

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

Anonymous

Table of Contents

<u>SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET</u>	1
<u>Anonymous</u>	2
<u>CHAPTER I</u>	3
<u>CHAPTER II</u>	5
<u>CHAPTER III</u>	6
<u>CHAPTER IV</u>	10
<u>CHAPTER V</u>	12
<u>CHAPTER VI</u>	15
<u>CHAPTER VII</u>	17
<u>CHAPTER VIII</u>	22
<u>CHAPTER IX</u>	25
<u>CHAPTER X</u>	27
<u>CHAPTER XI</u>	31
<u>CHAPTER XII</u>	33
<u>CHAPTER XIII</u>	37

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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- CHAPTER I.
 - CHAPTER II.
 - CHAPTER III.
 - CHAPTER IV.
 - CHAPTER V.
 - CHAPTER VI.
 - CHAPTER VII.
 - CHAPTER VIII.
 - CHAPTER IX.
 - CHAPTER X.
 - CHAPTER XI.
 - CHAPTER XII.
 - CHAPTER XIII.
-

Transcribed by Justin Gilbert and Michael Holmes

'A Thrilling Story of the Old City of London. Founded on Facts.'

CHAPTER I.

HARK! twelve o'clock is proclaimed by old 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 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 strong to distance others!

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

Is it a fire? is it a fight? or anything else sufficiently alarming or 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 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 at Mrs. 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 to great distances. Oh—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; the fat and the lean so artistically mixed up.

The counter in Lovett's shop was in the shape of a horse shoe, and it was the custom of the young bloods from the Temple and Lincoln's Inn to sit in a row at its edge, while , they partook of the pies, and chatted gaily about one thing and another.

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 Miss 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 pastrycook 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 declare 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 Bellyard, being sniffed up by many a poor wretch passing by.

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

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

"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. A penny pork, if you please, Mrs. Lovett. Ah! who would go without who could get pies like these?—eh, Master Clift?"

"Well, they are good; of course we know that, Tobias. So you are going to be a barber?"

"Yes, I am with Sweeney Todd, the barber of Fleet–street, opposite St. Dunstan's."

"The deuce you are! Well, I am going to a party tonight. I must be dressed and shaved. I'll patronise your master. " Tobias put his mouth close to the ear of the young lawyer and whispered the one word— "Don't." Tobias placed his fingers to his lips and left, and was about to enter his master's shop when 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 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 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 18 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; "aye, 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. Be discreet then, and you have nothing to fear. Do not force me to do that 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 out and shall not return for an hour or perhaps longer, and mind you take care of the shop."

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

CHAPTER II.

At the same hour that the above scene I was taking place, a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, accompanied by an immense Newfoundland dog, might be seen wending his way down Fleet-street. Suddenly he stopped in front of a barber's shop, and after a word or two to his dog, which quietly seated itself outside, he entered. Now Lieutenant Thornhill, for such was the gentleman's name, was a brave man; but, brave as he was, a slight feeling of uneasiness crept over him as he gazed upon the face of Sweeney Todd, the barber, who, with upraised hand, appeared in the act of striking a boy who was crouched in the corner. The ferocious look of Sweeney Todd at that moment was indeed appalling, but it was instantly changed into a smile on perceiving the stranger.

"Shaved, sir. Yes, sir. Excuse me, sir. I was endeavouring to impress upon this boy how much better it would be for his future welfare if he were to take pattern by me, and devote his few spare hours in reading the Bible. Take a seat, sir?"

Thornhill seated himself in a large armchair, Todd stropping his razor, and darting his serpent like orbs on his customer.

"One minute, sir;" said Todd, with a bland smile. "You appear to be somewhat bronzed. From abroad sir?"

"Yes. I have just arrived from India. By-the-bye, can you inform me where a person named Oakley, a spectacle maker, resides? it is somewhere in this neighbourhood. I have a small packet which has been intrusted [sic] to me to deliver to one of the family."

Todd's eyes sparkled.

"Sir, you could not have asked a better person than myself. I do know where Oakley lives; it is in Fore-street, a little shop with two windows." Then turning to the boy, he said:

"Dear me, Tobias, I really had forgotten you. Here, dear boy, take twopence, go to Mrs. Lovett's and buy two of those nice pies for yourself. Don't hurry. Say half-an-hour." The boy timidly withdrew.

Thornhill mildly reminded Sweeney Todd that he wished to be shaved.

"Certainly, sir. Polish you off in no time. But, as your beard is so strong, I'll just step into the next room for another razor."

He did so. A slight, creaking sound was heard—

The chair was vacant.

Thornhill had disappeared.

