

BARNABY RUDGE

By CHARLES DICKENS

"Ha ha!" roared the fellow, smiting his leg...

"Ay, ay, we shall see, Muster Gashford, we shall see. You won't have to complain of me," returned the other, shaking his head.

"You'll be the death of me," cried Dennis, with another roar. "You will. But what's in the wind now, Muster Gashford?" he asked hoarsely.

"The sooner the better," said Dennis, with another oath. "We shall have to draw up in divisions, our numbers being so large; and I believe I may venture to say," resumed Gashford, affecting not to hear the interruption...

"No doubt," said Gashford, smiling as before. And when he said so, Dennis roared again, and smote his leg still harder, and falling into fits of laughter, wiped his eyes with the corner of his neckerchief...

"You would be cool, I know," pursued the secretary, still smiling, and still managing his eyes, so that he could watch him closely, and really not be seen in turn, "obedient to orders, and perfectly temperate. You would lead your party into no danger I am certain."

"No man alive can doubt it!" "No dead either. Parliament says this here—says Parliament 'If any man, woman, or child does anything which goes against a certain number of our acts—how many hanging laws may there be at this present time, Muster Gashford? Fifty?'"

"The secretary put his hand before his eyes to shade them from the glare of the lamp, and for some moments looked at Hugh with a frowning brow, as if he remembered to have seen him lately, but could not call to mind where, or on what occasion. His uncertainty was very brief, for before Hugh had spoken a word, he said, as his countenance cleared up—"

"Well, say fifty. Parliament says 'If any man, woman, or child does anything against any one of these fifty acts, that man, woman, or child shall be worked off by Dennis.' George the Third steps in when they number very strong at the end of a session, and says 'These are too many for Dennis. I'll have half for myself and Dennis shall have half for himself; and sometimes he throws me one over that I don't expect, as he did three years ago, when I got Mary Jones, a young woman of nineteen who came up to Tyburn with an infant at her breast, and was worked off for taking a piece of cloth off the counter of a shop in Ludgate hill, and putting it down again when the shopman saw her; and who had never done any harm before, and only tried to do that, in consequence of her husband having been pressed three weeks previous, and she being left to beg, with two young children—as was proved upon the trial. Ha ha! Well! That being the law and the practice of England, is in the glory of England, ain't it, Muster Gashford?'"

"The enrollment being completed, and Hugh having been informed by Gashford, in his peculiar manner, of the peaceful and strictly lawful objects contemplated by the boy to which he now belonged—during which recital Mr. Dennis nudged him very much with his elbow, and made divers remarkable faces—the secretary gave them both to understand that he desired to be alone. Therefore they took their leave without delay, and came out of the house together."

"I have no doubt they will," said the secretary. "Well, then, look here," said the hangman. "If these Papists gets into power, and begins to boil and roast instead of hang, what becomes of my work! If they touch my work that's a part of so many laws, what becomes of the laws in general, what becomes of the religion, what becomes of the country? Did you ever go to church, Muster Gashford?'"

"That's social," said his new friend. "Which way shall we take? Shall we go and have a look at doors that we shall make a pretty good clattering at, before long—eh, brother?'"

"Ever!" repeated the secretary with some indignation, "of course." "Well," said the ruffian, "I've been once—twice, counting the time I was christened—and when I heard the Parliament prayed for, and thought how many new hanging laws they made every session I considered that I was prayed for. Now mind, Muster Gashford," said the fellow, taking up his stick and shaking it with a ferocious air, "I mustn't have my Protestant work touched, nor this here Protestant state of things altered in no degree, if I can help it; I mustn't have no Papists interfering with me unless they come to me to be worked off in course of law; I mustn't have no biling, no roasting, no frying—nothing but hanging. My lord may well call me an earnest fellow. In support of the great Protestant principle of having plenty of that, I'll, and here he beat his club upon the ground, "burn, fight, kill—do anything you bid me, so that it's bold and devilish—though the end of it was, that I got hung myself. There, Muster Gashford!"

