



"They will be a singular party," said Sir John, leaning his head upon his hand, and sipping his chocolate, "a very curious party. The hangman himself, the centaur, and the madman. The centaur would make a very handsome preparation in Surgeon's Hall, and would benefit science extremely. I hope they have taken care to bespeak—Peak, I am not at home, of course, to anybody but the hair-dresser."

tion to be seated, but had not availed himself of it. "Sir John"—he dropped his voice and drew nearer to the bed—"I am just now come from Newgate."

had something particular to communicate. I needn't tell you that he is no friend of mine, and that I had never seen him until the rioters beset my house."

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image of him on his stick, by way of braving death, and showing those who attended on him, how little he cared or thought about it. He gave this stick into his hands at Tyburn, and told him then, that the woman I have spoken of had left her own people to join a fine gentleman, and that, being deserted by him, and cast off by her old friends, she had sworn within her own proud breast, that whatever her misery might be, she would ask no help of any human being. He told him that she had kept her word to the last, and that meeting even him in the streets, she had been fond of her once, it seems—she had slipped from him by a trick, and he never saw her again, until, being in one of the frequent crowds at Tyburn, which some of his rough companions, he had been driven almost mad by seeing, in the criminal under another name, whose death he had come to witness, herself. Standing in the same place in which she had stood, he told the hangman this, and told him, too, her real name, which only her own people and the gentleman for whose sake she had left them, knew. That name he will tell again, Sir John, to none but you."

CHAPTER XVIII. As the locksmith walked slowly away from Sir John Chester's chambers, he lingered under the trees which shaded the path, almost hoping that he might be summoned to return. He had turned back thrice, and still loitered at the corner, when the clock struck twelve.

"To none but me!" exclaimed the knight, pausing in the act of raising his cup to his lips with a perfectly steady hand, and curling up his little finger for the better display of a brilliant ring with which it was ornamented; "but me!—My dear Mr. Varden, how very preposterous, to select me for his confidence! With you at his elbow, too, who are so perfectly trustworthy!"

thrice within as many weeks, turned your lawful son, Mr. Edward, from your door, you may have time, you may have years, to make your peace with him, Sir John; but that twelve o'clock will soon be here, and soon he passed forever."

"I thank you very much," returned the knight, kissing his delicate hand to the locksmith, "for your guileless advice, and I only wish, my good soul, although your simplicity is quite captivating, that you had a little more worldly wisdom. I never so much regretted the arrival of my hair-dresser as I do at this moment. God bless you! Good-morning! You will not forget my message to the ladies, Mr. Varden? Peak, show Mr. Varden to the door."

Gabriel said no more, but gave the knight a parting look, and left him. As he quitted the room, Sir John's face changed, and the smile gave place to a haggard and anxious expression, like that of a weary actor jaded by the performance of a difficult part. He rose from his bed with a heavy sigh, and wrapped himself in his morning-gown.

"So she kept her word," he said, "and was constant to her threat! I would I had never seen that dark face of hers—I might have read these consequences in it, from the first. This affair would make a noise abroad, if it rested on better evidence; but, as it is, and by not joining the scattered links of the chain, I can afford to slight it. Extremely distressing to the parent of such an uncouth creature! Still, I gave him very good advice. I told him he would certainly be hanged. I could have done no more if I had known of our relationship, and there are a great many fathers who have never done as much for their natural children. The hair-dresser may come in, Peak!"

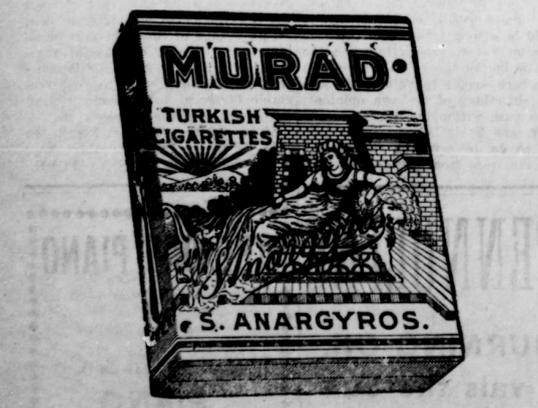
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have mercy on them—alas! I say I can do no more for them, but whom can I help? Mary Rudge will have a home, and a firm friend when she most wants one; but Barnaby—poor Barnaby—willing Barnaby—what aid can I render him? There are many, many men of sense, God forgive me," cried the honest locksmith, stopping in a narrow court to pass his hand across his eye, "I could better afford to lose than Barnaby. We have always been good friends, but I never knew, till now, how much I loved the lad."

There were not many in the great city who thought of Barnaby that day, otherwise than as an actor in a show which was to take place to-morrow. But, if the whole population had had his life to be spared, not one among them could have done so with a purer zeal or greater singleness of heart than the good locksmith.

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