

BARNABY RUDGE

By CHARLES DICKENS

An officer cried directly that he had helped to plunder a house last night. He was loudly called on to surrender. He ran the harder, and in a few seconds would have been out of gunshot. The word was given, and the men fired.

There was a breathless pause and a profound silence, during which all eyes were fixed upon him. He had been seen to start at the discharge, as if the report had frightened him. But he neither stopped nor slackened his pace in the least, and ran on full forty yards further. Then, without one reel or stagger, or sign of faintness, or quivering of any limb, he dropped.

Some of them hurried up to where he lay—the hangman with them. Everything had passed so quickly, that the smoke was not yet scattered, but curled slowly off in a little cloud, which seemed like the dead man's spirit moving solemnly away. There were a few drops of blood upon the grass—more, when they turned him over—that was all.

"Look here! Look here!" said the hangman, stooping one knee beside the body, and gazing up with a disconsolate face at the officer and men. "Here's a pretty sight!"

"Stand out of the way," replied the officer. "Sergeant! See what he had about him."

The man turned his pockets out upon the grass, and counted, besides some foreign coins and two rings, five and forty guineas in gold. These were bundled up in a handkerchief and carried away; the body remained there for the present, but six men and the sergeant were left to take it to the nearest public-house.

"Now then, if you're going," said the sergeant, clapping Dennis on the back, and pointing after the officer who was walking towards the shed.

To which Mr. Dennis only replied, "Don't talk to me!" and then repeated what he had said before, namely, "Here's a pretty sight!"

"It's not one that you care for much, I should think," observed the sergeant coolly.

"Why, who," said Mr. Dennis, rising, "should care for it, if I don't?"

"Oh! I didn't know you was so tender-hearted," said the sergeant. "That's all!"

"Tender-hearted!" echoed Dennis. "Tender-hearted! Look at this man. Do you call this constitutional? Do you see him shot through and through instead of being worked off like a Briton? Damme, if I know which party to side with. You're as bad as the other. What's to become of the country if the military power's to go superseding the civilians in this way? Where's this poor fellow-creature's rights as a citizen, that he didn't have me in his last moments! I was here. I was willing. I was ready. These are nice times, brother, to have the dead crying out against us in this way, and sleep comfortably in our beds afterwards; wery nice!"

Whether he derived any material consolation from binding the prisoners, is uncertain; most probably he did. At all events, his being summoned to that work, diverted him, for the time, from these painful reflections, and gave his thoughts a more congenial occupation.

They were not all three carried off together, but in two parties; Barnaby and his father, going by one road in the centre of a body of foot; and Hugh, fast bound upon a horse, and strongly guarded by a troop of cavalry, being taken by another.

They had no opportunity for the least communication, in the short interval which preceded their departure, being kept strictly apart. Hugh only observed that Barnaby walked with drooping head among his guard, and, without raising his eyes, that he tried to wave his fettered hand when he passed. For himself, he buoyed up courage as he rode along, with the assurance that the mob would force his jail wherever it might be, and set him at liberty. But when they got to London, and more especially into Fleet Market, lately the stronghold of the rioters, where the military were rooting out the last remnant of the crowd, he saw that this hope was gone, and felt that he was riding to his death.

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Dennis having despatched this

piece of business without any personal hurt or inconvenience, and having now retired into the tranquil respectability of private life, resolved to sojourn himself with half an hour or so of female society. With this amiable purpose in mind, he bent his steps towards the house where Dolly and Miss Haredeale were still confined, and whither Miss Miggs had also been removed by order of Mr. Simon Tappertit.

As he walked along the streets with his leather gloves clasped behind him, and his face indicative of cheerful thought and pleasant calculation, Mr. Dennis might have been likened unto a farmer ruminating among his crops, and enjoying by anticipation the bountiful gifts of Providence. Look where he would some heap of ruins afforded him rich promise of a working off; the whole town appeared to have been ploughed and sown, and nurtured by most genial weather, and a goodly harvest was at hand.

Having taken up arms and resorted to deeds of violence, with the great main object of preserving the Old Bailey in all its purity, and the galleys in all its pristine usefulness and moral grandeur, it would perhaps be going too far to assert that Mr. Dennis had ever distinctly contemplated and foreseen this happy state of things. He rather looked upon it as one of those beautiful dispensations which are inscrutably brought about for the behoof and advantage of good men. He felt, as it were, personally referred to, in this prosperous ripening of the gibbet; and had never considered himself so much the pet and favorite child of Destiny, or loved that lady so well or with such a calm and virtuous reliance, in all his life.

