

BARNABY RUDGE

By CHARLES DICKENS

"Oh yes," replied the guest. "Oh, certainly. Let him do it by all means. Please to bring him here that I may charge him to be quick. If he objects to come you may tell him it's Mr. Chester. He will remember my name, I dare say."

John was so very much astonished to find who his visitor was, that he could express no astonishment at all, by looks or otherwise, but left the room as if he were in the most placid and imperturbable of all possible conditions. It has been reported that when he got downstairs, he looked steadily at the boiler for ten minutes by the clock, and all that time never once left off shaking his head; for which statement there would seem to be some ground of truth and feasibility, inasmuch as that interval of time did certainly elapse, before he returned with Barnaby to the guest's apartment.

"Come hither, lad," said Mr. Chester. "You know Mr. Geoffrey Haredale?"

Barnaby laughed and looked at the landlord as though he would say, "You hear him?" John, who was greatly shocked at this breach of decorum, clasped his finger to his nose, and shook his head in mute remonstrance.

"He knows him, sir," said John, frowning aside at Barnaby, "as well as you or I do."

"I haven't the pleasure of much acquaintance with the gentleman," returned his guest. "You may have. Limit the comparison to yourself, my friend."

Although this was said with the same easy affability, and the same smile, John felt himself put down and laying the indignity at Barnaby's door, determined to kick to the qualifications of his best bed, when his ideas were put to flight by Mr. Chester giving Barnaby the letter, and bidding him make all speed away.

"Speed!" said Barnaby, folding the little packet in his breast. "Speed! If you want to see hurry and mystery, come here. Here!"

With that, he put his hand, very much to John Willet's horror, on the guest's fine broadcloth sleeve, and led him stealthily to the back window.

"Look down there," he said softly. "Do you mark how they whisper to each other's ears; then dance and leap, to make believe they are in sport? Do you see how they stop for a moment, when they think there is no one looking, and mutter among themselves again, and then how they reel and gambol, delighted with the mischief they've been plotting? Look at 'em now. See how they whirl and plunge. And now they stop again, and whisper cautiously together—little thinking, mind, how often I have lain upon the grass and watched them. I say—what is it that they plot and hatch? Do you know?"

"They are only clothes," returned the guest, "such as we wear, hanging on those lines to dry, and fluttering in the wind."

"Clothes!" echoed Barnaby, looking close into his face, and falling quickly back. "Ha ha! Why, how much better to be silly, than as wise as you! You don't see shadowy people there, like those that live in sleep—not you. Nor eyes in the knotted panes of glass, nor swift ghosts when it blows hard, nor do you hear voices in the air, nor see men stalking in the sky—not you! I lead a merrier life than you, with all your cleverness. You're the dull men. We are the bright ones. Ha! ha! I'll not change with you, clever as you are—not I!"

With that, he waved his hat above his head, and darted off.

"A strange creature, upon my word!" said the guest, pulling out a handsome box, and taking a pinch of snuff.

"He wants imagination," said Mr. Willet, very slowly and after a long silence; "that's what he wants. I've tried to instil it into him, many and many's the time; but—John added this, in confidence—"he ain't made for it; that's the fact."

To record that Mr. Chester smiled at John's remark would be little to the purpose, for he preserved the same conciliatory and pleasant look at all times. He drew his chair nearer to the fire though, as a kind of hint that he would prefer to be alone, and John, having no reasonable excuse for remaining, left him to himself.

Very thoughtful old John Willet was, while the dinner was preparing, and if his brain were ever less clear at one time than another, it is but reasonable to suppose that he added it in no slight degree by shaking his head so much that day. That Mr. Chester, between whom and Mr. Haredale, it was notorious to all the neighborhood, a deep and bitter animosity existed, should come down there for the sole purpose, as it seemed, of seeing him, and should choose the Maypole for their place of meeting, and should send him express, were stumbling-blocks John could not overcome. The only resource he had was to consult the boiler, and was accordingly, by Barnaby's personal allusion—"They'll fight in that room. You know by the newspapers what a common thing it is for gentlemen to fight in coffee-houses without seconds. One of them will be wounded or perhaps killed in this house."

