

BARNABY RUDGE

By CHARLES DICKENS

Miss Miggs also put in her word to the same effect. She said that indeed and indeed Miss Dolly might take pattern by her blessed mother, who, she always had said, and always would say, though she were to be hanged, drawn, and quartered for it, next minute, was the mildest, aimablest, forgivingest-spirited female as ever she could have believed; the mere narration of whose excellencies had worked such a wholesome change in the mind of her own sister-in-law, that, whereas, before, she and her husband lived like cat and dog, and were in the habit of exchanging brass candlesticks, pots, flat-irons, and other such strong resentments, they were now the happiest and affectionate couple upon earth; as could be proved any day on application at Golden Lion Court, number twenty-seven, second bell-handle on the right-hand door-post. After glancing at herself as a comparatively worthless vessel, but still as one of some desert, she besought her to bear in mind that her aforesaid dear and only mother was of a weakly constitution and excitable temperament, who had constantly to sustain afflictions in domestic life, compared with which, thieves and robbers were as nothing, and yet never sunk down or gave way to despair or wrath, but, in prize-fighting phraseology, always came up to time with a cheerful countenance, and went in to win as if nothing had happened. When Miggs had finished her solo, her mistress struck in again, and the two together performed a duet to the same purpose: the burden being, that Mrs. Varden was persecuted perfection, and Mr. Varden, as the representative of mankind in that apartment, a creature of vicious and brutal habits, utterly insensible to the blessings he enjoyed. Of so refined a character, indeed, was their talent of assault under the mask of sympathy, that when Dolly, recovering, embraced her father tenderly, as in vindication of his goodness, Mrs. Varden expressed her solemn hope that this would be a lesson to him for the remainder of his life, and that he would do some little justice to a woman's nature ever afterwards—in which aspiration Miss Miggs, by divers sniffs and coughs, more significant than the longest oration, expressed her entire concurrence.

But the great joy of Miggs's heart was, that she not only picked up a full account of what had happened, but had the exquisite delight of conveying it to Mr. Tappertit for his jealousy and torture. For that gentleman, on account of Dolly's indisposition, had been requested to take his supper in the workshop, and it was conveyed thither by Miss Miggs's own fair hands.

"Oh, Simmun!" said the young lady, "such goings on to-day! Oh, gracious me, Simmun!"

Mr. Tappertit, who was not in the best of humors, and who disliked Miss Miggs more when she laid her hand on her heart and panted for breath than at any other time, as her deficiency of outline was most apparent under such circumstances, eyed her over in his loftiest style, and deigned to express no curiosity whatever.

"I never heard the like, nor nobody else," pursued Miggs. "The idea of interfering with her. What people can see in her, to make it worth their while to do so, that's the joke—he, he, he!"

Finding that there was a lady in the case, Mr. Tappertit haughtily requested his fair friend to be more explicit, and demanded to know what she meant by "her."

"Why, that Dolly," said Miggs, with an extremely sharp emphasis on the name. "But, oh, upon my word and honor, young Joseph Willett is a brave one; and he do deserve her, that he do."

"Woman!" said Mr. Tappertit, jumping off the counter on which he was seated; "beware!"

"My stars, Simmun!" cried Miggs, in affected astonishment. "You frighten me, to death! What's the matter?"

"There are strings," said Mr. Tappertit, flourishing his bread-and-butter knife in the air, "in the human heart that had better not be vibrated. That's what's the matter."

"Oh, very well—if you're in a huff," cried Miggs, turning away.

"Huff or no huff," said Mr. Tappertit, detaining her by the wrist. "What do you mean, Jezebel? What were you going to say? Answer me!"

Notwithstanding this unenviable exhortation, Miggs gladly did as she was required; and told him how that their young mistress, being alone in the meadows after dark, had been attacked by three or four tall men, who would have certainly borne her away and perhaps murdered her, but for the timely arrival of Joseph Willett, who with his own single hand put them to flight, and rescued her; to the lasting admiration of his fellow-creatures generally, and to the eternal love and gratitude of Dolly Varden.

"Very good," said Mr. Tappertit, fetching a long breath when the tale was told, and rubbing his hair up till it stood stiff and straight on end all over his head. "His days are numbered."

