a habit of his preparatory to replying to any very intricate question. "I can tell you easily."

The Police-Galley Chasing Todd To Gravesend.

The Police-Galley Chasing Todd To Gravesend.

"What is it then?"

"You pull away, and I'll tell you. You see that boat with the sail and the six rowers there?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And you heard them fire a gun?"

"To be sure."

"Well, pull away. It's enough to make a cat laugh; but it was Mr. Anthony Strong that fired that gun."

"How very droll? But what did he do it for?"

"Well, pull away, and I'll tell you. You must know that Mr. Anthony Strong, who is in command of that police-boat, is my brother-in-law, and he laid a wager with me, that he would start from the pier at Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, at daybreak this morning, and get to Gravesend before me, if I started from Blackfriars, and did the best I possibly could to get on that money and men could do for me. I allowed that he was to take all his six rowers with him, and hoist his sail if he liked, and I was to take no more than two watermen at a time. When he saw me, he was to fire a gun, you see; and the wager is for twenty pounds and a dinner. I should like to win it, and so, if you can fairly beat him, with the start you have, which is above a mile—"

"It's above two," said Bill, "Water's deceiving."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it; and I was going to say, I would stand five guineas!"

"You will, old fellow?"

"I will; and to convince you of it, here they are, and I will place them in your hands at once; so now, I do hope that you will pull away like devils!"

"Won't we! If Mr. Anthony Strong, with all his sail and his six hands, catches us on this side of Gravesend, I'll give him leave to skin me and eat me at the dinner that he would win. No, no! if we don't know the currents, and the shortcuts of the river a little bit better than ever a captain of police-boat that ever lived, or that ever will live, why you may set me down for a frog or a Frenchman, which, I take it, are much of a muchness."

"They is," said the other.

Todd shouted with delight, and it was real now the wild laughter that shook his frame, for he began to think he was safe. The confident tone in which the waterman spoke, had quite convinced him that he could do what he said. With a perfect confidence in the power of his two watermen, he looked at the police wherry without any alarm, and the foam that it dashed up as it came bounding on, did not seem to fall coldly upon his breast, as it had seemed to do before.

"Two miles," he said. "That's a long start."

"In a stern chase," said Bill, "it's half of the blessed world to get over is them two miles."

"Yes, yes—exactly; and I shall beat Mr. Anthony Strong, I feel now. You see, my little nephew, Bill White, gave me the first start from Blackfriars; but I knew I could not depend upon him all the way, so I—There's another gun. Hal ha! Mr. Strong, it won't do."

"Well," said Bill, with a look of what he, no doubt, thought was great cleverness, "if I didn't know as this was a bit of fun between Mr. Anthony Strong and you, sir, I should have said that them guns was for us to lie-

to."

"That's just what he wants," cried Todd.

"Does he?"

"Yes. He thinks that he will frighten whoever is rowing into a dead stop, when they find a police-galley firing guns; but I think he is mistaken in this matter, my friends."

"Rather!" said Dick, as he bent his back to the oars, and pulled away like a giant.

How the boat shot through the water! and yet to Todd's apprehension, the police-galley gained upon him. Of course, he told himself that it must gain with its sail and six rowers; but the question was, how much it would gain in the seven or eight miles they had got to go? With what a feverish action Todd licked his lips.

CHAPTER CLXIV.
TODD GOES BACK ON LAND.

"Oh, quicker—quicker!" cried Todd.

"That would be difficult," said Bill. "But I rather think as we is a doing of it something out of the common way."

Bang! went another gun from the pursuing boat, and this time there certainly was the greatest possible hint given by the police-galley that it was in earnest, for a bullet struck the water not above a couple of boats' length from Todd's wherry.

"Well," said Bill, "that may be firing, but I'll be hanged if it is at all pleasant."

"Oh, heed it not," said Todd; "heed it not. They would have such a laugh at both me and you, if by any means they could frighten you into stopping, and so giving me up—no, no, I mean giving up the wager. What am I saying?"

"I tell you what it is," said Bill, "to my mind this is a very odd sort of wager, and if you have no sort of objection to it, sir, we will just pull to the next stairs, and put you ashore. If you don't like that, why, I rather think you must be content to lose your wager."

"You will desert me? Oh, no—no. Surely you will not, and cannot. You have but to name your price, and you shall have it."

"No. That won't do. You must land now."

Todd looked nervously along the bank of the river, and he saw a little miserable landing-place, towards which the men now began to urge the boat. He thought then that if he could get anything like a start of his pursuers on the shore, all might yet be well. "I could get across the country to Gravesend, and if once there, I might find some vessel to take me off."

"Pull to shore, then," he said; "I will take my chance. Pull to shore at once, as swiftly as you possibly can."

When the boat's head was turned towards the shore, it was pretty evident that the police-galley was much more intent upon getting to Todd than to Gravesend, for the rowers in it on the instant turned the boat's head in the same direction, and it became then, truly, a case of life and death to Todd.

Vigorously as the boatmen worked, the little wherry was quickly so close to the shore, that Todd saw he could land by a scramble through the water.

"There is your money," he cried, to the men; "and for what you have done, I thank you with all my heart. Good-by to you."

He sprang over the side of the boat, although by so doing he was up to his knees in the river; but that he heeded not, and in the course of half a minute he had scrambled to the shore, and going at a great rate up the little steps at the landing-place, he gained the road and began to run at great speed.

The two boatmen were not a little amazed at this proceeding, and Bill said,—

"I say, I rather think that this is another queer sort of a piece of work than a wager; but if we don't wish to get ourselves into trouble, we must stick to it tooth and nail, that that was what we believed it to be."

"Ay," said the other. "I believe you, we must, or else we shall get into limbo for our share of the affair, and no mistake. Here they come, hand over hand, and they don't look very well pleased, either."

The rowers in the police-galley had made such strenuous exertions to reach the landing-place quickly, that they were really not far behind the wherry that had conducted Todd there, and the first thing that was done was to lay hold of the wherry with a boat-hook, and drag it alongside of them. Then the officer in command of the police-boat called out in a voice hoarse with rage—

"What do you mean, you infernal rascals, by running off in this way, when you know by our flag that we were the police? But you will have leisure to repent of it in jail. Clap handcuffs upon them both, my men."

"Why, what have we done?" said Bill. "You will win your wager yet, I should say, if you look sharp about it."

"Wager? What wager? What do you mean?"

"Why, the gentleman told us that he had a wager with you about who was to get to Gravesend first, and he was to take what means he could, and you were to cut along in the galley, and there was to be quite a grand dinner on the strength of it."

"Oh, nonsense—nonsense."

"Well, that's what he told me, and that's why we pulled away so for; but if so be as it ain't, we are sorry enough, for why should we get into trouble about a man we never saw before, and ain't likely to see again?"

"This excuse won't serve you."

"But who is he, and what's he done?"

"For all we know to the contrary, he is the infamous Todd, the murderer."

"What? The fellow that made the people into pies! Oh, if we had only had half a quarter of an idea of that! But, hold—I saw the way he went. It was along that chalky bit of road. If you really want to nab him, why do you waste time here talking to us? Come on shore, and I will go with you, and we will soon have him now, if that will do any good."

The officer saw at once that this was the only mode of proceeding that promised him the least chance of capturing the fugitive, whether he were Todd or not; for, after all, the persons in the police-galley had nothing like positive evidence that it was Todd of whom they were in pursuit. A couple of officers were left in the charge of the boats, and the whole of the remainder of them landed along with Bill, and ran up the steps to the road along which Todd had been seen to run.

They did not know, however, what a wily, cunning personage they had to deal with.

When Todd found himself in such comparatively close quarters with the enemy, he felt perfectly sure that to continue scampering along the high road was not the most likely way to escape. If he were to succeed in eluding his foes, he felt that it must be by *finesse*, and not by speed.

With this idea, he did not go along the road for a greater distance than sufficed to bring him to a hedge, across which he then instantly made his way, and then turning, he crouched down and crept back towards the other direction. On the side of the hedge where he was now, there was not a very pleasant kind of field-drain, but Todd's circumstances did not permit of his being very particular, and getting right down into the drain, he crept along, stooping so low that only a portion of his head and back were visible above it.

This was certainly the most likely way to baffle his pursuers, who were not very likely to think that he had so rapidly doubled upon them. Knowing now that his destination was Gravesend, they would in all probability run along the road after him, or if they took to the fields it would still be with the idea that he was ahead of them.

After proceeding for some distance, Todd thought it would be just as well if he were to reconnoitre the foe a little, and, accordingly, he raised his head sufficiently to enable him just to peep through the hedge, and when he did so, he found that he was on sufficiently high ground to

command a view of the road, and the landing-place, and the river. To his immense consternation, he saw the police advancing rapidly towards him.

"Lost! lost!" said Todd, as he sunk down into the ditch, with a conviction that he was all but taken. He felt in his pocket for a pistol, and getting one out, he placed it to his ear, and there held it, for he had made up his mind now, to shoot himself, rather than be dragged back to prison, from where another escape would be quite out of the question.

"They shall not take me. I will die—I will die," he murmured; and then he concentrated all his attention to the act of listening to the proceedings of the police.

They came on in a straggling kind of way from the landing-place, and the principal officer cried out—

"You, Jenkins, get up the first tree you come to, and take a long look about you. The country is flat enough, and he will find it no easy matter to hide from us, I should say."

"Oh, it's all right, sir," said another voice. "We have him as safe as if he were lying at the bottom of our boat with the darbies on him; and as far as I can judge of him, sir, I should say it is Todd."

"I hope so," said the officer. "It will not be a bad morning's work for you all, my lads, if it is."

Not very far off from where Todd lay concealed in the ditch, only, fortunately for him, on the other side of the road, was a stunted tree, rising about twenty feet from the barren soil, and upon this the man, who was named Jenkins, made his way carefully, and took a long look all round him, and particularly in advance.

"Do you see him?" said the officer commanding the party.

"No, sir, I don't."

"Then he is hiding somewhere, and the only plan is to go right on, and hunt him up if he is among the hedges. Come on, now, at once. We must have him. He cannot possibly escape us now."

Todd, upon this, again gave himself up for lost; but, as luck would have it, although two of the men got over the hedge, and began looking about, and dashing their cutlasses into the hedge, the officer called to them—

"Oh, he never came so far up the road. You don't suppose he was goose enough to come back again? If he is hiding, it will be more likely by the time he lost breath, I should say. Come now; I saw him myself get past yonder little chestnut trees, and the white cottage."

Upon this the men ran on, and Todd felt, for the present, at all events, he was saved.

"The idiots!" said Todd, as he looked up and listened. "The idiots!—So they think that I am as far gone in stupidity as they are, and that I have nothing to do, but to run on until they, younger and more fleet of foot, overtake me."

He crawled out of the ditch, and a most pitiable figure he was when he did so. In his anxiety to hide himself completely, he had, in fact, lain himself down comfortably enough, as far as regarded the softness of the place, right at the bottom of the ditch, and had only, in the midst of a thick growth of rank weeds, kept his face above the water.

"This is horrible," he said; "and they will be back soon, too. What on earth am I to do?"

He heard a loud shout at this moment, and he raised his head sufficiently to see along the road to observe the actions of the officers. He found that they had paused, and were talking to a man on horseback, who was pointing in the very direction where he (Todd) stood, or rather crouched. The idea that this man had from some eminence, he being mounted, too, seen him (Todd) hide in the ditch, at once crossed his mind, and from that moment he felt that he was not in the safety that he had fondly hoped he was.

To remain where he was, with such an idea prevailing in his mind, would have been madness and, accordingly, crawling down close to the hedge, he ran along, splashing, like some gigantic water-fowl, in the ditch, until he came to a thickly-planted fence, at right angles with the hedge that bordered the road. There he was forced to come to a stand-still.