But Barnaby delayed beyond all precedent. The visitor's dinner was served, removed, his wine was set, the fire replenished, the hearth clean swept, the light waned without, it grew dusk, became quite dark, and still no Barnaby appeared. Yet, though John Willet was full of wonder and misgiving, his guest sat cross-legged in the easy-chair, to all appearance as little ruffled in his thoughts as in his dress—the same calm, easy, cool, gentleman, without a care or thought beyond his golden toothpick.

"Barnaby's late," John ventured to observe, as he placed a pair of tarnished candlesticks, some three feet high, upon the table, and snuffed the lights they held.

"He is rather so," replied the guest, sipping his wine. "He will not be much longer, I dare say."

John coughed, and raked the fire together.

"As your roads bear no very good character, if I may judge from my son's mishap, though," said Mr. Chester, "and as I have no fancy to be knocked on the head—which is not only disconcerting at the moment, but places one, besides, in a ridiculous position with respect to the people who chance to pick one up—I shall stop here to-night. I think you said you had a bed to spare."

"Such a bed, sir," returned John Willet, "say, such a bed as few, even of the gentry's houses, own. A finer here, sir, I've heard say that bedstead is eight two hundred years of age. Your noble son—a fine young gentleman—slept in it last, sir, half a year ago."

"Upon my life, a recommendation!" said the guest, shrugging his shoulders and wheeling his chair nearer to the fire. "See that it be well aired, Mr. Willet, and let a blazing fire be lighted there at once. This house is something damp and chilly."

John raked the logs up again, moss from habit than presence of mind, or any reference to this remark, and was about to withdraw, when a bounding step was heard upon the stair, and Barnaby came panting in.

"He'll have his foot in the stirrup in an hour's time," he cried, advancing. "He has been riding hard all day—has just come home—but will be in the saddle again as soon as he has eat and drank, to meet his loving friend."

"Was that his message?" asked the visitor, looking up, but without the smallest discomposure—or at least without the smallest show of any.

"All but the last words," Barnaby rejoined. "He meant those. I saw that in his face."

"This for your pains," said the other, putting money in his hand, and glancing at him steadfastly. "This for your pains, sharp Barnaby."

"For Grip, and me, and Hugh, to share among us," he rejoined, putting it up, and nodding, as he counted it on his fingers. "Grip one, me two, Hugh three; the dog, the goat, the cats—well, they shall spend it pretty soon, I warn you. Stay—Look. Do you wise men see nothing there, now?"

He bent eagerly down on his knee, and gazed intently at the smoke, which was rolling up the chimney in a thick black cloud. John Willet, who appeared to consider himself particularly and chiefly referred to under the term wise men, looked that way likewise, and with great solidity of feature.

"Now, where do they go to, when they spring so fast up there," asked Barnaby; "eh? Why do they tread so closely on each other's heels, and why are they always in a hurry—which is what you blame me for, when I only take pattern by these busy folk about me? More of 'em' catching to each other's skirts; and as fast as they go, others come up as fast as they dance it! I would that Grip and I could frisk like that!"

"What has he in that basket at his back?" asked the guest after a few moments, during which Barnaby was still bending down to look higher up the chimney, and earnestly watching the smoke.

"In this?" he answered, jumping up before John Willet could reply—shaking it as he spoke, and stopping his head to listen. "In this! What is there here? Tell him!"

"A devil, a devil, a devil!" cried a horse voice.

"Here's money!" said Barnaby, chinking it in his hand, "money for a treat, Grip!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" replied the raven, "keep up your spirits. Never say die. Bow, wow, wow!"

Mr. Willet, who appeared to entertain serious doubts whether a customer in a laced coat and fine linen could be supposed to have any acquaintance even with the existence of such unpolite gentry as the bird claimed to belong to, took Barnaby off at this juncture, with the view of preventing any other improper declarations, and quitted the room with his very best bow.

CHAPTER XI.

There was great news that night for the regular Maypole customers, to each of whom, as he struggled in to occupy his allotted seat in the chimney corner, John with a most impressive slowness of delivery, and in an apologetic whisper, communicated the fact that Mr. Chester was alone in the large room up-stairs, and was waiting the arrival of Mr. Geoffrey Haredale, to whom he had sent a letter (doubtless of a threatening nature) by the hands of Barnaby, then and there present.

