

## OUR TABLE.

BARNABY RUDGE—BY BOZ.

MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK having been brought to a close, has been immediately followed by a new tale, under the somewhat indefinite title of "Barnaby Rudge," the first number of which only has reached this city. From so small a portion of the contemplated book it is of course impossible to judge what its merits may be, but as far as the style is concerned, and the opening of the plot may be discovered, we think we may venture to predict for it a popularity equally great with the last of the author's works, though that it will equal the "Pickwick" or the "Nickleby" is more to be hoped for than expected.

The genius of "Boz" is of a very peculiar character—even at the present day we can easily find writers not inferior in the humorous—superior in boldness and vigour—few, if any, who can compete with him in the eloquent and natural simplicity which steals as it were noiselessly into the citadel of the heart, and wholly leads it captive. In this is the secret of his success. An occasional burst of feeling, when he becomes excited with his subject, startles the reader with the wondrous power which his pen wields over the mind; but with these rare exceptions, his tales lean for their support upon their quiet and unpretending character, which, as it were, takes the reader unprepared for what he finds in every succeeding page, to pursue which he is impelled by a fascination as pleasing as it is resistless.

The story of Barnaby Rudge opens at a country hostelry, known as the "Maypole Inn," in the neighbourhood of London, where, on a boisterous night in March, a party of village gossip are assembled, discussing the news of the day and the landlord's best. Among the guests is a bold, weather-beaten traveller—a stranger in the country, who inquisitively seeks information regarding the neighbours of the inn, particularly in reference to the ownership of a somewhat distinguished mansion, occupied by a Master Geoffrey Haredale and his niece. With this mansion and its owner a tragic tale is connected, the telling of which is the especial property of the parish clerk, one of the fireside party. Upon this tale, if we do not greatly err, so small a portion of the interest hangs, the stranger doubtless being connected with it in no very honourable manner. We quote this short narrative, as given in the first chapter of the book:

"It was Mr. Reuben Haredale, Mr. Geoffrey's elder brother, that twenty-two years ago was the owner of the Warren, which, as Joe had said—not that you remember it, Joe, for a boy like you can't do that, but because you have often heard me say so—was then a much larger and better place, and a much more valuable property than it is now. His lady was lately dead, and he was left with one child—the Miss Haredale you have been inquiring about—who was then scarcely a year old."

Although the speaker addressed himself to the man who had shown so much curiosity about this same family, and made a pause here as if expecting some exclamation of surprise or encouragement, the latter made no remark, nor gave any indication that he heard or was interested in what was said. Solomon therefore turned to his old companions, whose noses were brightly illuminated by the deep red glow from the bowls of their pipes: assured, by long experience, of their attention, and resolved to show his sense of such indecent behaviour.

"Mr. Haredale," said Solomon, turning his back upon the strange man, "left this place when his lady died, feeling it lonely like, and went up to London, where he stopped some months: but finding that place as lonely as this—as I suppose and have always heard say—he suddenly came back again with his little girl to the Warren, bringing with him besides, that day, only two women servants, and his steward, and a gardener."

Mr. Daisy stopped to take a whiff at his pipe, which was going out, and then proceeded—at first in a snuffing tone, occasioned by keen enjoyment of the tobacco and strong pulling at the pipe, and afterwards with increasing distinctness:

"—Bringing with him two women servants, and his steward and a gardener. The rest stopped behind up in London and were to follow next day. It happened that that night, an old gentleman who lived at Chigwell-row, and had long been poorly, deceased, and an order came to me at half after twelve o'clock at night to go and toll the passing bell."

There was a movement in the little group of listeners, sufficiently indicative of the strong reprobation any one of them would have felt to have turned out at such a time upon such an errand. The clerk had understood it, and pursued his theme accordingly.

"It was a dreary thing, especially as the grave-digger was laid up in his bed, from long working in a damp soil and sitting down to take his dinner on cold tombstones, and I was consequently under obligation to go alone, for it was too late to hope to get any other companion. However, I wasn't unprepared for it; as the old gentleman had often made it a request that the bell should be tolled as soon as possible after the breath was out of his body, and he had been expected to go for some days. I put as good a face upon it as I could, and muffling myself up (for it was mortal cold,) started out with a lighted lantern in one hand and the key of the church in the other."

At this point of the narrative, the dress of the strange man rustled as if he had turned himself to hear