The fence was composed of the common privet, so that there would have been neither difficulty nor danger in forcing his way through it; but what he might encounter upon the other side was a subject of consideration well worth his attention.

Through the interstices of the foliage he could see that there was a pretty and well-kept mixed garden on the other side. Roses and other flowers grew in quite loving companionship with all kinds of culinary vegetables, and the little plot of ground was well shadowed by some half-dozen fruit trees. A part of the ground was made into a kind of lawn, and upon that lawn was a child about one year old crawling about, and amusing itself by making weak efforts to pull up the grass.

While Todd was observing these things, a woman came out of a little white-washed cottage that was at the farther end of the garden, with some clothes to hang up to dry. The woman spoke to the child, and from the tone in which she did so, it was quite evident she was the mother of it.

Todd waited until she had hung the clothes up that she had brought out into the garden, and then when she went into the house for more, he burst his way through the hedge, and with a resolution and firmness that nothing but the exigencies of his situation could possibly have endowed him with, he took the child up in his arms and walked slowly across the lawn towards the cottage.

The woman, with another heap of wet clothes in her arms, met him, and uttered a loud scream.

"Peace," said Todd. "Peace, I say. There is no danger unless you make some. Listen to me, and I will tell you how you can do a service to me, and spare your child."

"Help! help! Murder! Thieves!" cried the woman.

Todd took one of his pistols from his pocket, and held it to the head of the child.

"Another word," he said, "and I fire!"

Todd Resorts To A Frightful Stratagem With A Mother And Child.

Todd Resorts To A Frightful Stratagem With A Mother And Child.

The woman fell upon her knees, and holding up her hands in the attitude of prayer, she said—

"Oh, have mercy! Kill me, if you must take a life, but spare the child!"

"The child's life," said Todd, "is in your own hands. Why do you seek to destroy me?"

"I do not—I do not, indeed."

"Then, peace, and do not cry out for help. Do not shout that dreadful word 'Murder!' for that will destroy me. I am hunted by my fellow-men. I am a poor proscribed wretch, and all I ask of you is that you will not betray me."

"You will spare my child?"

"I will. Why should I harm the little innocent? I was once myself a little child, and considered to be rather a beauty."

As Todd said this, he made one of his most hideous faces, so that the woman cried out with terror, and tried to snatch the child from him, but he held it with a firm grasp.

CHAPTER CLXV.
TODD HIDES IN A CUPBOARD.

"It is in vain," said Todd; "my safety is wound up now with the safety of this little one. If you would save it, you will save me."

"Oh, no, no. Why should it be so? I cannot save you."

"You can, I think. At all events, I will be satisfied if you make the effort to do so. I tell you I am pursued by the officers of the law. It does not matter to you what I am, or who I am, or what crime it is that they lay to my charge; your child's life is as dear to you in any case. Hide me in the cottage, and deny my being seen here, and the child shall live. Betray me, and as sure as the sun gives light, it dies."

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"But, I say, yes. Your course is easy. It is all but certain that my prosecutors will come to this cottage, as it is the only habitation on the route that I have taken. They will ask you if you have seen such a man as I am, and they will tell you that you may earn a large reward by giving such information as may deliver me into the hands of justice; but what reward—what sum of money would pay you for your child's life?"

"Oh, not all the world's worth!"

"So I thought; and so you will deny seeing me, or knowing ought of me, for your child's sake? Is it agreed?"

"It is—it is! God knows who you are, or what you have done that the hands of your fellow creatures should be raised against you; but I will not betray you. You may depend upon my word. If you are found in this

place, it shall not be by any information of mine."

"Can you hide me?"

"I will try to do so. Come into the cottage. Ah! what noise is that? I hear the tread of feet, and the shouts of men!"

Todd paused to listen. He shook for a moment or two; and then, with a bitter tone, he said—

"My pursuers come! They begin to suspect the trick that I have played them!—they now know—or think they know, that I have turned upon my route. They come—they come!"

"Oh, give me the child! I swear to you that I will hide you to the utmost of my means; but give me the child!"

"Not yet."

The woman looked at him in an agony of tears.

"Listen to me," she said. "If they discover you it will not be my fault, nor the fault of this little innocent—you feel that! Ah! then tell me upon what principle of justice can you take its life?"

"I will be just," said Todd. "All I ask of you is, to hide me to the best of your ability, and to keep secret the fact of my presence here. If, after you have done all that, you still find that I am taken, it will be no fault of yours. I do not ask impossibilities of any one, nor do I threaten punishment against you for not performing improbable feats. Come in—come in at once! They come—they come! Do you not hear them now?"

It was quite evident now that a number of persons were approaching, and beating the bushes as they came on. The tread of a horse's feet, too, upon the road convinced Todd that among his foes, now, was the mounted man whom he had seen, and whom he thought he saw point to him as he lay crouching down behind the hedge, half hidden in the ditch.

With the little child still in his arms, he rushed into the cottage, and the woman followed him, wringing her hands with terror. And yet Todd was gentle with the child. He knew that from the mother he had everything

to hope, and everything to dread, and he did not wish to drive her to despair by any display of harshness to the little one.

"This way," she cried, "this way," as she led the way into an inner-room. "There is a cupboard here in which you can conceal yourself. If they do not search the house, they will not find you, and I will do all that I can to prevent them."

"That will do," said Todd; "but, remember, I will have the child near me, so that upon the least symptom of treachery from you, I can put it to death; and I shall not, under any circumstances, at all scruple so to do. Where is this cupboard that you speak of?"

"It is here—it is here!"

"Ah! that will do." Todd now cast his eyes around the room, and perceived a little cot, that, at night, was devoted to the slumbers of the child. "Take that," he said, pointing to it, "and place it against the door of the cupboard with the child in it. It will seem then not likely that I am hidden here."

"I will do so."

Todd did not feel any apprehension of treachery from the mother of the child. He was not slow to perceive that every other feeling was in her breast weak in comparison with the all-absorbing one of love for the infant; and so he calculated that, rather than run the shadow of a risk of injury to it, she would do all that he required. The cupboard was a deep one; but it was not high enough for Todd quite to stand upright in. That, however, was a trifling inconvenience, and he got into it at once. The child's cot was placed against the door; and the young mother, with a thousand fears tugging at her heart, pretended to busy herself about her household affairs.

The little interval that now ensued, before Todd's pursuers reached the spot, was certainly to him rather a fearful one; and he felt that his fate hung upon the proceedings of the next few moments. He called to the woman in an earnest tone—

"Courage—courage—all will be well."

"Oh, peace—peace!" she said. "They come!"

Todd quite held his breath now in the painful effort that he made to listen, so that not the slightest sound that might be indicative of the approach of his enemies might escape him; and he gave such a start, that he nearly threw open the cupboard-door, and upset the cot, as he heard a hoarse man's voice suddenly call out from the garden—

"Hilloa!—House here—house—Hilloa!"

"Now—now," he gasped. "Now I live or die! Upon the next few moments hangs my fate!"

The cold dew of intense fear stood upon his brow, and his sense of hearing appeared to be getting preternaturally acute. Not a word that was said escaped him, although it was right away in the garden that this, to him, fearfully interesting conversation took place.

"What is the matter?" he heard the woman say, and then the rough voice replied to her—

"We are the police, my good woman, and we are in search of a man who is hidden somewhere about this neighbourhood. Has any one come into your place, or have you seen a tall man pass the cottage?"

"No," said the woman.

Todd breathed a little more freely.

"It's very odd," said another voice; "for he must be about this spot, that is quite clear, as he was dodging about the field at the back of here, and hiding in the hedge. We must have passed him."

"Well, he can't get away," said a third; "but after all, he may be lying down somewhere in the garden, for all we know to the contrary."

"I don't think it," said the woman.

At this moment, the child began to cry violently.

"Oh, confound you for a brat!" said Todd, "I wish it was only safe to throttle you."

"Is that your child?" said one of the officers.

"Oh, yes—yes," said the young mother, and hastening into the cottage, she placed a chair by the side of the cot, and began to rock it to and fro, singing while she did so, to lull the child to sleep.

"She will keep her word," thought Todd. "I feel confident that she will keep her word, now, with me."

"You look all round the garden, while I take a peep about the house," said the principal officer.

"Oh, I am lost!" moaned Todd. "I am surely lost now! If the house should be searched well, so obvious a place of concealment as a cupboard will not escape them. All is lost now, indeed."

He almost gave up all thought, now, of keeping life or liberty, and he waited only for the fatal moment when the officers should approach and place their hands upon that cupboard door to open it. The child still cried, and the mother sang to it.

"'Sleep, sleep, little baby—
Oh, sleep all the day;
The sunshine is hiding,
The birds fly away.
Away, away—far away.
The sunshine is hiding,
The birds fly away—'"

"Hilloa! What cupboard is that behind the child's cot?"

"'And when they return
You may open your eyes.'

"Oh, it's where we keep our best crockery. Don't disturb the child—I do think it is sickening with the measles.

"'And see how the sunset

Is gilding the skies,
Away, away—far away.
And see how the sunset
Is gilding the skies.'

"Have you found him in the garden? I shall be almost out of my wits, now, till my husband comes home. Who is it that you are looking for, and pray what has he done? He would need to be clever, indeed, to come in here without my knowing it; and as for the garden, why, I was hanging out the clothes there for the last half hour, I tell you."

"Oh, he's not here," said the officer. "It would be no bad thing, marm, for any one who could lend a helping hand to find him."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes. You have heard of Todd, the murderer? Well, that's the man we are after, and we have every reason to think that he is somewhere about here, and it is a large reward that is offered for him, I can tell you."

"Ah! I should like to get it."

"Not a doubt of it. Good-day, marm. If you should see any suspicious-looking fellow about the fields, just give notice of it in some sort of a way, if you can, for you may depend upon it, it will be Todd."

"Oh, yes, I will. How very fractious this little thing is to-day, to be sure. I hardly ever knew it to be so before."

"Ah, well, they will be so, at times. But I'm off. Mind, now, you get the reward if you see anything of Todd."

"Oh, yes. Trust me for that."

The man left the room. What a reprieve from death that was for Todd! He thought that during all the perils that he had passed through, he had surely never been quite so near to destruction as then; and when he found that he was saved, temporarily, he could hardly hold himself up in the cupboard, and a sensation of faintness came over him.

It was not safe for him yet, by any means, to think of emerging from his place of concealment. Indeed, he felt that the young mother would be the best judge upon that hand, so he did not stir nor speak, and at last he heard the cot with the now sleeping child in it, being gently moved from before the cupboard-door. Then it was opened, and Todd, with his face pale and haggard, stepped out into the room.

The young woman only pointed to the door of the little apartment steadily and significantly.

"What do you mean?" said Todd.

"Go," she said. "I have done that which you require of me. Now go."

"To death?"

"No. Your enemies are no longer here. At the sacrifice of truth and of feeling I saved you. It was all you asked of me, and now I tell you to go, and no longer pollute this place by your presence. I know who and what you are, now. You are Sweeney Todd, the murderer."

"Well, and if I am, what then?"

"Nothing—nothing! I ask nothing of you, but that you should leave this house; I have kept my word. I will let the memory of this hour's work sink deeply into my heart, and there remain untold to any one. Not even to my husband will I breathe it. I only ask you to go."

"I am going—I am going."

Todd felt awed by her manner. He cowered before the look that, full of horror, she bent upon him, and he crept towards the cottage door. But the dread that some of his enemies might be lurking about the spot detained him.

"Tell me," he said, "oh! tell me truly—are they gone?"

"Wait," she said, "and I will see again."

She took the child in her arms, and left the cottage. Todd found, now that the child was no longer in his power as a kind of hostage for the faith of the mother, that he had trusted her too far; but it was too late,

now, for him to recede from the position in which he had placed himself, and with all his terror, he had no resource but to calmly—calmly as he could—wait her return.

She came back again in a few moments.

"You can go with safety. They are all away."