For a little knot of smokers and solemn gossips, who had seldom any new topics of discussion, this was a perfect Godsend. Here was a good, dark-looking mystery progressing under that very roof—brought home to the fireside as it were, and enjoyable without the smallest pain or trouble. It is extraordinary what a zest and relish it gave to the drink, and how it heightened the flavor of the tobacco. Every man smoked his pipe with a face of grave and serious delight, and looked at his neighbor with a sort of quiet congratulation. Nay, it was felt to be such a holiday and special night, that, on the motion of little Solomon Daisy, every man (including John himself) put down his sixpence for a can of gin

which grateful beverage was brewed with all despatch, and set down in the midst of them on the brick floor, both that it might simmer and stew before the fire, and that its fragrant steam, rising up among them and mixing with the wreaths of vapor from their pipes, shroud them in a delicious atmosphere of their own and shut out all the world. The very furniture of the room seemed to mellow and deepen in its tone; the ceiling and walls looked blacker and more highly polished, the curtains of a ruddier red; the fire burned clear and high, and the crickets in the hearth-stone chirped with a more than wonted satisfaction.

There were present two, however, who showed but little interest in the general contentment. Of these, one was Barnaby himself, who slept, or, to avoid being beset with questions, feigned to sleep, in the chimney corner; the other, Hugh, who, sleeping, too, lay stretched upon the bench on the opposite side, in the full glare of the blazing fire.

The light that fell upon this slumbering form, showed it in all its muscular and handsome proportions. It was that of a young man, of a hale athletic figure, and a giant's strength, whose sunburned face and swarthy throat, overgrown with jet black hair, might have served a painter for a model. Loosely attired, in the coarsest and roughest garb, with scraps of straw and hay—his usual bed-clinging here and there, and mingling with his uncombed locks, he had fallen asleep in a posture as careless as his dress. The negligence and disorder of the whole man, with something fierce and sullen in his features, gave him a picturesque appearance, that attracted the regards even of the Maypole customers who knew him well, and caused Long Parkes to say that Hugh looked more like a poaching rascal to-night than ever he had seen him yet.

"He's waiting here, I suppose," said Solomon, "to take Mr. Haredale's horse."

"That's it, sir," replied John Willet. "He's not often in the house, you know. He's more at ease among horses than men. I look upon him as an animal himself."

Following up this opinion with a shrug that seemed meant to say, "two can't expect everybody to be like us," John put his pipe into his mouth again, and smoked like one who felt his superiority over the general run of mankind.

"That chap, sir," said John, taking it out again after a time, and pointing at him with the stem, "though he's got all his faculties about him—bottled up and corked down if I may say so, somewhere or another."

"Very good!" said Pattee, nodding his head. "A very good expression, Johnny. You'll be a-tackling somebody presently. You're in twigs to-day."

"Take care," said Willet, not at all grateful for the compliment, "that I don't tackle you, sir, which I shall certainly endeavor to do, if you interrupt me when I'm making observations—That chap, I was a-saying, though he has all his faculties about him, somewhere or another, bottled up and corked down, has no more imagination than Barnaby has. And why hasn't he?"

The three friends shook their heads at each other, saying by that action without the trouble of opening their lips, "Do you observe what a philosophical mind our friend has?"

"Why hasn't he?" said John, gently striking the table with his open hand. "Because they was never drawn out of him when he was a boy. That's why. What would any of us have been, if our fathers hadn't drawn our faculties out of us? What would my Joe have been if I hadn't drawn his faculties out of him—Do you mind what I'm a-saying of, gentlemen?"

"Ah! we mind you," cried Parkes. "Go on improving of us, Johnny."

"Consequently, then," said Mr. Willet, "that chap, whose mother was hung when he was a little boy, along with six others, for passing bad notes, and it's a blessed thing to think how many people are hung in batches every six weeks for that, and such like offences, as showing how wide awake our government is—that chap was then turned loose, and had to mind cows, and frighten birds away, and what for, for a few pence to live on, and so got on by degrees to mind horses, and to sleep in course of time in lofts and litter, instead of under haystacks and hedges, till at last he came to be hostler at the Maypole for his board and lodging and a annual trifle—that chap that can't read nor write, and has never had much to do with anything, but animals, and has never lived in any way but like the animals he has lived among, is an animal. And, said Mr. Willet, arriving at his logical conclusion, "is to be treated accordingly."