Then followed a loud barking and scratching at the door. Todd, with ghastly face, peered over the shop-blind, and, perceiving the dog, seized a stout cudgel, with the intention of inflicting summary vengeance; and opening the door for that purpose he was instantly capsized by the noble animal, who bounded into the shop.

The dog, after sniffing in every hole and corner, set up a dismal howl. Todd, who had in the meantime fastened himself in his room, staggered back in terror as he saw the dog seize Thornhill's hat and rush out with it into the street.

CHAPTER III.

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

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, Colonel Jeffery, 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 of 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 young, was cashiered for fighting a duel with his superior officer."

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

"It has, indeed. I [illegible] what keeps him. He went last night, and said he would pull up to the Temple stairs, because he wanted to call on somebody by the waterside; 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."

"He's coming," said the other.

"What makes you think that?"

"Because I see his dog. There, don't you see, swimming in the water 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 seems exhausted."

Then addressing the crew, he shouted:

"Lend a hand there to Mr. Thornhill's dog, some of you." And in a suppressed voice he said to his companion:

"Why, it's a hat he has in his mouth!"

The dog made towards the vessel; and as with the assistance of the seamen he reached the deck, he sank down upon it in a state of 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 in 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 his coat.

"You, understand him," said the captain to the passenger; "something has happened to Thornhill, I'll be bound; and you see object of the dog is to got 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 so accompany you; there may be more in it than we think of, when we look how anxious the poor beast is."

The captain ordered a boat to be launched at once, and manned by four stout rowers, 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.

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 soon reached the Temple.

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

The dog led them through the Temple with great rapidity, pursuing with admirable sagacity the precise path that his master had taken towards the entrance to the Temple in Fleet-street, opposite Chancery-lane. Darting

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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 had 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 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 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 anyone 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."

"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 gently 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.

The dog had watched the countenances of all parties during the 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."

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

"It is in Fore—street—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, but he contrived to get free of them, 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. 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 Mrs. Oakley.

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

"But what am I to do? I sail tonight; 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. "

"You may depend upon me. But that I know he set his heart upon performing the message he had to deliver, I should recommend that we at once get into this home 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.

Retracing their steps they found that Hector would not move an inch from the barber's door. There he sat with the hat by his side—exhibiting occasionally a formidable row of teeth when anybody shewed a disposition to touch it; but who shall describe the anger of Sweeney Todd, when he found that he was 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. 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 shrank back. How bad Sweeney Todd terrified the boy about his mother! He must have done so, or Tobias would never have shrunk as he did.

Then the barber 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 uttered the words.

This was what Sweeney Todd certainly did not expect. He would have been glad of any 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.

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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

"Ah, where indeed?" said Todd; "I should not wonder if he had come to a 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; he shortly replied:

"Does he? He is wrong then."

Sweeney Todd had no desire to enter into anything like a controversy with 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 rivetted his eyes on the door, and if we may judge from the expression of his countenance his thoughts were not of a pleasant anticipatory character, for now and then he gave a grin as may well have sat on the features of a demon.

CHAPTER IV.

Seated in a neat little parlour at the back of the spectacle-maker's shop were Mr. Oakley and his beautiful daughter Johanna; they had evidently been conversing on a very painful subject

"Dear father," said the girl, "your kind words were well meant, and if I have any consolation it is the knowledge that in revealing to you the state of my feelings, you do not blame me. A vessel has arrived from India, and tortured by my hopes and fears, this day has been one of the most wretched that I have ever passed. Not even two years ago, when I parted with Mark Ingestrie, did I feel such a pang of anguish as now fills my heart, when I see the day gliding away and the evening creeping on apace without word or token from him."

Her father tried to console her, but she wept such bitter tears as only such a heart as hers can know, when it feels the deep and bitter anguish of desertion.

At this moment her mother entered.

"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 time after time 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——."

We here leave the happy couple to settle their differences, while Johanna retired 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 were 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."

And so she tried to while 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

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

of time in order to become wearisome to her.

She had said that she would be in the Temple-gardens two hours before sunset instead of one, and she kept her word. Looking happier than she had done for weeks, she tripped down the stairs of her father's house, and left by the private staircase without attracting any attention.

As he walked upon that side of the way of Feet-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 villainy 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.

CHAPTER V.

The clock struck the hour of meeting, and Johanna looked anxiously for anyone who should seem to her to bear the appearance of being a man such as she might suppose Mark Ingestrie would choose for his friend.

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

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

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

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

"I am proud to say I am he who comes to bring you news of Mark Ingestrie, but sorry to say I am not the messenger that was expressly deputed by him"

"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!"