"I will trust you, and take your word for it," said Todd. "I thank you for the service you have rendered to me, and I am not ungrateful. Accept of this in remembrance of me, and of this day's adventure."

He took from his pocket a splendid gold watch and laid it upon the table, in the outer room, but with vehemence, the woman cried—

"No—no! Take it up, I will not have it. Take it up, or even now I will dare everything and call for help. I will take nothing from your blood-stained hands. Take up the watch, or I will destroy it."

"As you please," said Todd, as he placed the watch in his pocket again. "I wish not to force it upon you. I am gone."

He went out into the little garden, but he looked about him very nervously indeed, before he trusted himself to walk towards the little white gate that opened upon the high road. Each moment, however, that passed without any one springing upon and attacking him, was a moment of confidence gained. He carried a pistol in his hand, and keeping his eyes keenly around him, he reached the road.

"All is safe," he said. "I do, indeed, think she is right, and that they have given up the chase for me. She has not deceived me, and I may yet escape."

He kept close to the road-side, so that he was very much covered by the hedge, and then, at as fast a pace as he thought he could keep up for any length of time, he ran on.

He had not gone far when he heard the sound of wheels behind him, and he got over a hedge and hid behind it until he could see what sort of vehicle it was that approached. It turned out to be a cart driven by a

couple of countrymen, who were talking upon their own affairs in rather loud tones; as they came on, Todd listened intently, and was satisfied that his supposed escape into that neighbourhood was not the subject of their discourse.

CHAPTER CLXVI.
THE SHIP BOUND FOR HAVRE TAKES A PASSENGER.

"Hilloa!" cried Todd, as he came out into the middle of the road and confronted the cart with the two men in it. "Hilloa! Which way are you going?"

"One would think you might see that," said one of the men, "by the way the horse's nose points."

"What do you want?" said the other, rather sharply.

"Not to intrude upon you at all, if you don't like it," replied Todd; "but I am going to Gravesend, and if you will help me on a part of the way, I will pay you well for it. I thought it would be good for my constitution to walk, but I find I am older than I thought I was."

"What will you give?" said one of the men, in a dubious tone of voice.

"Name your price," said Todd, "and I will give it. I know you will not be unreasonable with me."

"Will you give half a guinea?" said the other.

"Yes, for I am foot-weary."

"Jump up, then, and we will soon take you to Gravesend. You ain't many miles off from it now by the near cuts that we know. Come on."

Todd managed to scramble into the cart, and the man who was driving gave the horse an impulse forward, and away they went at a good pace.

Todd began to feel a little easier in his mind now, for the quick motion of the cart in the direction that he wished to go in was most satisfactory to him. He felt quite delighted in a little time, when one of the men pointing ahead, cried out—

"There's the first houses in Gravesend, if you really want to go there."

"Really," said Todd. "Indeed I do. Can you tell me what vessels are off the Port?"

"Perhaps we can, and perhaps we can't, old fellow; but we will have some talk about that soon. Ha! ha!"

There was something so peculiar in the laugh of the man, that Todd began to wonder into what hands he had fallen. They, every now and then, too, gave to each other a very significant look, as though there was some secret between them which they would not converse of before him. All this began to make Todd very uneasy, indeed, and the little amount of felicitation which he had been giving to himself so short a time before, rapidly subsided.

"Am I a prisoner?"

These were the words that occurred to him, but he had no ready means of answering the question. All he could do was to keep upon his guard, and, to tell the truth, well armed and desperate as he was, Todd was no very despicable match for any two men.

Suddenly the man who was driving turned the horse's head down a deep declivity that led towards the river, to the right of the road.

The country they were in was all of chalk, and this narrow road, or rather lane, at right angles with the high road, was evidently a cutting through the chalk foundation for the sake of a ready passage from the side of the Thames to the high road.

A more picturesque spot could not well have been conceived. The small amount of loam upon the surface of the chalk, bore a brilliant vegetation; and upon the tall rugged sides of the deep cutting, wherever a small portion of earth had lodged, tall weeds had grown up, while on

each side of the lane, close to the base of the chalky heights, there was a mass of weeds and tall creeping plants, and here and there a young tree, which lent a beautifully verdant aspect to the place.

Every step that the horse now went, conducted the cart and its occupants deeper and deeper into the cutting, until, at last, the sky overhead looked only like a thin streak of light, and the gloom of a premature twilight was about the place.

"Halt!" cried the man who was not driving, and the horse was stopped in the gloomiest portion of the lane. Todd turned ghastly pale, and kept his hand plunged in his breast upon one of his pistols.

"What have you come down here for?" he said. "Why do you come to a stop in such a place as this?"

"We will soon let you know," said the man who had not been driving, knitting his brows. "No doubt, you thought you had nailed us nicely, my fine fellow."

"Nailed you?"

"Yes. You need not put on such an innocent look, I can tell you. We are pretty good judges in these matters, and it's quite sufficient for me to tell you that we know you."

"Know me?"

"Yes, to be sure. Did you think we were taken in by any such nonsense as your being tired, and so on?—No. We know you, I say, and this hour is your last. You have placed yourself in our power, and we will take good care of you now. There is a well in this lane which keeps secrets capitally."

Todd drew his pistol, and held it against the breast of this man.

"Attempt any violence," he said, "and I fire!"

"Oh, indeed! You are well prepared, are you? I must say that, for an exciseman, you are a bold fellow."

"A what?"

"An exciseman. You know well you have been on the look-out for us for the last week; so it is of no use denying it. You thought you nabbed us, when you got into our cart."

Todd's Adventure With The Smugglers.

Todd's Adventure With The Smugglers.

Todd lowered his pistol.

"This is a foolish enough mistake," he said, "I am no more an exciseman than I am Commander-in-chief of the forces. What could have put such a thing into your heads?"

"Say you so?" cried the other. "But how will you make us believe it? That's the question."

"Well," said Todd, putting on a very candid look, "I don't know how a man is to set about proving that he is not an exciseman. I only know that I am not. The real truth is, that I am in debt, and being pressed by my creditors, have thought proper to get out of their way; and so I want to make the best of my way to Gravesend, that is all. I fancy, by your anger at the idea of my being an exciseman, that you are smugglers; and if so, I can only say that, with all my heart, you may go on smuggling with the greatest success until the day of judgment, before I would interfere with you in the matter."

"Dare we believe him?" said one of the men to the other.

"I hardly know," replied the other; "and yet it would be rather a sad thing to take a man's life, when it might turn out that he was not what we took him for."

"How on earth am I to convince you?" said Todd.

"Where do you want to go to?"

"I want to get on board some vessel, I don't care what, so that it is bound to some continental port. My object, I tell you, is to get away, and that is all."

"Would the Port of Havre in France suit you?"

"Perfectly well."

The two men now whispered together for a few moments, and then, one of them, turning to Todd, said:—

"The fact is that we are somewhat connected with a vessel bound for Havre, and it will sail to-night. If you are really what you pretend, and truly want to leave England, you can come with us, and we will give you a passage; but we expect to be paid for it."

"Nothing can be more reasonable," said Todd; "I will pay you a liberal price, and as I wish to go on board as soon as I can, you may feel yourself perfectly easy regarding your suspicions of my being an exciseman, by keeping me in your company, and placing me on board your own vessel as quickly as you can."

"Hang it, that's fair enough," cried one of them. "Come on, then, and let us get to the Lively William as soon as we can. It's rather a mercy we did not knock you on the head, though, at once."

"I am very much obliged," said Todd.

"Oh, don't mention it. I always myself, mind, defer anything of that sort till the last. It's a very rough and ugly way of settling matters, at the best; but when you can't reasonably, you know, do anything else, why, you must, and there's an end of it."

"Exactly," said Todd. "I perceive that you are quite a philosopher in such transactions. So now that we have a better understanding together, the sooner we get on board this Lively William you talk of, the better."

"Not a doubt of that. Come up."

The horse's head was turned up the lane again, and in a very few moments the high road was gained, and they went on at a rapid trot for Gravesend. The town was soon reached—that town what is all dirt in winter, and chalk-dust in summer—and the two men, by the manner in which they kept their eyes upon Todd while they passed several throngs of people, showed that it was a very difficult thing indeed to get rid of suspicion when once it took possession of them.

After, however, getting right through the town, and finding that Todd did not attempt to give the least alarm, but, on the contrary, shrunk from observation as much as he could, their confidence in him was complete, and they really believed him to be what he pretended to be.

Whether, if those men had really known who and what he was, they would have altered their views with regard to him, is a matter difficult to give an opinion upon; but as it was, they had no scruples whatever, provided he would pay them a good price for his passage to Havre.

"Now," said one of them, "we know that you have not deceived us, and that it is all right, we don't mind telling you that we are the captain and owner of the Lively William, and that we are in the regular smuggling trade, between the French Ports and this country. We don't make a bad thing of it, one way and another."

"I am glad to hear it," said Todd.

"Ah, you view this sort of thing in a christian-like spirit, we see; and if you have no objection to a drop of as pure champagne brandy as ever you tasted, provided you have tasted some of the best, you can have a drop."

"I should like it much," said Todd.

"Just look out ahead, then, and fix your eyes on that old tree yonder, while we get it."

Todd did not care to know what mode of hiding spirits the two men had in their cart; so he did as they required of him, and fixed his eyes upon the old tree. After he had kept his eyes upon that object for some few

minutes, they called out to him—

"All's right."

Todd looked round, and found one of the men with a small bladder of spirits, and a little horn drinking-cup.

"Here," he said, "you can give us your opinion of this."

Todd tossed off the contents of the cup.

"Excellent!" he cried. "Excellent! That, indeed, is brandy. I do not think that such is to be got in London."

"Scarcely," said the man, as he helped himself, and then handed the bladder and the cup to his companion; "but we are going to put up our horse and cart now, and if you will be so good as to look at the old tree again, we will send the brandy away."

"Certainly," said Todd.

The brandy was soon, in some mysterious manner, disposed of, and then the cart was stopped at the door of a little country-looking inn, the landlord of which seemed to have a perfect understanding with the two men belonging to the Lively William.

"Now," said one of them to Todd, "as you have no objection to go on board at once, we will put you there."

"Objection?" cried Todd. "My objection is to remain on land. I beg that you will let me feel that I am on the deck of your vessel, as quickly as possible."

"That will do. This way."

They led him down a narrow lane with tall hedges upon each side, and then across a straggling mangy-looking field or two, such as are to be found on the banks of the Thames, and on the northern coasts of some portions of England, the Isle of Wight in particular, and then they came at once to the bank of the river.

A boatman hailed them, and upon their making signs to him that his services were required, he pulled in to the shore; and Todd, with his two new friends, were in a few moments going through the water to the vessel.

The Lively William did not look particularly lively. It was a slatternly-looking craft, and its black, dingy hull presented anything but an inviting appearance. The genius of dirt and neglect seemed to have taken possession of the vessel, and the nearer Todd got to it, the less he liked it; but still it was a means of his escaping, and had it been ten times a more uncomfortable-looking abode than it was, he would have gladly gone on board it.

"Here we are!" cried one of the men.

The boat touched the side of the ship, and in another moment, Todd was upon her deck.

CHAPTER CLXVII.
TODD MEETS WITH A LITTLE ROUGH WEATHER IN THE CHANNEL.

Todd almost thought that he was saved, when he felt himself fairly upon the deck of the Lively William. It seemed to him such a miracle to get so far, that his faith in completely getting the better of his enemies increased wonderfully.

"Oh, this is a relief," he said. "This is, indeed, a vast relief."

"What do you mean?" said one of the men of the cart to him, as he eyed him keenly.

Todd was very anxious not to excite any suspicion that he was other than what he had represented himself to be; so he answered quickly—

"I mean that it is a relief to get out of the small boat into the ship. Ever so little a distance in a boat disagrees with me."

"Oh, that's it, is it?"