"Willet," said Solomon Daisy, who had exhibited some impatience at the intrusion of so unworthy a subject on their more interesting theme, "when Mr. Chester comes this morning, did he order the large room?"

"He signified, sir," said John, "that he wanted a large apartment."

"Why, then, I tell you what," said Solomon, speaking softly and with an earnest look. "He and Mr. Haredale are going to fight a duel in it."

Everybody looked at Mr. Willet, after this alarming suggestion. Mr. Willet looked at the fire, weighing in his own mind the effect which such an occurrence would be likely to have on the establishment.

"Well," said John, "I don't know—I am sure—I remember that when I went up last, he had put the lights upon the mantel-shelf."

"It's as plain," returned Solomon, "as the nose on Parkes' face"—Mr. Parkes, who had a raven's nose, rubbed it, and looked as if he considered

this a personal allusion—"They'll fight in that room. You know by the newspapers what a common thing it is for gentlemen to fight in coffee-houses without seconds. One of them will be wounded or perhaps killed in this house."

"That was a challenge that Barnaby took then, eh?" said John.

"—Enclosing a slip of paper with the measure of his sword upon it. I'll bet a guinea," answered the little man.

"To know what sort of gentleman Mr. Haredale is. You have told us what Barnaby said about his looks, when he came back. Depend upon it I'm right. Now, mind."

The flip had no flavor till now. The tobacco had been of more English growth, compared with its present taste. A duel in that great old rambling room up-stairs, and the best bed ordered already for the wounded man!

"Would it be swords or pistols now?" said John.

"Heaven knows. Perhaps both," returned Solomon. "The gentlemen wear swords, and may easily have pistols in their pockets—most likely have, indeed. If they fire at each other without effect, then they'll draw, and go to work in earnest."

A shade passed over Mr. Willet's face as he thought of broken windows and disabled furniture, but bethinking himself that one of the parties would probably be left alive to pay the damage, he brightened up again.

"And then," said Solomon, looking from face to face, "then we shall have one of those stains upon the floor that never come out. If Mr. Haredale wins, depend upon it, it'll be a deep one, or if he loses, it will perhaps be deeper still, for he'll never give in unless he's beaten down. We know him better, eh?"

"Better indeed!" they whispered all together.

"As to its ever being got out again," said Solomon, "I tell you it never will, or can be. Why, do you know that it has been tried, at a certain house we are acquainted with?"

"The Warren!" cried John. "No, sure!"

"Yes, sure—yes. It's only known by very few. It has been whispered about though, for all that. They planned the board away, but there it went deeper. They put new boards down, but there was one great spot that came through still, and showed itself in the old place. And—harkye—draw nearer—Mr. Geoffrey made that room his study, and sits there, always with his foot (as I have heard) upon it; and he believes through thinking of it long and very much, that it will never fade until he finds the man who did the deed."

As this recital ended, and they all drew closer round the fire, the tramp of a horse was heard without.

"The very man!" cried John, starting up. "Hugh! Hugh!"

The sleeper staggered to his feet, and hurried after him. John quickly returned, ushering in with great attention and deference (for Mr. Haredale was his landlord) the long-expected visitor, who strode into the room clanking his heavy boots upon the floor; and looking keenly round upon the bowing group, raised his hat in acknowledgement of their profound respect.

"You have a stranger here, Willet, who sent to me," he said, in a voice which sounded naturally stern and deep. "Where is he?"

"In the great room up-stairs," sir," answered John.

"Show the way. Your staircase is dark. I know. Gentlemen, good-night."

With that, he signed to the landlord to go on before, and went clanking out, and up the stairs; old John in his agitation, ingeniously lighted everything but the way, and making a stumble at every second step.

"Stop!" he said, when they reached the landing. "I can announce myself. Don't wait."

He laid his hand upon the door, entered, and shut it heavily. Mr. Willet was by no means disposed to stand there listening by himself, especially as the walls were very thick; so descended, with much greater alacrity than he had come up, and joined his friends below.

CHAPTER XII.

There was a brief pause in the state room of the Maypole as Mr. Haredale tried the lock to satisfy himself that he had shut the door securely, and as he slid up the dark chamber to where the fire enclosed a little patch of light and warmth, presented himself, abruptly and in silence, before the smiling guest.