"He told him, too, who some of the Lords and Commons were, by name, as they came in and out; whether they were friendly to the Papists or otherwise; and bade him take notice of their liveries and equipages, that he might be sure of them in case of need. Sometimes he drew him close to the windows of a passing carriage, that he might see its master's face by the light of the lamps; and, both in respect of people and localities, he showed so much acquaintance with everything around, that it was plain he had often studied there before; as indeed, when they grew a little more confidential, he confessed he had."

"I find," said Mr. Tappertit, looking round on the assembled guests, "that brother What's-his-name and I are old acquaintances. You never heard anything more of that rascal, I suppose, eh?" "Not a syllable," replied Hugh. "I never want to. I don't believe I ever shall. He's dead long ago, I hope."

"It tells the man that finds it to come here, don't it?" asked Hugh. "I'm no scholar, myself, but I showed it to a friend, and he said it did." "It certainly does," said Gashford, opening his eyes to their utmost width; "really this is the most remarkable circumstance I have ever known. How did you come by this piece of paper, my good friend?" "Muster Gashford," wheezed the hangman under his breath, "agin' all Newgate!"

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"The greater part of the company implicitly subscribed to this opinion, and testified their faith in Hugh by nods and looks of great significance. Mr. Tappertit sat and contemplated him for a long time in silence, as if he suspended his judgment, then drew a little nearer to him, and eyed him ever more carefully; then went close up to him, and took him apart into a dark corner.

"What's the use of shooting wide of the mark, eh, old boy!" cried Hugh. "My sentiments all over!" rejoined the hangman. "This is the sort of chap for my division, Muster Gashford. Down with him, sir. Put him on the roll. I'd stand godfather to him, if he was to be christened in a bonfire, made of the ruins of the Bank of England."

When they had paraded the street and all the avenues of the building in this manner for near two hours, they turned away, and his friend asked him what he thought of what he had seen, and whether he was prepared for a good hot piece of work if it should come to that. "The hotter the better," said Hugh, "I'm prepared for anything."

"No Popery, brother!" cried the hangman. "No Popery, brother!" responded Hugh. "Popery, Popery," said the secretary with his usual mildness. "It's all the same!" cried Dennis. "It's all right. Down with him, Muster Gashford. Down with everybody, down with everything! Hurrah for the Protestant religion! That's the time of day, Muster Gashford!"

As they were thirsty by this time, Dennis proposed that they should repair to The Boot, where there was good company and strong liquor. Yielding a ready assent, they bent their steps that way with no loss of time.

"The secretary regarded them both with a very favorable expression of countenance, while they gave loose to these and other demonstrations of their patriotic purpose; and was about to make some remarks aloud, when Dennis, stepping up to him, and shading his mouth with his hand, said in a hoarse whisper, as he nudged him with his elbow—"

"Before putting his lips to the liquor which was brought for them, Dennis drank in a loud voice the health of Lord George Gordon, President of the Great Protestant Association, which toast Hugh pledged likewise, with corresponding enthusiasm. A fiddler, who was present, and who appeared to act as the appointed minstrel of the company, forthwith struck up a Scotch reel, and that in tones so invigorating, that Hugh and his friend (who had both been drinking before) rose from their seats as by previous concert, and to the great admiration of the assembled guests, performed an extemporaneous No-Popery Dance."

"The secretary assented to this proposition with the best grace he could assume—it is difficult to feign a true professional relish; which is eccentric sometimes—and after asking the candidate a few unimportant questions, proceeded to enroll him a member of the Great Protestant Association of England. If anything could have exceeded Mr. Dennis' joy on the happy conclusion of this ceremony, it would have been the rapture with which he received the announcement that the new member could neither read nor write; those two arts being (as Mr. Dennis swore) the greatest possible curse a civilized community could know, and militating more against the professional emoluments and usefulness of the great constitutional office he had the honor to hold, than any adverse circumstances that could present themselves to his imagination."