"Yes; and if you have no particular objection, I will go below at once. I daresay the cabin accommodation is very good on board the Lively William."

"Oh, quite wonderful!" said the captain. "If you will come with me Mr.—a—a—what's your name?"

"Wilkins," said Todd.

"Oh, Mr. Wilkins. Well, if you will come with me, I shall have the very great pleasure of showing you what a capital berth we can give you."

"Thank you," said Todd, and then, rather timidly, for the staircase down which the captain dived seemed to Todd better adapted for poultry than for human beings, he carefully followed his new friend.

The cabin of the Lively William was a woful place. Any industrious house-wife would have sneered at it as a linen-cupboard; and if it had been mentioned as a store-room in any establishment of pretentions, it would have excited universal reprobation. It had a roof which nobbed Todd's head if he attempted to stand upright; and the walls sloped to the shape of the sides of the Lively William. The window was a square hole, with a sliding shutter; and the furniture would have made the dingiest broker's shop in London blush to own it.

"This is the state cabin," said the captain.

"Really?" said Todd.

"Why, don't you see it is by its size and looks? You won't often see in a craft of this size a handsomer cabin than that of the Lively William."

"I dare say not," said Todd. "It will do very well for me, my friend. When a man is travelling, he must not be very particular, as it is soon over."

"That true; but now I want to say something to you, if you please, that's rather particular. It's quite clear to me and my mate, that you want to get out of England as quickly as possible. What you have done, or what you haven't is not much matter to us, except, so far as that, we daresay you have swindled the public to a tolerable tune. We don't mean to take you for nothing."

"Nor do I wish you," said Todd. "Nothing can possibly be further from my thoughts."

"Very good; then, in a word, we don't intend to do the thing unhandsome; and you shall have all the capital accommodation that the Lively William can give you to the Port of Havre for twenty pounds."

"Twenty pounds?"

"Yes. If you think it is too much, you may go on shore again, and there is no harm done, you know."

"Oh, no—no. That is, I cannot help thinking it is a large price; and if I were to say I thought otherwise, you would not believe me; but as I really wish to go, and you say you will not take less, I must give it."

"Very good. That's settled, then. We shall be off at ebb-tide, and I only hope we shall have good luck, for if we do, we ought to make Havre, at all events, this time to-morrow."

"I hope we shall."

"Keep up your heart, and make yourself comfortable. Here's lots of the most amusing books on this shelf. Let me see. Here is the 'Navy List' for about ten years ago, and here's a 'Ready-reckoner,' and here is 'The Exciseman's Vade Mecum,' and here is a 'Chart of the Soundings of Baffin's Bay,' so you can't say you are out of books."

"Oh, how kind," said Todd.

"And you can order whatever you like to eat and drink, provided you don't think of anything but boiled beef, biscuits, and brandy."

"Oh, I shall do well enough. Rest is now what I want, and a quick voyage."

"Very good," said the captain. "You will not be at all interrupted here, so you can lie down in this magnificent berth."

"What, on that shelf?"

"Shelf? Do you call the state berth of the 'Lively William,' a shelf!"

"Well—well, I dare say it is very comfortable, though the roof, I see, is only eight inches or so from one's nose. I am very much obliged. Oh, very!"

The captain now left Todd to himself and to his own thoughts, and as he really felt fatigued, he got into the state berth of the Lively William, which, to tell the truth, would have been very comfortable if it had only

been a little wider and a little longer, and the roof higher, and not quite so damp and hard as it was.

But, after all, what where all these little disagreeables, provided he, Todd, fairly escaped? If he once set his foot upon the shores of France, he felt that, with the great continent before him, he should be free, and he did not doubt for a moment getting in any capital a ready enough market among the Jews for the watches and jewellery that he had about him.

The ship as the tide washed slowly by it, moved to and fro with a sluggish motion that rocked Todd to sleep, and he dropped off from a perception of the world and all its cares.

How long he slept he knew not, but when he awoke all was darkness around him, and the first attempt he made to move brought his head into violent contact with the partition of his berth.

Then Todd felt that the ship was tossing upon the water, and he could hear the dash and ripple of the sea pass her sides, while every now and then a loud splash against the closed shutter of the cabin-window warned him that that sea was not in one of its quietest moods.

"We are off!" cried Todd, in the exultation of his spirits at that fact. "We are off, and I am all but free."

He attempted to get out of the berth, and he was materially assisted by a roll of the sea that sent him to the other side of the cabin, accompanied by a couple of stools and several articles that happened to be lying loose upon the floor.

"Murder!" cried Todd.

"Hilloa!" cried a gruff voice from the companion-way. "Hilloa! What now?"

"Oh, nothing," said Todd. "Nothing. Where are we now? Oh, dear, what a thing it is to live in a cupboard that won't stand still."

The gleam of a lantern flashed in Todd's eyes, and the captain came below with it swinging in his hand. He steadied himself against the table, which was firmly screwed to the floor, and hung the lantern to a short chain dependent from the cabin-roof.

"There," said the captain. "The chandelier is alight now, and you will be able to see about you. Hilloa! Where are you now?"

"Why, I rather think I fell off the shelf," said Todd. "I beg your pardon, the state berth, I mean."

"Then you had better turn in again, for we shall have, I think, a squally sort of night rather. There are symptoms of a sou wester, and if so, you will know a little of what weather is in the Channel."

"Where are we now?" said Todd, mournfully.

"About fifteen miles off the North Foreland, so we are tolerably quiet just yet; but when we turn the head of the land, it's likely enough we may find out what the wind means to say to us."

While the captain spoke, he tugged on a complete suit of waterproof apparel, that seemed as thick and inflexible as so much armour covered with tar, and then up he went upon deck again, leaving Todd to the society of his own reflections and the chandelier.

The Lively William was going on just then with a flowing sheet, so that she was carrying a tolerably even keel, and Todd was able to get up and reach his berth; but at the moment that he laid hold of the side of it to clamber in, the ship was tacked, and away went Todd to the opposite side of the state-cabin with the rug in his grasp that did duty as a counterpane in the berth.

"This will kill me," he groaned. "Oh, this will kill me. But yet—yet I am escaping, and that is something. There will be a storm, but all ships are not lost that encounter storms."

Todd made up his mind to remain where he was, jammed up against the cabin partition, until the ship should right itself sufficiently for him to make another effort to reach his berth.

After a few minutes he thought he would make the attempt.

"Now," he said. "Now, surely, I can do it. I will try. How the wind howls, to be sure, and how the waves dash against the ship's sides, as though they would stave in her timbers; but all is well, no doubt. I will try again."

Very cautiously now Todd crept to his berth, and this time the winds and the waves were kind enough only to move the ship so that he knocked his head right and left a little, and managed then to scramble on to the little inconvenient shelf, with its damp mattress that served for a bed.

"Ah," said Todd, "and there are people who might, if they liked, stay on land all their lives, and yet they pretend to prefer the sea. There's no accounting for tastes."

By dint of jerking it a little from under him, Todd propped the mattress against the outer edge of the berth; so that provided the vessel did lurch in that direction, it was not so likely to tumble him out, and there he lay listening to the winds and the waves.

"A storm in the Channel!" he muttered. "From what that beast of a captain said, it appears we are to have one. Well, well, I have weathered many a storm on land, and now I must put up with one at sea."

At this moment, there was a tremendous bustle upon deck, and some orders were issued that were quite unintelligible to Todd. There was, however, a great flapping of canvas, and a rattling of chains.

The Lively William was weathering the South Foreland, and just going to do battle with half a gale of wind in the Channel.

Up to this point, Todd had, with something approaching to resignation, put up with the disagreeables about him; and upon the principle of the song which states that—

> "When a man travels, he mustn't look queer,
> If he meets a few rubs that he does not meet here,"

he regarded his position with philosophy; but now there came over him a dreadful sensation. A cold clammy dew burst out upon his face—all strength fled from his limbs, and with a deep groan, Todd began to feel the real horror of sea sickness.

Nothing can be like sea sickness but death, and nothing can be like death but sea sickness. Todd had never suffered from that calamity before; and now that it came upon him, in all its aggravated horrors, he could not believe that it was a mere passing indisposition, but concluded that he must have been poisoned by the captain of the ship, and that his last hour was come.

And now Todd would fain have made a noise, and called for help. He would have liked to fire one of his pistols in the face of that captain, provided he could but have got him to the side of his berth; but he had not strength left to utter a word above a whisper; and as for moving his hand to his pockets to get out his fire-arms, he could not so much as lift a finger.

All Todd could do was to go on, and to get each moment worse and worse with that awful sensation of sickness, which resembles the sickness of the soul at parting from its mortal house, to which it had clung so long.

The wind howled upon the deck and through the cordage of the vessel—the spray dashed over her bulwarks, and each moment the storm increased in fury.

CHAPTER CLXVIII.
TODD GETS A WORLD OF MARITIME EXPERIENCE.

The idea that he was poisoned grew upon Todd each moment, and to such a man, it was truly terrific to think that he should come to so fearful an end.

"Help! Help!" he groaned; but after all, it was only a groan and not a cry —not that that mattered; for if he had had the lungs of ten men all concentrated in his own person, and had so been able to cry out with a superhuman voice, it would have been most completely lost amid the roar of the wind, and the wild dashing of the waves.

The storm was certainly increasing.

"Oh, this sickness!" groaned Todd. "Oh, dear—oh, dear!"

At the moment that he was so bad that, in his want of experience of what sea sickness really was, he thought every moment would be his last, he heard some one coming down into the cabin, and one of the crew rolled rather than walked into it.

"Help!" said Todd; "oh, help!"

"You go to the d—l!" said the man. "The captain is washed overboard, and we are all going to the bottom, so I am one who likes to take a little spirits with him to qualify the water that one may be obliged to swallow. That's it. Steady, craft, steady."

Practised as this man no doubt was in the art of keeping his footing upon an undulating surface, the pitching of the ship was so tremendous, that even he was thrown to the cabin floor with considerable violence, and had no easy task to rise again.

"No!" cried Todd, finding that positive fright lent him strength, "you do not mean that?"

"Mean what, you old sinner?"

"That we shall be lost?"

The man nodded, and having opened a little cupboard, he brought out a little bladder of spirits, and placing it to his lips, he drank a large quantity, while he held by the cupboard door to keep himself from falling.

"That will do," he said, as he dropped the bladder to the floor, and then, after several unsuccessful efforts to do so, he scrambled upon deck again.

"I, too, will drink," said Todd; "oh, yes, I will drink. I feel that if anything will give me strength to bear the horrors of the night, it will be my old and well-tried friend, brandy."

He cast his eyes upon the bladder of spirits that the sailor had thrown to the floor. The spirit was slowly weltering out of the bladder, and running in a stream across the cabin. As the odour of it saluted the nose of Todd, he exclaimed,—

"It is brandy! I must and will have some!"

It was all very well for Todd to say that he must and would have some of the brandy, but the difficulty of getting at it was one by no means easy to surmount. He recollected what a job he had to get into his berth again upon the occasion that he had got out of it before, and he dreaded to place himself in a similar predicament; yet he found the vessel was more steady, although the wind had not at all abated. Yes, it certainly was more steady.

"I will try," said Todd. "I must have some."

With a determination, then, to get at the choice liquor, which was wasting what Todd considered its sweetness upon the cabin floor, he slid out of his little bed-place, and the ship giving a sudden roll in a trough of the sea, he fell sprawling to the floor.

"Oh, I shall be killed!" he yelled. "This frightful voyage will be the death of me! It is too terrible! Oh, Heaven! It is much too terrible! Help!—mercy!"

Todd lay upon his back on the cabin floor, with his arms and legs stretched out like a gigantic St. Andrew's cross. Something touched his hand; it was the bladder of brandy, that, as the ship rolled, had moved towards him. He clutched it with a feeling of despair, and brought it to his lips.