"Ob, Simmun!" "I tell you," said the apprentice, "his days are numbered. Leave me. Get along with you."

ideas his entrance had disturbed. "If time were money," he said, handling his snuff-box, "I would compound my creditors, and give them—let me see—how much a day? There's my nap after dinner—an hour—they're extremely welcome to that, and to make the most of it. In the morning, between my breakfast and the paper, I could spare them another hour; in the evening, before dinner, say another. Three hours a day. They might pay themselves in calls, with interest, in twelve months. I think I shall propose it to them. Ah, my centaur, are you there?"

"Here I am," replied Hugh, striding in, followed by a dog as rough and sullen as himself; "and trouble enough I've had to get here. What do you ask me to come for, and keep me out when I do come?"

"My good fellow," returned the other, raising his head a little from the cushion and carelessly surveying him from top to toe, "I am delighted to see you, and to have, in your being here, the very best proof that you are not kept out. How are you?"

"I'm well enough," said Hugh, impatiently. "You look a perfect marvel of health. Sit down."

"I'd rather stand," said Hugh. "Please yourself, my good fellow," returned Mr. Chester, rising, slowly pulling off the loose robe he wore, and sitting down before the dressing glass. "Please yourself by all means."

Having said this in the politest and blandest tone possible, he went on dressing, and took no further notice of his guest, who stood in the same spot as uncertain what to do next, eyeing him sulkily from time to time.

"Are you going to speak to me, master?" he said, after a long silence.

"My worthy creature," returned Mr. Chester, "you are a little ruffled and out of humor. I'll wait till you're quite yourself again. I am in no hurry."

This behavior had its intended effect. It humbled and abashed the man, and made him still more irresolute and uncertain. Hard words he could have returned, violence he would have repaid with interest, but this cool, complacent, contemptuous, self-possessed reception, caused him to feel his inferiority more completely than the most elaborate arguments. Everything contributed to this effect. His own rough speech, contrasted with the soft persuasive accents of the other; his rude bearing, and Mr. Chester's polished manner; the disorder and negligence of his ragged dress and the elegant attire he saw before him; with all the unaccustomed luxuries and comforts of the room, and the silence that gave him leisure to observe these things, and feel how ill at ease they made him; all these influences, which have too often some effect on tutored minds and become of almost irresistible power when brought to bear on such a mind as his, quelled Hugh completely. He moved by little and little nearer to Mr. Chester's chair, and glancing over his shoulder at the reflection of his face in the glass, as if seeking for some encouragement in his expression, said at length, with a rough attempt at conciliation.

"Are you going to speak to me, master, or am I to go away?"

"Speak to you," said Mr. Chester, "speak to you, good fellow. I have spoken, have I not? I am waiting for you."

"Why, look'ee, sir," returned Hugh with increased embarrassment, "am I the man that you privately let away from the Maypole, and told to bring it back whenever he might want to see you on a certain subject?"

"No doubt the same, or you have a twin brother," said Mr. Chester, glancing at the reflection of his anxious face; "which is not probable, I should say."

"Then I have come, sir," said Hugh, "and I have brought it back, and something else along with it. A letter, sir, it is, that I took from the person who had charge of it." As he spoke, he laid upon the dressing-table Dolly's last epistle. The very letter that had cost her so much trouble.

"Did you obtain this by force, my good fellow?" said Mr. Chester, casting his eye upon it without the least perceptible surprise or pleasure.

"Not quite," said Hugh. "Partly."

Table with 4 columns: DAY OF MONTH, DAY OF WEEK, COLOR OF VESTMENTS, and the liturgical calendar for July 1905, including Octave of St. John the Baptist, Third Sunday After Pentecost, etc.

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into custody and had him dragged before a justice with the stolen property upon him, in which case it was as certain he would have been hung as it was that he had been born. The ascendancy which it was the purpose of the man of the world to establish over this savage instrument, was gained from that time. Hugh's submission was complete. He dreaded him beyond description; and felt that accident and artifice had spun a web about him, which at a touch from such a master hand as his, would bind him to the gallows.

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