As to being taken up, himself, for a rioter, and punished with the rest, Mr. Dennis dismissed that possibility from his thoughts as an idle chimera, arguing that the line of conduct he had adopted at Newgate, and the service he had rendered that day, would be more than a set-off against any evidence which might identify him as a member of the crowd. That any charge of companionship which might be made against him by those who were themselves in danger, would certainly go for naught. And that if any trivial indiscretion on his part should unluckily come out, the uncommon usefulness of his office at present, and the great demand for the exercise of its functions, would certainly cause it to be winked at, and passed over. In a word, he had played his cards throughout, with great care, had changed sides at the very nick of time, had delivered up two of the most notorious rioters, and a distinguished felon to boot; and was quite at his ease.

Saving for there is a reservation; and even Mr. Dennis was not perfectly happy—saying for one circumstance, to wit, the forcible detention of Dolly and Miss Haredeale, in a house almost adjoining his own. This was a stumbling-block, for if they were discovered and released, they could, by the testimony they had in their power to give, place him in a situation of great jeopardy, and to set them at liberty, first extorting from them an oath of secrecy and silence, was a thing not to be thought of. It was more, perhaps, with an eye to the danger which lurked in this quarter, than from his abstract love of conversation with the sex, that the hangman, quickening his steps, now hastened into their society, cursing the amorous natures of Hugh and Mr. Tappertit with great heartiness, at every step he took.

When he entered the miserable room in which they were confined, Dolly and Miss Haredeale withdrew in silence to the remotest corner. But Miss Miggs, who was particularly tender of her reputation, immediately fell upon her knees and began to scream very loud, crying, "What will become of me!" "Where is my Simmuns?" "Have mercy, good gentleman, on my sex's weaknesses!"—with other doleful lamentations of that nature, which she delivered with great propriety and decorum.

"Miss, miss," whispered Dennis, beckoning to her with his forefinger, "come here—I won't hurt you. Come here, my lamb, will you?"

On hearing this tender epithet, Miss Miggs, who had left off screaming

when he opened his lips, and had listened to him attentively, began again, crying, "Oh I'm his lamb. He says I'm his lamb! Oh gracious, why was I not born old and ugly! Why was I ever made to be the youngest of six and all of 'em dead and in their graves, excepting one married sister, which is settled in Golden Lion Court, number twenty-five, second bell-handle on the left!"

"Don't I say I ain't a going to hurt you?" said Dennis, pointing to a chair. "Why, miss, what's the matter?"

"I don't know what mayn't be the matter!" cried Miggs, clasping her hands distractedly. "Anything may be the matter!"

"But nothing is, I tell you," said the hangman. "First stop that noise, and come and sit down here, will you, chucky?"

The coaxing tone in which he said these latter words might have tailed in its object, if he had not accompanied them with sundry sharp jerks of his thumb over one shoulder, and with divers winks and thrustings of his tongue into his cheek, from which signals the damsel gathered that he sought to speak to her apart concerning Miss Haredeale and Dolly. Her curiosity being very powerful, and her jealousy by no means inactive, she added, and with a great deal of shivering and starting back, and much muscular action among all the small bones in her throat, gradually approached him.

"Sit down," said the hangman. "Suiting the action to the word, he thrust her rather suddenly and prematurely into a chair; and designing to reassure her by a little harmless jocularity, such as is adapted to please and fascinate the sex, converted his right forefinger into an ideal bradawl or gimlet, and made as though he would screw the same into her side—whereat Miss Miggs shrieked again, and evinced symptoms of faintness.

"Lovey, my dear," whispered Dennis, drawing his chair close to hers. "When was your young man here last, eh?"

"My young man, good gentleman!" answered Miggs in a tone of exquisite distress.

"Ah! Simmuns, you know—him?" said Dennis.

"Mine indeed!" cried Miggs, with a burst of bitterness—and as she said it, she glanced towards Dolly. "Mine good gentleman!"

This was just what Mr. Dennis wanted, and expected.

"Ah!" he said, looking so soothingly, not to say amorously, on Miggs, that she sat, as she afterwards remarked, on pins and needles of the sharpest Whitechapel kind, not knowing what intentions might be suggesting that expression to his features; "I was afraid of that. I saw as much, myself. It's her fault. She will entice 'em."

"I wouldn't," cried Miggs, folding her hands and looking upwards with a kind of devout blankness, I wouldn't lay myself out as she does; I wouldn't be as bold as her; I wouldn't seem to say to all male creatures, 'come and kiss me'—and here a shudder quite convulsed her frame—"for any earthly crowns as might be offered. Worlds," Miggs added solemnly, "should not reduce me. No. Not if I was wenis."

"Well, but you are Venus you know," said Mr. Dennis, confidently.