With the exception of about half a pint, the brandy had made its way on to the cabin floor; but it was strong, pure spirit—such brandy, in fact, as smugglers might well reserve for their own private drinking; so that the half pint was a very tolerable dose to take at once, and Todd drained it to the last drop.

"Better!" he said; "oh, yes, I am better, now."

The fumes of the strong spirit mounted to his brain, and got the better, for the time, of that frightful feeling of sickness which had been so like death, that Todd had mistaken it for the last pangs that he was likely to feel in this world.

"Oh, yes, I am better. How the wind howls now, and how the waves dash the ship hither and thither. The deck, yes, the deck will be the place for me. Oh, gracious! what was that?"

A loud crash, and a scream from some drowning wretches who had gone overboard along with a mast, had broken upon his ears. Terror sat at his very heart, and unable any longer to endure the frightful suspense of being below, he tried, upon his hands and knees, to crawl upon the deck.

By no other mode could Todd have had the slightest hope or expectation of reaching the deck of that fated vessel, but as he tried it, he did, after a time, succeed in dragging himself up from the cabin. The sea was washing over the deck, and for a few moments he could see no one. He watched for a lull in the wind, and then he cried—

"Help! help! Oh, help!"

"Who's that?" shouted a voice.

"I!" said Todd.

"Go to blazes, then!"

"Oh, how kind!" groaned Todd. "How very considerate at such a time as this, too."

The wind that had lulled for a few moments, now came with a frightful gush, and Todd was glad to find the fragments of a quantity of cordage, belonging to some of the top parts of the mast that had gone overboard, to cling to till the gust had passed over the ship. Then there came some tons of salt water over him, and he was nearly bereft of the power of breathing.

"Oh, this is dreadful!" he said. "This is truly dreadful!"

"Hands off!" growled a voice. "Everybody for himself here. Hands off, I say."

"What do you mean?" said Todd. "Do you speak to me?"

The voice had sounded close to him; and now again, with an angry tone, it cried—

"Some one has got hold of my leg!"

"Oh, I dare say I have," said Todd, "but I didn't know. There, I have left go. Who are you, sir, eh?"

"Oh! don't bother!"

"Well, but is there any danger?"

"Danger! I rather think there is. I suppose you are the love of a passenger that the captain brought on board?"

"Yes, I am the passenger," said Todd. Why he should be called a love of a passenger he did not exactly know; but he repeated his question concerning the condition of the ship; and at the next lull of wind, for it came now very strangely in gusts, he got a not very consolatory reply.

"Why, as to danger," said the man, "that's rather past, I reckon; but, perhaps, you are a landsman, and have not yet thoroughly made up your mind."

"To what?"

"To be drowned, some day or night, as I have."

"Oh, no—no! Don't say that. Drowning is a very dreadful death, indeed. I am sure it is."

"It may, or it may not be so," said the man, "but whether it is or not, you and I are very likely soon to find out, for the old craft is going at last."

"Going?"

"Yes. It's all up with her, and it will soon be all down with her, likewise."

"But the ship goes easier through the sea."

"Oh, ah, she's filling, you see, and settling lower down in the water, so you can't have quite so much pitching and tossing as you had an hour ago, hardly."

"You can't mean that? You do not mean to tell me that there is no hope? Oh, say not so!"

"Well, you can please yourself. I can tell you that the rudder has gone.—We have not a mast standing. There is already five feet of water in the hold, and we are drifting as hard as we can upon a lee-shore, so if you can make anything satisfactory out of that, I leave you to do it."

"Did you say we were drifting to shore?"

"A lee-shore."

"Oh, dear. I'm glad to hear it. Any shore will do for me, if I can but get out of this confounded ship. What is that afar off? Is it a light? Oh, yes, it is a light."

"It is. We are on the Sussex coast, somewhere, but I can't take upon myself to say where; but it don't matter a bit, for we shall go to pieces long before we reach the surf, and then in such a sea as this you might as well try to swallow the Channel at a few draughts as to swim."

"But I can't swim at all."

"It don't matter a bit."

"But, my dear friend—"

"Hold your row—I am not your dear friend nor anybody else's, just now. I tell you we shall be all drowned, and the best thing you can do, is to take it as easy as possible. What can be the good of making a fuss about it?"

This information was to Todd of so deplorable a character—for to none is death so terrible as to the guilty—that he wept aloud and screamed with terror as the spray of the sea struck him on the face, and the wind roared and whistled over him.

"Oh, no—no!" he cried. "I cannot die yet—I must not. Spare me—spare me! I am afraid to die!"

"Oh, you stupid," said the sailors. "That comes now of not having had a proper sort of education. I make no doubt but your howling will pretty soon be put an end to."

The situation of the ship was undoubtedly one of the greatest possible peril. Having by the violence of the tempest lost all her masts, and having had her rudder torn away, she was quite at the mercy of the winds and the waves; and the set of the sea, as well as the direction of the wind, carried her sometimes stern foremost and at other times head foremost, and at times broadside, on to the coast of Sussex, upon which the lights were at intervals dimly visible through the thick haze of the storm.

It was truly a dreadful night, and such as fully merited the worst apprehensions of the sailor, who had spoken so coolly to Todd of his coming fate.

There was but one chance for those on board of the vessel, and that was that the wind might abate sufficiently to enable some boats to put off from the Sussex coast, provided they happened to be off a part of it where such accommodation was to be had, and rescue those upon the wreck. The lights that at intervals were visible, rather favoured the supposition that it was a populous part of the coast that the ill-starred struggling ship was driving fast upon.

Todd, however, did not know of that slender hope, and he gave himself up to despair.

To a landsman nothing could exceed the real horrors of the scene on board the ship, and, indeed, to one well accustomed to the sea, there was quite enough to produce much terror. All but three persons connected with the working of the ship had been washed overboard during the gale. Both of the men with whom Todd had had the meeting in the cart were at the bottom of the sea, and all their struggles and smugglings were over. Todd did not know that, though.

It was quite evident to practical observers that the gale was abating, for it no longer was so steady and so continuous a wind that blew with fury over the fated ship; and although the sea still ran high, it did not break over the vessel with such thundering impetuosity.

A very faint glow of daylight, too, began to come over the sea.

If Todd had had mind enough left to look about him now, he would have seen that there was some food for hope, although not much; but the fact was, that he had so thoroughly made up his mind that all was lost, that he did not look for consolation.

How poor and how miserable appeared to him, at this moment, all his struggles for wealth—that wealth, for the attainment of which he had struggled through such gigantic crimes! How much happier, he could

not help thinking, it would have been for him to have gone on all his life in plodding industry, than to endeavour as he had done to find a short road to fortune, and only to end in finding a short one to death.

One of the seamen cried out in a loud voice—

"Save themselves who can! We shall be on shore, now, in less than five minutes! We are all going now as safe as nuts!"

CHAPTER CLXIX.
TAKES A PEEP AT SOME FRIENDS OF THE READER.

For a brief space, now, in order to connect more closely the events of this narrative, we will leave Sweeney Todd to the perils and chances of the disabled ship, and the storm in the Channel, while we conduct the reader to the society of other persons, in whom it is to be presumed we are largely interested.

In the most cheerful room of one of the prettiest houses at Brighton, facing the beach upon the Esplanade, which is unrivalled, was a rather select party.

That party consisted of old and well-tried friends of the reader, and when we announce of whom it was composed, it will be seen that their society is decidedly good.

First of all, there was Ben the beef-eater. Poor Ben had never before been at a sea-coast town, and everything was consequently to him new and strange. Yet he felt amazingly happy, because he was surrounded by those whom he loved with all his heart; and if he had now and then a wandering thought, it was to the animals in the Tower, to whom he was accustomed, and who, no doubt, missed Ben quite as much, if not more, than he missed them.

Then there was Tobias. Yes, Tobias was there, looking so fresh and so well, notwithstanding that he knew Sweeney Todd was at large, that it was quite a congratulation for those who felt that they were his friends to

see him. The rest of the party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Ingestrie, and Colonel Jeffrey and his young bride, and Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, so that there was really quite an assemblage in that room.

The colonel holds a letter in his hands, and is speaking, while all eyes are turned upon him.

"Yes," said the colonel, "this letter is from Sir Richard Blunt, and I will read it to you, if you will be so good as to listen to it."

"Oh, yes—yes," said everybody.

"Very well. Here it is, then."

Upon this, the colonel read as follows:—

> "Craven Street, London.
>
> "My Dear Colonel,—No news of Todd. We are sparing neither pains nor expense in tracking him; and it is an absolute impossibility that he should escape us long. Accident, I am convinced, much more than any design or luck upon his part, has had the effect as yet of keeping him out of our hands. But I do not think that it would be very difficult to count the time, in hours, between this and the period when he must be dead or a prisoner.
>
> "I hope that all our dear friends with you are quite well, and that they will banish from their minds all fear of the revenge of Todd. Nothing is more improbable than that he should dream of finding his way to the obscure little village where you are. I hope all of you are benefiting much by the health-giving breezes of the ocean.
>
> "With kind regard to all, I am, my dear colonel,
>
> "Yours very truly,
>
> "Richard Blunt."

"Still at large!" said Mark Ingestrie, upon the conclusion of the letter. "So the rascal is still at large?"

"Yes," said the colonel; "but you hear what the magistrate says, that he will soon have him."

"Yes, but that is rather a hope than a certainty."

Tobias changed colour, and Johanna turned to him, saying, in a kind tone—

"Nay, now, Tobias, you have nothing to fear from Todd. Did you not hear what the letter said upon that point?"

"Yes oh, yes!" replied Tobias. "I will fear nothing while you are all so good to me."

"I tell's you what it is," said Ben. "That 'ere fellow is for all the world just like one of the wild beastesses as declines being tamed. We had one once as got away one night, and he swam over the river, you see."

"And did you catch him?" said Tobias.

"After a time, yes. Easy did it."

"Who did it, sir?"

"Easy—It ain't a who. It's a way of doing things. You take it easy, you know."

"Oh, yes, I understand now."

"Well, I went arter the fellow, and traced him up and down the streets on the Surrey side, till I got him into a court where there was no thoroughfare, and then I nabbed him."

"And he did no mischief?"

"None to signify. He settled a couple of old women and five or six children, that was all."

Tobias shuddered, and the colonel said—

"I cannot but be surprised that Sir Richard has not yet found out the retreat of Todd, and my own opinion is that he is dead."

"It is more than probable," said Ingestrie; "I have thought so several times. When he found that there was no hope for him, and that he was in a state of destitution, or something near it, which must be the fact, it is likely enough that he has laid violent hands upon himself, and his body may not be found for a long time."

"Well," said the colonel "let us get out for a stroll upon the beach. It will be dark in another half hour, and as there is no moon to-night, we shall not like to remain out."

They all rose upon this suggestion, but the evening dropped so rapidly, and several black clouds piled themselves up in the sky, that Ingestrie, after stepping out upon the balcony and looking at the weather, came back again, and said—

"You had better remain in, all of you. I have seen enough of the sea, and heard enough of the wind, to prophesy that this will be a rough night in the Channel."

"Will there be a storm, Mark?" said Johanna.

"There will be a very good imitation of one, you may depend, if not a real one."

"If there should be," said the colonel, "you will be rather surprised, for, I can tell you, that a gale off this coast is no joke. You would be truly amazed at the violence with which a regular south-western sets upon this shore."

"I can easily imagine it," said Mark Ingestrie. "See, it darkens every minute, and what an angry look that small cloud right away in the horizon has."

"It has, indeed," said Johanna, as she clung to the arm of her husband. "Do you think, Mark, that any poor souls will be wrecked to-night?"

"Probably enough; but the coast of Suffolk and the Irish Channel will be the worst. It will be child's play here in comparison."

A strange booming noise came across the sea at this moment, and the colonel cried out—

"Is that a gun, or is it thunder?"