"Calm 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."

"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 a 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."

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,

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

you can imagine how extremely, tempting such an offer was likely to be. He embraced it at once with the greatest pleasure.

"It is from the lips of another, 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.

They sailed in an ill-fated ship—but I must not anticipate; 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 friend-ship 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; but 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; but by the utmost precautions, 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."

"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. 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

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

perished. 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 the night watch 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 shewed 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, he disappeared somewhere about Fleet-street. We trace him from Temple stairs to a barber there named Sweeney Todd, but beyond there no information can be obtained."

"Gracious Heaven!"

"What makes the affair more extraordinary is that nothing will induce Thornhill's dog to leave the place."

"Kind sir, I thank you. I will go home, and pray for strength to maintain my heart against this sad affliction."

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 VI.

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 Moorfield, then a place very much frequented by dealers in bullion and precious stones. He was about entering his door 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 recognizing Sweeney Todd, and well might the old lapidary start at such a very unprepossessing looking personage who thus addressed him.

"Do you deal in precious stones?"

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

"No, I sell."

"Ah, I dare say it's not in my line; if they are rubies they are not in the market."

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

"The d——l you do! Why, you don't mean to say you have any of them?"

"Come, I'm too old to joke with, and am waiting for my supper. Just look at the pearls."

"I can't, to-night."

"Well, I'll go Mr. Coventry's; he'll deal with me."

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 24 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 £50 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 £100 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 everyday 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 £12,000, and I will let you have them for £10,000. What do you think of that for an offer?"

"What odd noise was that?"

"Oh, it was only I who laughed."

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

"Hark ye, my friend; since you do know the value of your pearls, and this is a downright business transaction, I think I can find a customer who will give £9,000 for them, and if so I have no objection to give you £8,000."

"Give me the £8,000," said Sweeney Todd.

"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 to be bought like a piece 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 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 a 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 if I sell them to you at a thief's price, but if I want their value you are particular."

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

"I am not 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 easily, 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 to 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. 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.

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 VII.

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 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 to any of us?"

"I came here because I found the open door, and I was told by someone to enter here, as I was pursued."

"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 someone 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 questions 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 one's self—you must pass by that inquiry."

"Shall we do so?" inquired the interrogator of those around him, and gathering his due 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?"

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

"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, thrusting his hand into his bosom drawing out the string of 24 pearls, "I challenge you, or anyone, 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.

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 are 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 shewed 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 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."

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

"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."

"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 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 shewed 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 at 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 to 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 24 miles on the road."

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 to 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 everyone 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."

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

"All wrong, I say."

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

"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 a 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 prejudiced 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 forever, 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."

"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!"

But as each of them approached he was struck down, and at length finding himself on the second floor landing, and that someone was descending from above he rushed into one of the rooms and in an instant he had locked the door, which was strong.

"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

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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."

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 VIII.

Johanna Oakley would not allow Colonel Jefferey 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."

They parted, and Johanna proceeded to her father's house.

The next day Colonel Jefferey visited his friend, the captain, and it was agreed that the colonel should take a bed at Lime-tree Lodge, the residence of the captain, 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 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 Jefferey had during the night concerning his friend Thornbill, 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. [illegible] they walked towards Fleet-street and soon arrived opposite the little shop within which there appeared 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 extraordinarily 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 anywhere but in his own shop, and when we come to consider, Sweeney Todd's adventures

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

of the proceeding evening, we shall not feel 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 had 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 Jefferey. "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 they 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 Dumbledown 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 Jefferey 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. Ain't 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 name—"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 connections."

"A very good plan," said Sweeney Todd. "I'll be as quick so 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 shaving 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—

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

"Clever—very ingenious—but it won't do. Oh dear, no, not at all! I am not so easily taken in—diamond merchants, ha! ha! 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."

CHAPTER IX.

"We return now to Bell-yard."

Mrs. Lovett having disposed of her cook, has engaged another, who had applied to her in half-starved condition, with an unlimited leave to eat as much as possible. No wonder that, banishing all scruple, a man so placed would take the situation with little inquiry. But people will tire of good things.

As he was seated in the bakehouse under the shop, he muttered to himself—

"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 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 of 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 bag of flour begin gradually to come down.

"Hilloa; hilloa!" he cried; "Mrs. Lovett—Mrs. Lovett!"

Down came the flour, and the trap was closed.

"Oh, I can't stand this sort of thing," he exclaimed; "I cannot be made into a 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. 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.