If the two had no greater sympathy in their inward thoughts than in their outward bearing and appearance the meeting did not seem likely to prove a very calm or pleasant one.

With no great disparity between them in point of years, they were in every other respect, as unlike and far removed from each other as two men could well be. The one was soft-spoken, delicately made, precise, and elegant; the other, a burly square-built man, negligently dressed, rough in manner, stern, and, in his present mood, forbidding both in look and speech. The one preserved a calm and placid smile; the other, a distrustful frown. The new-comer, indeed, appeared bent on showing by his every tone and gesture his determined opposition and hostility to the man he had come to meet.

The guest who received him, on the other hand, seemed to feel that the contrast between them was all in his favor, and to derive a quiet exultation from it which put him more at his ease than ever.

"Haredale," said this gentleman, without the least appearance of embarrassment or reserve, "I am very glad to see you."

"Let us dispense with compliments. They are misplaced between us," returned the other, waving his hand, "and say plainly that we have to say. You have asked me to meet you. I am here. Why do we stand face to face again?"

"Still the same frank and sturdy character, I see!"

"Good or bad, sir, I am," returned the other, leaning his arm upon the chimney-piece, and turning a haughty look upon the occupant of the easy-chair. "The man I failed to be I have long ago killed or disliking; my memory has not failed me by a hair's breadth. You ask me to give you a meeting. I say, I am here."

"Our meeting, Haredale," said Mr. Chester, tapping his snuff-box, and following with a smile the impatient gesture he had made—perhaps unconsciously—towards his sword, "is one of conference and peace. I hope?"

"I have come here," returned the other, "at your desire, holding myself bound to meet you, when and

Table with 4 columns: DAY OF MONTH, DAY OF WEEK, COLOR OF VESTMENTS, and the date 1905. It lists the calendar for June, including Ascension of Our Lord, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, and Second Sunday After Pentecost.

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where you would. I have not come to bandy pleasant speeches, or hollow professions. You are a smooth man of the world, sir, and at such play have me at a disadvantage. The very last man on this earth with whom I would enter the lists to combat, with gentle compliments and masked faces, is Mr. Chester. I do assure you. I am not his match at such weapons, and have reason to believe that few men are."

"You do me a great deal of honor, Haredale," returned the other, most composedly, "and I thank you. I will be frank with you—"

"I beg your pardon—will be what?"

"Frank—open—perfectly candid."

"Hah!" cried Mr. Haredale, drawing in his breath. "But don't let me interrupt you."

"So resolved am I to hold this course," returned the other, tasting his wine with great deliberation, "that I have determined not to quarrel with you, and not to be betrayed into a warm expression or a hasty word."

"There again," said Mr. Haredale, "you will have me at a great disadvantage. Your self-command!"

"Is not to be disturbed, when it will serve my purpose, you would say," rejoined the other, interrupting him with the same complacency.

"Granted. I allow it. And I have a purpose to serve now. So have you. I am sure our object is the same. Let us attain it like sensible men, who have ceased to be boys for some time. Do you drink?"

"With my friends," returned the other.

"At least," said Mr. Chester, "you will be seated?"

"I will stand," returned Mr. Haredale, impatiently, "on this dismantled beggared hearth, and not pollute it, fallen as it is, with mockeries. Go on!"

"You are wrong, Haredale," said the other crossing his legs, and smiling as he held his glass up in the bright glow of the fire. "You are really very wrong. The world is a lively place enough, in which we must accommodate ourselves to circumstances, and sail with the stream as glibly as we can, be content to take froth for substance, the surface for the depth, the counterfeit for the real coin. I wonder no philosopher has ever established that our globe itself is hollow. It should be, if Nature is consistent in her works."

"You think it is, perhaps?"

"I should say," he returned, sipping his wine, "there could be no doubt about it. Well; we, in our trifling with this jingling toy, have had the ill-luck to jostle and fall out. We are not what the world calls friends, but we are as good and true and loving friends for all that, as nine out of every ten of those whom it bestows the title. You have a niece, and I a son—a fine lad, Haredale, but a fool. They fall in love with each other, and form what this same world calls an attachment, meaning a something fanciful and false like all the rest, which, if it took its own free time, would break like any other bubble. But it may not have its own free time—will not, if they are left alone—and the question is, shall we, because society calls us enemies, stand aloof, and let them rush into each other's arms, when, by approaching each other sensibly, as we do now, we can prevent it, and part them?"