"Thunder!" said Ingestrie; "hark! there it is again! There is a storm some forty or fifty miles off. It's right away in the German Ocean, most likely; but only look now even, dark as it is getting, how the sea is rising, and

what an odd seething condition it is getting into."

They all stood on the balcony and looked out towards the sea. The surface of it was to the eye only undulating quite gently, and yet, strange to say, it was rapidly covering with white foam, and that from no perceptible cause, for as yet the wind was a mere trifle.

"How is that?" said Johanna. "The sea is not very rough, and yet it is all white."

"It is the worst sign of bad weather," said Ingestrie. "The commotion has begun below the surface in some mysterious way, and that white foam which you see each moment rapidly increasing is cast up; but soon the whole surface will begin to heave, and then you will find out what a storm is."

"We may hear it," said the colonel; "but if this darkness continues, I doubt very much if we shall be able to bring any other of our senses into requisition upon the occasion."

"Hush!" said Tobias, "what is that?"

He held up his hand as he spoke, and as they were then all profoundly still, a strange, low, wailing sound came over the water.

"What can it be?" said Johanna.

"Only the gale," smiled Ingestrie. "It's coming, now. That's the sigh of the wind over the water. You will soon hear it, I can tell you. Now, only notice how still everything is. There, look how that bird flies in a terrified manner close to the ground. It knows that the gale is coming. The sound you heard with intense listening, you will be able now to hear without listening at all. It will force itself upon your notice. Hilloa! There it comes! Look at the sea!"

A few miles out from the shore the sea seemed to rise like a wall of water, tipped with a ridge of foam, and then down it came with such a splash and a roar, that it was plainly heard on the shore, and then, in a moment

or two, the impulse so given communicated itself to the whole of the sea, and it was fearfully agitated. With a roar and a shriek, the gale swept on, and from that moment conversation was almost out of the question.

The ladies of the party were glad to get into the house again, and in a little time the colonel and Ingestrie found it anything but comfortable to remain in the balcony; and as the night had fairly set in, they likewise retreated.

The gale lasted the whole of the evening, and when our friends retired to rest it seemed to be rather increasing than otherwise. It was still dark when Ingestrie was awakened from his sleep by a knocking at the door of his room.

"Hilloa!" he said; "who's there?"

"It is I," said Colonel Jeffrey. "Will you get up, Mr. Ingestrie? It is nearly morning, and they say a ship is going down about a couple of miles off the coast."

"I'm coming!" cried Ingestrie, as he sprang out of bed and dressed himself with amazing rapidity. "If it does go down, it will not be the only one that finds the bottom of the Channel to-night."

When he reached the lower part of the house, he found the colonel and Ben waiting for him.

"This has been an awful night," said the colonel.

"Well, I don't know," said Ingestrie; "for I have been fast asleep."

"Asleep!" cried Ben; "I couldn't get a wink of sleep but once, and then I dreamt I was a mermaid. Why, what with the howling of the wind, which is a great deal worse than our lioness when she wants her knuckle of beef, and the washing of the water, I couldn't rest at all."

"The voice of the wind," said Ingestrie, "always has the effect of sending me fast asleep. But you said something of a ship in distress, did you not?"

"Yes. They say that in the offing there is a large ship, and that she is evidently water-logged, and must go down, unless she drives ashore."

"The deuce she must! Let us run down to the beach at once, and see what we can do."

With this, they all three left the house, and made the best of their way to the beach along the execrable shingle of the Brighton coast. It was far from being an easy task to proceed, for the wind was terrific, and now and then, when they did reach the beach, there came a sea washing in, that drenched them with spray.

A crowd of people had collected upon the coast; some were holding up lanterns on the end of poles, and many were prepared with ropes to cast to the aid of any of the crew of the vessel that might swim to the shore.

"There she is," said Ingestrie; "I see her! It's a small craft, and she is a wreck already."

"She must go down, then?" said the colonel.

"I don't know. She is drifting in shore, but evidently quite unmanageable. She is a sheer hulk. If they had the least control over her, they could run her in in ten minutes on to the beach; but she is going about like a log."

"Then, she may go down in deep water yet?"

"In truth, she may."

"Here are plenty of boats?"

"Boats? My dear friend, there never was a boat yet that could live in such a sea as this. It is out of the question. You find no one makes the attempt, and I am quite sure that among the hardy fishermen of this place, there are many would do so if it were at all practicable; but it is most certain that death in the surf would be the result."

"I fear it would, indeed."

"There she goes!" cried a voice.

"Eh?" said Ben, turning round and round, "I don't see anybody in the female line."

"The ship!" cried Ingestrie. "They mean the ship. But she is not gone yet. There she is, still. Do you see her, colonel, like a tub upon the water? There, right away, by yon light-coloured cloud."

"I do—I do!"

The ship had not gone down. She had only settled for a moment or two in the trough of the sea; and it was now quite evident that the wreck was rapidly drifting towards the shore, so that there was an expectation that it might strike in shallow water, and so give the crew a chance of escape from death.

CHAPTER CLXX.
MARK INGESTRIE RESCUES A SHIPWRECKED MAN.

The scene now upon the beach at Brighton was one of the most exciting that can well be imagined. No one who has not stood upon a beach under such circumstances, and seen a brave ship battling with the waters, can have any real idea of it.

Language is too weak to paint the feelings of such a conjunction of circumstances. It is so hopeless a thing to stand upon the shore, and listen to the wind roaring in its fury, and to see the waves dashing in mad gyrations hither and thither, while a few frail and creaking timbers only keep some poor mortals from sinking into the sea, which, like a seething cauldron, seems ready to devour them, that it is enough to unman the stoutest heart.

No wonder that persons with kindly sympathies and gentle feelings towards human nature, such as Colonel Jeffrey and Mark Ingestrie undoubtedly had, should suffer acutely to see others so suffer.

If there had been any likelihood of a boat reaching the ill-fated ship, Ingestrie would have been the first to propose such a measure, and the first, with hand and heart, to carry it out; but there was no such likelihood. Our friend had seen too much of service afloat, and was by far too good a sailor to suppose for an instant that any boat could live for a cable's length from the shore in such a sea as that!

"Is it quite impossible to aid them?" said the colonel.

"Quite," said Ingestrie, "unless they strike close in shore. Then, something may, perhaps, be done."

"Ay, sir," said a weather-beaten boatman who stood close to Ingestrie, "you are right there. If they only drift a little further in, and are still afloat, when the keel touches ground they may get ashore some of them."

"No boat," said the colonel, "could reach her?"

"Boat, sir! My little bit of a craft will do now and then things that one ought not to expect, from anything in the shape of a boat; but that surf would toss it up like a piece of cork, and it would only be making bad worse to draw a few brave fellows from land here, because others are going down at sea."

"You are right," said Ingestrie. "Do you happen to know the craft out yonder?"

"No, sir. She is so swept clear, that it would be hard to know her if she were one's own; but I don't think she belongs to this port at all."

"The gale is going down a bit."

"It is, sir. Don't you see it's coming in puffs like—It won't last much longer."

"Gone!" cried a hundred voices at once.

"No—no!" cried Ingestrie. "Don't say that."

A wild shriek came across the surface of the water, and the ship that had been doing battle with the winds and the waves, disappeared.

"Oh, this is, indeed, terrible," said Colonel Jeffrey. "It is too horrible!"

"It is, indeed!" cried Ingestrie. "There is but one chance now of doing any good, and that is in case any poor fellow should get washed on shore through the surf with a few sparks of life in him. Hilloa, my men! Get out your tackle, and let us look out for the survivors. Some one may try to fight for it yet."

The sailors and boatmen upon the beach were charmed with the idea that they might be able to do some good in this way; and as they soon found that Ingestrie knew perfectly well what he was about, they listened to his orders, in the course they should take, and obeyed them with alacrity and skill.

He had some of the long line connected with the fishing-nets, and to which corks were attached, cast out into the sea by the aid of little kedge anchors, so that the waves did not bring them back again, and as the other ends of the lines were held firmly on the shore, any one might be struggling for life amid the surf, would have had a good chance of preservation by laying hold of one of those lines.

"We may do some good," said Ingestrie, as he tied one end of one of the ropes round his waist.

"What are you about?" said the colonel.

"Oh, nothing. Do not fancy I am going to throw myself into the waves. But if I should chance to see any poor soul struggling for life, it would take something to prevent me from going after him."

"But think of yourself."

"Oh, I cannot come to any sort of harm, you know. They will easily be able to haul me on shore, you perceive, by the other end of the rope, and I have been rather used to fighting my way through the waves."

"Heaven speed you, if the occasion for your doing so again should arise, my gallant friend. Far be it from me to dissuade you against such an attempt; and I am sure that even she who loves you best of all, would be the first to encourage you."

"Of course she would."

"All lost, sir," said a sailor.

"No, don't say that!" cried Ingestrie. "Where is that night glass that some one had here a little while ago?"

"Here, sir."

Ingestrie placed the telescope to his eye, and looked fixedly in the direction of the wreck. He then handed it to the sailor, and said—

"Who has a good hold of the end of this rope that is about me?"

"All's right, sir. There will be no lack of hands with that. But you don't mean to go through the surf, sir?"

"I see a human being struggling with the foam, and from his actions he is no swimmer. I cannot stand here and see him die, while there is a chance of saving him. Hark you! Don't wait for me to sing out, but use your own eyes, and begin to pull in the moment you see me close with him. The dawn is coming rapidly, and you will see better each moment. Now, I'm off."

"For the love of Heaven be careful!" cried the colonel.

Ingestrie smiled, and then dashed into the roaring, bubbling surf of the sea, with the rope round his waist.

Mark Ingestrie Risks His Own Life To Save Todd.

Mark Ingestrie Risks His Own Life To Save Todd.

A loud cheer burst from the throats of all present, as the heroic action was witnessed. If anything had been wanting, which it was not, to urge the gallant Mark Ingestrie on his brave and noble adventure, that cheer would have done it; but amid the roar and din of the water about his ears, it is doubtful if he could have heard it at all, or any noise of ten times the intensity.

The figure in the sea, that had attracted the attention of Ingestrie, was now plainly perceived by the colonel, and by all who were upon the beach. To the practised eyes of the sailors then present, it was evident that the body must be lashed to some very buoyant substance, which enabled it to keep afloat, not-withstanding the roll of the sea, and the

breaking of the waves over it. The person was evidently not swimming, although, by the wash of the tide, and the set of the wind, he was being driven into shore.

Mark Ingestrie felt that his only chance of getting through the surf was to dive under it, and that manoeuvre he executed with a skill that few could have commanded and to the admiration and delight of all the spectators of his heroic conduct, he appeared outside the roaring edge of the sea, quite able to swim gallantly towards the shipwrecked man.

As he had said, the dawn was coming fast now, so that there was no great difficulty in seeing him, and in watching, with some degree of accuracy, his movements.

"He will do it!" said the colonel.

"Do it?" said the sailor who had the first hold of the rope that was round the body of Mark Ingestrie. "Do it? Of course he will. The man who has the heart and hand to try these sort of things, always does them."

"I believe you are right, my friend," said the colonel.

"I know I am, sir. I have seen too much of this sort of thing, and if I had not been a little out of sorts in my larboard leg, I should have gone; but I'm not all right, you see, sir, so it won't do. Ah, there he has him! It's all right enough—I told you so."

The progress of Ingestrie was watched by many eyes with the most intense interest. Under no circumstances was distance so deceiving as at sea; and although the black object in the water, which the practised eye of Ingestrie had shown him, was a man, appeared to be only just without the line of the surf, he (Ingestrie) knew that the distance was, in reality, much greater, and that he would have a good swim through those troubled waters before he could get within arm's-length of the shipwrecked person. To be sure, as the body was drifting to the shore, he made better progress, and the distance between him and it was diminished much more rapidly than as if it had been stationary.