He now made a still narrower examination of this vault, but he gained nothing by that. A closer inspection convinced him that there were a number of lines, written with lead pencil, after some difficulty he deciphered 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 walls 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 a new lustre to the sunbeams—"

Here, most unfortunately, the writing broke off, and our friend, who, up to this point 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 point, but not enough to gratify it.

"This is, indeed, most provoking," he exclaimed. "What can this most dreadful secret be, which 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 been then been 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 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 meat was kept into the large vault where the ovens were he trod upon

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

a piece of paper that a piece of paper that was lying upon the ground, and which he was quite certain he had not observed before. 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:—

"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 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!"

"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."

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.

"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 you 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."

"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 I 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."

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 100 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 price paid for his continued existence, and flinging himself upon the ground, he fell into a deep slumber.

CHAPTER X.

About this time, while the incidents of our tale are taking place, the pious frequenters of old St. Dunstan's Church noticed a most abominable odour throughout the sacred edifice.

A ponderous stone was raised in the flooring; the beadle, the churchwarden, and the workmen men shrank back—back; they could go no further.

"Ain't it a horrid smell?" said the beadle.

A gentleman, plainly dressed, advanced. He was no other than Sir Richard Blunt, the magistrate, who had been consulted by Colonel Jeffery as to the disappearance of Thornhill. He had taken great interest in the case and was endeavouring to unravel the mystery.

"Gentlemen," said he, "if what I expect be found here we cannot have too few witnesses."

The workmen were dismissed.

Sir Richard took a paper from his pocket and unfolded it.

"From this plan," he said, "the stone which I have raised discloses a staircase communicating with two passages. I have instructions from the Home Secretary to use my own discretion in this affair. I will, therefore, with one of my officers, descend to the vaults."

Sir Richard and Crotchet, the officer, both commenced the descent.

On their return Sir Richard looked ghastly pale. He had evidently seen something which had shaken his strong nerves.

After the stone was replaced the magistrate gave a signal to Crotchet to follow him.

"Now, Crotchet, no one for the future is to be shaved in Sweeney Todd's alone."

"Had we not better grab him at once?" said the officer.

"No, he has an accomplice or accomplices."

The stone was replaced, and Sir Richard gave a signal to Crotchet, and they both left the church together.

"Now, Crotchet," said the magistrate, "I will give you further particulars confided to me. It appears Sweeney Todd's shop-boy has also disappeared, and he placed a notice in his window requiring another. Now, Miss Oakley, being convinced that Thornhill is no other than Mark Ingestrie, a former sweetheart of hers under an assumed name, and that he has been kidnapped or murdered by Sweeney Todd, has disguised herself as a boy, and been engaged by the barber. It is a dangerous game, but she is a brave girl, and I am in communication with her. Sweeney Todd is evidently connected with Mrs. Lovett, and the vaults lead to her pie-shop. I must endeavour to find out the bake-house and the cook. I will at once set about it."

After parting with Sir Richard Blunt at Temple Bar, Crotchet 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 another officer.

Todd was standing at his door; he glared up and down the street like some one intent upon the destruction of a fresh victim.

"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,

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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.

"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 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 particular friend of mine, so you see I can't have it done. If you walk into him, you must walk through me first. Only just put down that razor, and I'll give you such a walloping, 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.

The people took the part of the dog and his new master, and it was in vain that Sweeney Todd exhibited his rent garment as 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 glared at the crouching boy, or rather Johanna, and seizing a razor threw himself into a ferocious attitude; but at this moment the door opened and a sea-faring 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.

"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 gentleman to remain, even for a few moments, on an unsteady chair. 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.

Then turning to Johanna, who appeared like a timid boy, said—

"Charley, you can run over to Mrs. Lovett and get a pie for yourself."

Charley left the shop.

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

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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 parlor 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 around, 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 movement of pullies, was to be heard, when Sir Rich 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 villainous barber.

Todd fairly danced with rage. Hark!—a knock; he opened the door—

"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 glanced at the direction. It was to him, sure enough, and written in a very clerk-like hand, too. 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 tomorrow 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."

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

Todd ground his teeth together in a horrible manner. He dashed the letter on 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 saw a postscript at the foot of the shipowner'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.

"Charley," he said, "I am going out. I shall not be long."

CHAPTER XI.

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.

After Todd's departure a slight tap was given at the door, and Sir Richard Blunt entered.

"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 I come here now to be shaved with perfect safety. I have made such arrangements that Todd cannot take another life."

"Thank Heaven!"

Sir Richard withdrew.

Soon after this Todd re-entered the shop.

"Hush," said he; "here's somebody coming. Why it's old Mr. Wrankley, the tobacconist, I declare. Good-day to you, sir—shaved; I suppose? I am 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 one 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 carefulness; 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 12 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."