"I love my niece," said Mr. Haredale, after a short silence. "It may sound strange in your ears; but I love her."

"Strangely, my good fellow!" cried Mr. Chester, lazily filling his glass again, and pulling out his toothpick.

"Not at all. I like Ned too—or, as you say, love him—that's the word among such near relations. I'm very fond of Ned. He's an amazingly good fellow, and a handsome fellow—foolish and weak as yet, that's all; but the thing is, Haredale—for I'll be very frank, as I told you for I would at first—independent of any dislike that you and I might have to being related to each other, and independently of the religious differences between us—and damn it, that's important—I couldn't afford a match of this description. Ned and I couldn't do it. It's impossible."

"Curb your tongue, in God's name, if this conversation is to last," returned Mr. Haredale fiercely. "I have said I love my niece. Do you think

that, loving her, I would have her fling her heart away on any man who had your blood in his veins?"

"You see," said the other, not at all disturbed, "the advantage of being so frank and open. Just what I was about to add, upon my honor! I am amazingly attached to Ned—quite dote upon him, indeed—and even if we could afford to throw ourselves away, that very objection would be quite insuperable—I wish you'd take some wine."

"Mark me," said Mr. Haredale, striding to the table, and laying his hand upon it heavily. "If any man believes—presumes to think—that I, in word, or deed, or in the wildest dream, ever entertained remotely the idea of Emma Haredale's favoring the suit of one who was akin to you—in any way—I care not what he lies. He lies, and does me grievous wrong, in the mere thought."

"Haredale," returned the other, rocking himself to and fro as in absent, and nodding at the fire, "it's extremely manly and really very generous in you, to meet me in this unreserved and handsome way. Upon my word, those are exactly my sentiments, only expressed with much more force and power than I could use—you know my sluggish nature, and will forgive me, I am sure."

"While I would restrain her from all correspondence with your son, and sever their intercourse here, though it should cause her death," said Mr. Haredale, who had been pacing to and fro, and who would do it kindly and tenderly if I can. I have a trust to discharge which my nature is not formed to understand, and for this reason, the bare fact of there being any love between them comes upon me to-night, almost for the first time."

"I am more delighted than I can possibly tell you," rejoined Mr. Chester with the utmost blandness, "to find my own impression so confirmed. You see the advantage of our having met. We understand each other. We quite agree. We have a most complete and thorough explanation, and we know what course to take—Why don't you taste your tenant's wine? It's really very good."

"Pray who," said Mr. Haredale, "have aided Emma, or your son? Who are their go-betweens, and agents—do you know?"

"All the good people hereabouts—the neighborhood in general, I think," returned the other, with his most affable smile. "The messenger I sent to you to-day, foremost among them all."

"The idiot? Barnaby?"

"You are surprised? I am glad that, for I was rather so myself. Yes, I thought that from his mother—a very decent sort of woman—from whom, indeed, I chiefly learned how serious the matter had become, and so determined to ride out here to-day, and hold a parley with you on this neutral ground—You're stouter than you used to be, Haredale, but you look extremely well."

"Our business, I presume, is nearly at an end," said Mr. Haredale, with an expression of impatience he was at no pains to conceal. "Trust me, Mr. Chester, my niece shall change from this time. I will appeal," he added in a lower tone, "to her woman's heart—her dignity, her pride, her duty—I shall do the same by Ned," said Mr. Chester, restoring some errand fagots to their places in the grate with the toe of his boot. "If there is anything real in the world, it is those amazingly fine feelings and those natural obligations which must subsist between father and son. I shall put it to him on every ground of moral and religious feeling. I shall represent to him that we cannot possibly afford it—that I have always looked forward to his marrying well, for a genteel provision for myself in the autumn of life—that there are a great many clamorous dogs to pay, whose claims are perfectly just and right, and who must be paid out of his wife's fortune. In short that the very highest and most honorable feelings of our nature, with every consideration of filial duty and affection, and all that sort of thing, imperatively demand that he should run away with an heiress."

"And break her heart as speedily as possible!" said Mr. Haredale, drawing on his glove. (To be Continued.)