Colonel Jeffrey distinctly saw Ingestrie reach the body, at length, and the sailor who had hold of the rope, likewise saw him, and he sung out—

"Now, pull away; but easy, my lads—a steady pull, and no jerking, or you will hinder him instead of helping. That's it—easy now, easy."

"Ah!" said Ben, who had come down to the beach to see what was going on. "Easy does everything, as I always said. Pray, Colonel Jeffrey, what unfortunate animal is that you are dragging out of the water?"

"Don't you know, Ben?"

"Not I. But I suppose it is some poor half-drowned fellow from the ship."

"It is that, as well, I hope; but the person who is with him, and who is being hauled to the shore, is no other than our friend, Mr. Ingestrie."

"What, Johanna's husband?"

"The same."

"Oh, lor! oh, lor! I'm afraid easy won't do it then, and that my little girl will be a widow. Give me hold of the rope. If pulling will do it, I'll soon have him on shore again all right. The idea, now, of a man, with the nicest young creature of a wife in the world, going into the sea at the end of a rope, and covering himself all over with froth and sea-weed! Oh, dear! oh, dear! It's truly dreadful, it is; and easy certainly don't do it."

Ben would have lent his aid to pull the rope, but the colonel kept him back, as it was not strength but skill and tact that in the process was required, and the rope was in the hands of men who had both.

It was clear that Ingestrie had got hold of the floating object, whatever it was, and that, as he was pulled into shore, he brought it with him. When he reached the edge of the surf again, a quick pull brought him at once through it, and a couple of the sailors, dashing into the waters, got a hold of him, and drew him right up on to the beach between them.

Half a dozen more brought to the shore the body of a man, tied to a plank of wood.

Poor Mark was nearly exhausted. He was just able only to smile faintly in answer to the colonel's anxious inquiries.

"He must be carried home," said the colonel. "Lend me some assistance, my brave fellows, to do so."

"No—no!" Ingestrie managed just to say faintly. "Take him—take him!"

He pointed to the man whom he had rescued, and the colonel immediately said,

"Make yourself easy about him, my dear friend. The sailors will carry him to the house, and if the vital spark has not quite fled, you shall have the pleasure of knowing that you have saved him. But it is yourself that I wish to have got home."

"Can you walk?" said Ben.

"I—don't think—I will try."

Poor Ingestrie did try, but he was really so completely exhausted by the efforts he had made, that it was quite evident that he was unequal to the task of walking along the shingle.

"Give it up," said Ben. "You can't do it."

"He must be carried," said the colonel.

"To be sure he must," said Ben; "and this is the way to do it."

With these words, Ben did not hesitate another moment, but taking Mark Ingestrie in his arms as though he had been an infant, he walked over the pebbly beach with him as easily as though he had been only a very ordinary kind of bundle to carry.

As he went on, it occurred to Ben that Johanna might see him carrying her husband home, and might imagine that some fearful accident had happened to him, so, by way of putting an end to that idea, he kept crying out as he got near the house—

"Here we are! All alive and kicking! It's only a joke. All alive—alive O! Here we are! it's only a joke! All alive! alive! and ready for feeding time!"

CHAPTER CLXXI.
A RATHER IMPORTANT DISCOVERY IS MADE.

The man, who appeared to be the only one at all—dead or alive—who was preserved from the wreck of the ship off the coast of Sussex, was carried to the house where all our friends were staying, and being taken into the kitchen, was there placed in the care of a couple of medical men, who were hastily sent for, and who quickly restored animation to the seemingly drowned person. It was reported to Ingestrie that the stranger was all right, and as he himself had by that time thoroughly recovered, and had changed his saturated apparel for a dry suit, the news gave him the liveliest satisfaction.

"Well," he said, "it is something that I have not gone through that tremendous surf in vain."

"Yes, Mark," said Johanna, with the tears starting to her eyes, "but we must, indeed, get away from the sea-coast, and then you cannot be tempted to expose your life in such adventures. Only think of what might be the consequences!"

"Yes," said the colonel. "It is hardly fair, although, at the moment, one cannot help admiring the heroism of the act."

"I don't know how it can be avoided," said Ingestrie. "If you see a poor fellow struggling for his life, and you feel that you may save him at a little risk to yourself, it seems a strange thing not to do it."

"It does," said old Mr. Oakley, "and I should be the last to say no to the noble impulse; only if there are to be many storms off his coast, I shall second the resolution of Johanna that you ought to live somewhere else."

"And so shall I," said Arabella.

"And I," said Tobias.

"He's better, they say," cried Ben, popping his head into the room. "The doctors say he is better, and that, after he has had a sleep, he will be all right."

"The sailor belonging to the ship you mean?" said the colonel, "What sort of a person is he, Ben?"

"Haven't seen him yet, so can't tell; but they have made up a good fire in the back kitchen, and he is lying on a sofa there, and going to sleep, and the doctor says it will do him no good to disturb him, or bother him by talking."

"It certainly will not," said Ingestrie. "It matters very little to us who he is, poor fellow. He is saved—that is the principal thing."

"Yes," said Johanna, "that is everything; and, at all events, Mark, there is one human being who through life, let his position and prospects be what they may, must look upon you as his friend and preserver."

"Ah!" said poor Tobias, "We should all be very happy if Sweeney Todd were but in the hands of justice. It is very strange why I tremble so to-day at the thought of him; and I did not tremble yesterday."

"You have no occasion to tremble to-day, nor yesterday either, Tobias," said Arabella. "Remember how surrounded you are by your best friends, and remember, likewise, that, after all, Todd is but a man, and by this time he must be but a poor, weak, dispirited one, and much more intent upon devising means for his own safety, than in carrying out his revenges."

"If, indeed, he lives," said the colonel.

"Just so," said Ingestrie. "My opinion will very much incline to the idea that he is dead, if Sir Richard Blunt does not very shortly get some news of him."

"That will be a pity," said Tobias, "unless it can be proved past all dispute, for while it continues only a likely thing, the dread of him will still cling to my heart, and I shall never be happy."

"Nay, Tobias," said the colonel, "you must pluck up a spirit. The probability is now, that Sweeney Todd, let him be where he may, is much more afraid of meeting you than you can possibly be of meeting him."

"I wish I thought so," said Tobias. "But only look now how sweetly the sun is peeping out on the water after the storm there. This is very beautiful."

Tobias walked to the window; and his praise of the beauty of the morning caused the breakfast-table to be, in a very few minutes, completely deserted. To be sure, the praise that the imaginative boy had lavished upon the young day, was by no means misapplied; for a more lovely day than that which broke over Brighton, after that terrific gale in the Channel, could not be conceived. It seemed as if the good genii of earth, sea, and sky, were striving to banish from the minds of all the inhabitants of that place the recollections of the frightful storm that had made the world dismal and terrific.

"Indeed, it is lovely," said Johanna, "Who, now, to look at that placid sheet of water, with scarce a ripple upon its surface to reflect the sunbeams, would think that only a few hours ago, it presented a scene of such fury that it was a shuddering terror to look upon it?"

"And yet," said Ingestrie, "it is these varieties that make the great world beautiful."

"Not a doubt of it; but they require more stern minds than mine, Mark, to stand them."

The party now, finding that the day was so delightful, sallied out to the beach to make some inquiry among the sailors and boatmen, concerning the damage that the gale had done. The moment Mark Ingestrie appeared with his friends, he was recognised as the person who had performed the gallant exploit of going through the surf to the rescue of the shipwrecked man, and he became immediately the observed of all observers.

This sort of homage was at once flattering and embarrassing to Johanna. She felt proud that it was her husband who was entitled to so much popular consideration and respect, and yet, with her natural timidity of disposition, she shrank from sharing it with him.

Some eager inquiries were made of Ingestrie now, regarding the man he had saved, and it was a great gratification to him to be enabled to state that he was doing well, although he had not himself seen him since he grappled with him in the water, and brought him to the beach.

A few fragments only of the wreck had been washed to the shore, but nothing that could in any way enable them to identify the vessel; so that that was a species of information that must come from the man who had been saved, whenever he should be able to go through the fatigue of an interview with his friend and his deliverer.

After an hour's stroll upon the beach, the party, at a slow pace, returned to the house they had hired during their stay at Brighton. The moment they got to the door, the colonel's servant appeared with his horse, which he had ordered to be ready for him at twelve o'clock.

"Just walk him up and down," said the colonel, to the man; "I shall be ready in a few minutes. Hilloa! my friend, Hector, are you here?"

The dog was with the horse, and the man said, touching his hat—

"We were half a mind, sir, to let Hector loose last night during the storm, for he is a famous fellow in the water; but knowing how much you valued him, we were afraid to do so."

"I am glad you didn't," said the colonel. "You were quite right to keep him shut up. I would not have him come to any mischief for any money."

The colonel entered the house, and when he and all his friends had got into the drawing-room, they sent for a servant to inquire how the poor wrecked man was getting on; and after a little time, one of the domestics of the house came to say that he was up and sitting, dressed, in the front kitchen, and would be happy to see, and to thank those who had saved him from death in the raging sea.

"Shall we have him up here?" said the colonel.

"Yes, if you please," said Ingestrie; "and, I daresay, a glass of wine won't hurt him, while he tells us the name of his ship, poor fellow, and who and what he is."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Oakley. "I will get out the decanter."

"Allow me, my dear," said Mrs. Oakley. "You know you always break every glass that you interfere with."

"Oh, stuff!"

"But I say, Mr. Oakley, that you do."

"Easy does it," said Ben, in his deepest bass voice. "Easy does it, I say—Easy!"

"How cold I am," said Tobias.

"Cold, Tobias!" said Ingestrie. "My good fellow, we will have a fire if you are cold."

"Oh, no—no. Not on my account, Mr. Ingestrie, I shall be better soon; but I feel as if something were going to happen. My heart beats so fearfully, and at the same time, I shake as if—as if—I know not what."

"Give him a glass of wine," said Ingestrie to Johanna.

Tobias took the glass of wine, and it evidently did him some good; but yet he looked ill and uneasy. Orders were given that the shipwrecked man should be shown up to the drawing-room, for they were all curious

to know to what ship he had belonged, and how many had fallen victims to the frightful gale that had made the vessel such a complete wreck.

"He is coming, poor fellow," said the colonel. "I hear his footsteps on the stairs. He comes slowly. No doubt he is weak yet."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Johanna. "Have the wine ready to give him at once, mother. It will put some heart into him. What must be his feelings towards you, Mark?"

"Come now," said Ingestrie; "don't plague him, any of you, about his being saved by me, and all that sort of thing. Just say nothing about it. Sailors are no great orators, at the best of times, and if he begins to make a speech about his gratitude, you may depend he will never get to the end of it."

"Yes; but he ought to know," said Mrs. Oakley, "who he owes his life to, under providence."

"Hem!" said Ben. He never liked to hear Mrs. Oakley begin to use religious phrases, as they had a tendency to remind him of the late Mr. Lupin.

The door of the drawing-room opened, and all eyes were eagerly bent in that direction. A servant came in, and said—

"The poor man is here, if you please. Is he to come in, now? He seems rather timid."

"Oh, yes," said Ingestrie, "let him come in, by all manner of means, poor fellow. He and I made acquaintance in the sea, and we ought to be good friends, now."

A tall, gigantic figure marched three paces into the room.

"*Todd!*" shouted Tobias. "*It is Todd!*"

It was Sweeney Todd! With one glance round the room, he recognised an enemy in every face. With a perfect yell of fear and rage, he turned, and dashed down the staircase. The servant who had conducted him up to the drawing-room, and whom he met in his way, he knocked down with

one blow, and in another moment he was in the street. The colonel's horse was close to the door. Todd felled the man who held it by a blow on the top of the head, that took him so suddenly, he could not guard against it, and then springing upon the horse, the murderer raised another wild unearthly kind of shout, and set off at a gallop.