"The applause which the performance of Hugh and his new friend elicited from the company at The Boot had not yet subsided, and the two dancers were still panting from their exertions, which had been of a rather extreme and violent character, when the party was re-enforced by the arrival of some more guests, who, being a detachment of United Bulldogs, were received with very flattering remarks of distinction and respect."

"The enrollment being completed, and Hugh having been informed by Gashford, in his peculiar manner, of the peaceful and strictly lawful objects contemplated by the boy to which he now belonged—during which recital Mr. Dennis nudged him very much with his elbow, and made divers remarkable faces—the secretary gave them both to understand that he desired to be alone. Therefore they took their leave without delay, and came out of the house together."

"The leader of this small party—for, including himself, they were but three in number—was our old acquaintance, Mr. Tappertit, who seemed, physically speaking, to have grown smaller with years (particularly as to his legs, which were stupendously little), but who, in a moral point of view, in personal dignity and self-esteem, had swelled into a giant. Nor was it by any means difficult for the most unobservant person to detect this state of feeling in the quondam 'Prentice, for it not only proclaimed itself impressively and beyond mistake in his majestic walk and kindling eye, but found a striking means of revelation in his turned-up nose, which scouted all things of earth with deep disdain, and sought communion with its kindred skies."

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Calendar for September 1905, showing days of the month, days of the week, and names of saints and feast days.

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Tappertit made this request and coupled it with an assurance that he needn't be frightened, amused Hugh mightily—so much indeed, that he saw nothing at all of the small man before him, through closing his eyes in a fit of hearty laughter, which shook his great broad sides until they ached again.

"Conceit!" said Mr. Tappertit, growing a little impatient under this disrespectful treatment. "Do you know me, feller?" "No!" cried Hugh. "Ha ha ha! Not I! But I should like to."

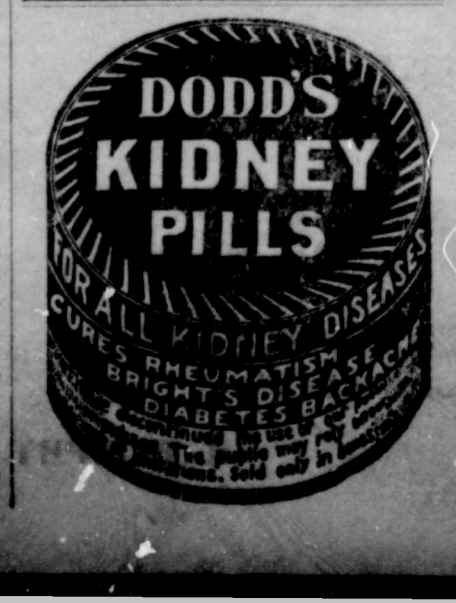
"And yet I'd have wagered a seven-shilling piece," said Mr. Tappertit, folding his arms, and confronting him with his legs wide apart, and firmly planted on the ground "that you once were hostler at the Maypole."

"Why it ain't!"—Hugh faltered. "Ain't it?" said Mr. Tappertit. "Are you sure of that? You remember G. Varden, don't you?" "Certainly Hugh did, and remembered G. Varden too, but that he didn't tell him."

"You remember coming down there, before I was put out of my time, to ask after a vagabond that had bolted off, and left his disconsolate father a prey to the bitterest emotions, and all the rest of it—don't you?" said Mr. Tappertit.

"Of course I do!" cried Hugh. "And I saw you there."

"Saw me there!" said Mr. Tappertit. "Yes, I should think you did see me there. The place would be troubled to go on without me. Don't you remember my thinking you liked the vagabond, and on that account going to quarrel with you; and then finding you detested him worse than poison, going to drink with you? Don't you remember that?"



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