

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Sweeney Todd the Barber

Sweeney Todd the Barber

(A) Dm A Dm / Bb Am Dm / Dm A Dm / Dm Am Dm /
F - / Gm / Dm A Dm / Gm Dm /
Dm A Dm / Dm A Dm Am / Dm A / Dm A / Dm - / Dm A Dm

In Fleet Street, that's in London Town
When King Charlie wore the crown,
There lived a man of great renown
'Twas Sweeney Todd the Barber.

One shave from him and you'd want no more,
You'd feel his razor sharp,
Then tumble, wallop!, through the floor
And wake up playing a harp, and singing . . .

Sweeney Todd the Barber, by God he were better than the play,
Sweeney Todd the Barber, "I'll polish 'em off" he used to say.
His clients through the floor would slope
But he had no fear of the hangman's rope
"Dead men can't talk with their mouths full of soap,"
Said Sweeney Todd the Barber.

Now underneath the shop, it's true
Where the bodies tumble through,
There lived a little widow, who
Loved Sweeney Todd the Barber.

She made her living by selling pies,
Her meat pies were a treat,
Chock full of meat and such a size
For she was getting the meat from mister

Sweeney Todd the Barber, by God he were better than the play,
Sweeney Todd the Barber, "I'll polish 'em off" he used to say.
For many a poor orphan lad
The first square meal he ever had
Was a hot meat pie made out of his dad
From Sweeney Todd the Barber
(spoken)

It was Saturday night in Old Sweeney Todd's shop
And the customers sat in a row.
While behind a screen Sweeney shaved some poor mug

And his sweetheart made pies down below.

Though none were aware, it were "cut prices" there,
They were rolling up in twos and threes,
And his foot got quite sore pressing knob on the floor
And his voice went from saying "Next please!"

Well in came a swell and he asked Sweeney Todd
"Just a shave and a perfumed shampoo,
For I've just got engaged." Sweeney just pressed the knob and
said,
"There, now it's all fallen through."

Well a bookmaker sat with his mouthful of soap, said,
"They're all backing favourites today,
So I 'spect I'll go down," Sweeney said, "Yes you will,"
And he did, he went down straight away.

But what rotten luck, the darn trap went and stuck
For the hinge he'd forgotten to grease,
And a customer started calling out "Police!"
Just as Sweeney was shouting, "Next please!"

Yes, he ran to the door and he shouted out "Police!"
He shouted out "Police!", nine times or ten
But no policeman came, it wasn't no wonder
Police weren't invented by then.

But up came the bold Bow Street Runners (Hurrah!)
And he had to let many a pie burn
And they dragged him to Quad, and next day Sweeney Todd
Was condemned to be switched off at Tyburn.

And there on the gibbet he hangs in his chains
And they do say a little black crow
Made a sweet little nest in old Sweeney Todd's whiskers
And he sang as he swang to and fro . . .

(sung)

Sweeney Todd the Barber, by God he were better than the play,
Sweeney Todd the Barber, they buried him underneath the clay
And Old Nick calls him from his grave shouting,
"Wake up, Sweeney, I need a shave,
And Mrs Nick wants a permanent wave from Sweeney Todd the Barber."

It can be argued that George Dibdin Pitt's "domestic drama,"
Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street (1842), was the

first true crime play. Critics have speculated, without success, as to the historical characters upon which the hero and heroine were based. Stanley Holloway credits R.P.Weston, a prolific writer for the Halls, with the creation of this cante-fabel which pokes fun at the melodrama which was so terrifying to Victorians. Recorded on 'Ere's Olloway, Columbia Records, 1956 and on An Evening At The English Music Hall, Front Hall records FHR-030, 1984.

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