"Hilloa!—I think you have cut me."

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

"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 slaving–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's 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 not have 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.

"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 fall 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 knowing 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?"

CHAPTER XII.

The handle of Sweeney Todd's shop door turned and a man presented himself, and Todd saw that the visitor was a substantial-looking farmer, with dirty top-boots, an 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 I 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 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 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 board, I think, do you see."

"Why, sir, in a manner of speaking," replied Todd, "it is a strong beard. 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."

"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.

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

The moment his back was turned, the seeming farmer 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 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 20ft. 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.

"Oh, God, the dead! the dead! Oh, 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 Richard, in a voice that rang 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 I 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.

"[illegible] well, my men," said the magistrate "and don't let him lay violent hands upon himself".

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."

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.

"Shut up the shop, Crotchet," said Sir Richard, "and then get a coach. I will lodge this man at once in

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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 in 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."

"I intrust you with him, 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 doorstep, 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 genman 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 time's 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 the atrocities of Sweeney Todd slowly sank and the revolving plank hung suspended by its axle, while a voice from below called out—

"Is it all right, sir?"

"Yes, Crotchet has taken him to Newgate. I am now all 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, 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 all been waiting to catch Mr. Wrankley when the chair should descend with him.

"Convulsions!" 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.

"Convulsions! 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

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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 a blaze."

"Convulsions!" then cried the beadle. "I ain't declared out of danger yet, then!"

CHAPTER XIII.

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 chronometrical 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 requires only 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 admiring [?] their charming Mrs. Lovett.

"Sir, I tell you once 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 shrank 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 battle 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 to leave you 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 must now 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 stout, impertinent man, but

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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—sure 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 would 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 was 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 shew 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 sprang 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.

"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, 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.

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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 ago. How, is you, mum, in yer fellins 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?"

"In the cupboard, in the parlour," said Mrs. Lovett, "there is a letter addressed to me by Sir Richard Blunt. It will be worth your while to save it from the mob. Let me shew you where to lay your hands upon it, and if you have any wish 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 precious 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—a knife!"

"Well, you are a rum customer," said Crotchet "A knife, s'help me, I can't see one; will a fork do?"

"Let's get along with her," Crotchet added, "I have her tight. She won't get away. Make way 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.

It took a quarter of an hour to reach the coach from the door of Mrs. Lovett's shop, a distance that in 20 steps anyone 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!

The coach door was opened, and Crotchet pushed his prisoner in, and she was safely lodged in Newgate.

"Now, mum," said Crotchet to Mrs. Lovett, "didn't I say I'd bring yer to the old stone-jug as safe as nine-pence?"

"She only looked at him vacantly; and, then, glaring around her with a shudder, she said—

"And this is Newgate!"

"Just a few," said Crochet.

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

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

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.

The cook and Crotchet then made their way to Sir Richard Blunt's 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."

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.

"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, the consequence was then, that directly he found me very different from what he wished, 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: but he said, 'You must give up all love nonsense if you wish to preserve my favour,' and the 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.

"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 was abandoned by my relative, and left penniless almost. I heard that an expedition was about to start to explore some rich island in the Southern Sea. If successful, everyone who took part in it would be enriched; and if unsuccessful, I could not lose my life in a better cause than 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, 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."

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

"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 her 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. I walked from Southampton to London, subsisting on the road as best I could. 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."

"The first object that met my eyes in that Temple-gardens was the being whom I loved so fondly leaning upon the arm of a man in 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 around her waist."

"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."

"I found myself, tired, worn out, famishing, opposite 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, O 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, your name is Mark Ingestrie!"

"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?"

"Thornhill 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 Thornhill's 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."

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 entirely a subject 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 sprang forward with a cry of joy. In another moment she was in the arms of Mark

SWEENEY TODD, THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET

Ingestrie, and Sir Richard Blunt had left the room.

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 anyone in the world but themselves. At the end of the period of time, though, Sir Richard Blunt gently walked into the room.

"Well," he said, "have you [illegible] understanding about that military man in the Temple-gardens?"

Johanna sprang towards the magistrate, and placing her arm 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 these few words, more than 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?"

"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 it from Todd's escritoire myself, and they are yours and Johanna's. Will you permit me always to call you 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 exigencies 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 once, and be happy enough with the proceeds."

Our tale is now drawing to a close. Sweeney Todd suffered the extreme penalty of the law, which Mrs. Lovett avoided, by poisoning herself.

Mark Ingestrie and Johanna were united, and no one was more welcome at the wedding than Sir Richard Blunt and Colonel Jeffery.

[THE END.]