Todd Seizes The Colonel's Horse, Mounts, And Makes Another Escape.

Todd Seizes The Colonel's Horse, Mounts, And Makes Another Escape.

So sudden—so totally unexpected, and so appalling had been the presence of Todd in the drawing-room, that if a spectre had appeared among the people there assembled, and they had had no possible means of escaping from the belief that it was a spectre, they could not have been more confounded than they were upon this occasion.

Poor Tobias, after uttering the exclamation that we have recorded, fell flat upon the floor. Ben swung backwards in his chair, and went with a tremendous crash right away into a corner. Ingestrie and the colonel rose together, and impeded each other in their efforts to follow Todd. Johanna, shrieking, clung to Ingestrie, and Arabella made a vain attempt to delay the colonel.

"By Heaven he is off!" cried the colonel, as he heard the clatter of the horse's feet.

"No!" shouted Ingestrie; "it cannot be!"

"Easy does it," said Ben, from the corner into which he had fallen. "Easy —Easy!"

"Johanna, unhand me, I implore you," cried Mark Ingestrie. "Do you wish the murderer to be lost sight of? Come on, colonel—you and I must engage in this pursuit. God of Heaven! the idea of me saving Todd from the waves!"

The colonel and Ingestrie seized their hats, and rushed down the stairs, tumbling over the servant in the hall. The next object they came across was the groom who had had charge of the horse. They found him sitting on the pavement, looking as confused as possible.

"Which way has he gone?" cried the colonel.

"The—the man. Round that corner, and Hector has gone after him, like mad, sir. Oh, dear!"

"Hector? Then he will be taken, for I will back Hector to hang upon him like grim death. Come with me to the nearest stable, Ingestrie, and let us get horses! Come—come!"

CHAPTER CLXXII.
THE PURSUIT OF TODD ON THE LONDON ROAD.

The whole of these proceedings had really come with such a rush upon the senses of Mark Ingestrie, that he might well have been excused had he not been able to act with the energy that he did; but the strong desire to capture Sweeney Todd, and so to put an end to all the doubts and fears that were felt concerning him, upon the parts of those to whom he was fondly attached, roused the young man to action.

Colonel Jeffrey was cooler than Ingestrie in the affair; but he was not a whit the less determined upon that account.

In the course of seven or eight minutes at the outside, they were both mounted, and as there were plenty of people who could tell them in which direction Todd had gone, they were soon upon his track.

Todd Pursued By The Colonel And Mark.

Todd Pursued By The Colonel And Mark.

Todd had taken the London Road, and had really got a considerable distance onward, and if he had been, which he was far from being, a good horseman, there is very little doubt but that he would either have led his pursuers a long distance, or possibly escaped them altogether, for the animal that he rode was one that in skilful hands would have done wonders.

It was no small aggravation to Colonel Jeffrey to be pursuing his own horse, while he himself was mounted upon a hack that was by no means equal to it.

Skill, however, will get more work out of an indifferent steed than absolute ignorance will achieve from a first-rate one, so that after getting to the top of a rising ground about three miles out of Brighton, our friends saw Todd not three quarters of a mile in advance, coasting a little water-course to find a safe place to cross at. Notwithstanding the distance was great, the colonel knew his own horse in a moment.

"Come on, Ingestrie," he said. "There he is!"

"Are you sure?"

"Quite. That's the rascal. Ah, there he goes through the water! The horse will carry him well across it, but he did not know that, so it is a bold step. On—on!"

They had let their horses come rather easy up the ascent, for the colonel was too good a horseman to break down his steed, merely with an useless burst, when there might be a chase before it of some twenty or thirty miles yet, for all he knew to the contrary; and so, as the country, from the hill-top, sloped very gently right away to the north, they got on wonderfully, and without giving the cattle too much to do.

To keep Todd in sight was everything now, for in that case they felt certain that they must eventually have him. From his actions, it did not seem that he was at all aware of his being so closely pursued, but suddenly they saw him pull up on an eminence and turn his horse's head in the direction of Brighton. They saw him shade his eyes with his hands, and take a long look, and then by the sudden start that he gave, and which caused the horse to plunge in alarm, they knew that he had seen them, and that from that moment he would strain every nerve to escape.

The slight pause that Todd had made in order to look back and see if he were pursued or not, had given his foes the advantage of about one hundred yards, for they had pushed on during that pause with renewed

vigour; but now bending low in the saddle, it was evident that he was doing his best to urge the colonel's horse onwards, and it went like the wind.

"There he goes, colonel!" cried Ingestrie. "That pace will do for us pretty quickly. He is leaving us behind fast enough."

"He is, by Heaven, and if he gets to a turn of the road, there is no knowing what fox-like trick he may play us. On—on, Ingestrie! There is no help for it, but to do our very best."

For another minute and a half, now, not a word was exchanged between the friends. The road did take a turn, and for some time they were out of all sight of Todd, but the moment they themselves got round the elbow of the road, the colonel raised a shout of gratification, and then cried—

"There he is! He has had a fall. On—on!"

Todd was in the middle of the road-way trying to mount the horse, from which it would appear as though he had been thrown, for the creature was rearing in evident alarm, and swerving every time that Todd put his foot in the stirrup. Maddened, then, at the idea that each moment his foes were gaining upon him, Todd made such a vigorous effort to mount, that he succeeded in doing so, although both his feet were out of the stirrups. He clung to the horse with desperation, and kicked it violently with his heels, striking it at the same time on the head violently with his clenched fist.

The animal was driven half crazy by such unusual treatment, and after plunging and rearing for a few seconds, set off at such a gallop as no one could have believed any mortal horse could have achieved.

"Off again!" cried the colonel. "I could have shot him, I think, Ingestrie, just now."

"Then, why, in the name of all that's tantalising, did you not do so?"

"Why, to tell the truth, I was afraid of hitting the horse. If it had kept still for a moment, it would have been all right; but I could not be certain of my aim as it was. Now, mind, we must have him, and I think he begins to

find that fact out."

Certainly, if any judgment could be come to, by the desperate manner in which Todd rode, it would appear as though he considered his career as all but at an end. Oh, how at that time he roared and raved that he had no fire-arms, by the aid of which he might turn and cope with his foes! If he had only had but a pair of pistols, he thought that not only would he have escaped, but escaped likewise with the intense gratification of destroying two of his enemies; but, then, he was totally unarmed, and if they should succeed in coming up with him, he had not even the means of self-destruction about him.

Indifferent horseman, however, as Todd was, even he could not help seeing that he was far better mounted than those who were pursuing him and so, from that circumstance, he gathered just a faint hope that he might distance them by knocking up their steeds. From what he had already experienced of the mettle of the horse he had got hold of so providentially for him, he felt certain that if his pursuers were obliged to come to a pause only for a quarter of an hour, he should be able to place such a distance between him and them, that he might consider himself to be in comparative, if not absolute safety.

To accomplish such a result, then, he felt that his plan was to keep right on within their sight, and let them sooner be tired out by the unwonted exertions that they would compel their inefficient cattle to make, with the vain hope of overtaking him. But Todd had to do with a man, in Colonel Jeffrey, who was quite equal to such an emergency.

A stern chace is a long chace, but an escape even at considerable speed is a weary affair, with a foe directly behind; and the colonel calculated that allowing Todd all the difference in speed between the horses, it would be yet a long distance before he could throw them back so far that they would not be in a position to take advantage of any accident that might occur to him.

"Cool and easy, Ingestrie," he said; "it's a question of time, now. The longer we can keep our horses on their legs, the better for us. Don't urge your horse too much."

Todd had now reached a very wild and romantic part of the road. It wound through a cutting in a mass of chalk, which, as it would be impossible to surmount, and a tedious thing to go round, had been very roughly levelled to the width of a road, and the sides were covered with rank vegetation, for successive rains had washed down upon the face of the chalk a facing of loam, from which had sprung up gigantic weeds, and innumerable wild flowers.

Todd had got about half way through this place, when, from the other end of it, there came a party of five horsemen.

One man rode at the head of the party upon a black horse, which had evidently gone far that day. Todd and this man met face to face, and they simultaneously pronounced each other's names.

"Sir Richard Blunt!" shrieked Todd.

"Sweeney Todd!" said the magistrate.

"Stop him!" shouted Ingestrie, as he and the colonel just got a sight of the horsemen beyond Todd. "Stop him!"

With a yell, like that which might be supposed to come from a fiend, Todd swerved from the grasp of Sir Richard Blunt, who made a dart at his throat, and then, drawing up his knees, he gave his horse the rein, and darting past Sir Richard, he dashed right into the midst of the party of officers, who were behind, and fairly broke his way through them.

"Not yet—not yet!" he shouted. "Ha!—ha! not yet!"

"Fire!" cried Sir Richard Blunt.

The sharp report of four holster-pistols sounded in the narrow road-way. Todd fell from his horse, and, terrified by the shots, the steed went off without him at a mad gallop.

Twice Todd rolled over, and grasped handfuls of chalk and dust from the road; and then he lay upon his back profoundly still. In an instant, Sir Richard Blunt dismounted; and then Colonel Jeffrey and Mark Ingestrie rode up to the spot.

"You have—have—" cried Ingestrie.

"Yes, at last, Mr. Ingestrie," said Sir Richard. "I had some information that he was hovering about the coast, and came here to see you all. I am sorry to defraud the gallows of its due: but there lies Todd!"

A couple of the officers now dismounted, while the others held their horses, and they dragged the wretched man to the side of the road.

"Is he dead?" said Ingestrie.

"No," said Todd, opening his eyes. "He still lives to curse you all! I—"

It was evident that he wished to say more; but he was bleeding internally, and he began to struggle with the volumes of blood that rose to his throat. With a horrible shriek, he rolled over on to his face, and then, after one sharp convulsion of his limbs, he lay perfectly still.

One of the officers turned him round again. One glance at the face was sufficient. The guilty spirit of Sweeney Todd had fled at last to its account!

"Dead," said Sir Richard Blunt. "Let the body lie here, and we will all ride on to Brighton, and from there send some conveyance for it. Mr. Ingestrie and you, Colonel Jeffrey, are witnesses of his end, and I can only say that I feel now as if a heavy weight were lifted off my breast. The good, and the kind, and true, need no longer live in fear of the wild vengeance of this man. Let us hope that Heaven will have more mercy upon his guilty soul than ever he had consideration for the sufferings of others."

The Death Of Sweeney Todd.

The Death Of Sweeney Todd.

CHAPTER CLXXIII.
THE CONCLUSION.

We have little to say in conclusion, now that the chief actor in the fearful Domestic Drama it has been our fate to record, is no more. Todd was buried in the old church-yard at Brighton, but no record of the spot where the murderer's bones decayed was preserved.

Sir Richard Blunt lived long to enjoy the respect and the admiration of all who knew him, and died full of years and honours.

The sunshine of the existence of Johanna and Mark was perfectly unclouded, and the colonel and Arabella, likewise, presented a true picture of connubial felicity. In due time Tobias was married to her whom he loved so well; and as he got older and more used to the world, that timidity of disposition that Todd by his cruelties had induced, entirely left him.

Ben did not marry after all, and he never ceased to congratulate himself upon his escape. Mr. and Mrs. Oakley were happy in the happiness of Johanna.

The mad-house at Peckham was completely pulled down, and in the well at the back of it was found the skeleton of the wretched victim of Fogg's villany. It was by his own hand that Fogg really died.

Often as Johanna would sit on a winter's evening, with her children climbing upon her knee, she would, with a faltering voice, tell them what their dear father had suffered to procure for her and for them THE STRING OF PEARLS.

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Transcriber's Note:

Archaic and colloquial spelling and punctuation was retained.

Chapter numbers were retained, even when mis-numbered.

Missing or obscured punctuation was corrected.

Typographical errors were silently corrected. Three unpaired double quotation marks could not be corrected with confidence.

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