"No, I am not, good gentleman," answered Miggs, shaking her head with an air of self-denial which seemed to imply that she might be if she chose, but she hoped she knew better.

"No I am not, good gentleman. Do not charge me with it."

Up to this time she had turned round, every now and then, to watch Dolly and Miss Haredeale had retired, and uttered a scream, or groan, or laid her hand upon her heart and trembled excessively, with a view of keeping up appearances, and giving them to understand that she conversed with the visitor under protest and on compulsion, and at a great personal sacrifice, for their common good. But at this point Mr. Dennis looked so very full of meaning, and gave such a singular expressive twitch to his face as a request to her to come still nearer to him, that she abandoned these little arts, and gave him her whole and undivided attention.

"When was Simmuns here, I say?" quoth Dennis, in her ear.

"Not since yesterday morning, and then only for a few minutes. Not all day, the day before."

LIVER COMPLAINT.

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artful mixxes—must be made miserable and unhappy for life, she did incline towards preventions. Such, she added, was her free confessions. But as this was private feelings, and might perhaps be looked upon as vengeance, she begged the gentleman would say no more. Whatever he said, wishing to do her duty by all mankind, even by them as had ever been her bitterest enemies, she would not listen to him. With that she stopped her ears, and shook her head from side to side, to intimate to Mr. Dennis that though he talked until he had no breath left, she was as deaf as any adder.

"Look here, my sugar-stick," said Dennis; "if your view's the same as mine, and you'll only be quiet and slip away at the right time, I can have the house clear to-morrow, and be out of this trouble.—Stop though! There's the other."

"Which other, sir?" asked Miggs—still with her fingers in her ears and her head shaking obstinately.

"Why, the tallest one, yonder," said Dennis, as he stroked his chin and added, in an undertone to himself something about not crossing Muster Gashford.

Miss Miggs replied (still being profoundly deaf) that if Miss Haredeale stood in the way at all, he might make himself quite easy on that score, as she had gathered, from what passed between Hugh and Mr. Tappertit when they were last there, that she was to be removed alone (not by them, but by somebody else), to-morrow night.

Mr. Dennis opened his eyes very wide at this piece of information, whistled once, considered once and finally slapped his head once and nodded once, as if he had got the clew to this mysterious removal, and so dismissed it. Then he imparted his design concerning Dolly to Miss Miggs, who was taken more deaf than before, when he began; and so remained, all through.

The notable scheme was this. Mr. Dennis was immediately to seek out from among the rioters, some daring young fellow (and he had one in his eye, he said), who, terrified by the threats he could hold out to him, and alarmed by the capture of so many who were no better and no worse than he, would gladly avail himself of any help to get abroad, and out of harm's way, with his plunder, even though his journey were encumbered by an unwilling companion; indeed, the unwilling companion being a beautiful girl, would probably be an additional inducement and temptation. Such a person found, he proposed to bring him there on the ensuing night, when the tall one was taken off, and Miss Miggs had purposely retired; and then that Dolly should be gagged, muffled in a cloak, and carried in any handy conveyance down to the river's side; where there were abundant means of getting her smuggled snugly off in any small craft of doubtful character, and no questions asked. With regard to the expense of this removal, he would say, at a rough calculation, that two or three silver tea or coffee pots, with something additional for drink (such as a muffin-er, or toast-rack), would more than cover it. Articles of plate of every kind having been buried by the rioter in several lonely parts of London, and particularly, as he knew, in St. James' Square, which, though easy of access, was little frequented after dark, and had a convenient piece of water in the midst, the needful funds were close at hand, and could be had upon the shortest notice. With regard to Dolly, the gentleman would exercise his own discretion. He would be bound to do nothing but to take her away, and keep her away. All other arrangements and dispositions would rest entirely with himself.

If Miss Miggs had had her hearing no doubt she would have been greatly shocked by the indecency of a young female's going away with a stranger by night (for her moral feelings, as we have said, were of the tenderest kind), but directly Mr. Dennis ceased to speak, she reminded him that he had only wasted breath. She then went on to say (still with her fingers in her ears) that nothing less than a severe practical lesson would save the locksmith's daughter from utter ruin; and that she felt it, as it were, a moral obligation and a sacred duty to the family, to wish that some one would devise one for her reformation. Miss Miggs remarked, and very justly, as an abstract sentiment which happened to occur to her at the moment, that she dared to say the locksmith and his wife would murmur, and repine, if they were ever, by forcible abduction, or otherwise, to lose their child; but that she seldom knew, in this world, what was best for us, such being our sinful and imperfect natures, that very few arrived at that clear understanding.

Having brought their conversation to this satisfactory end, they parted.

Dennis to pursue his design and take another walk about his farm; Miss Miggs to launch, when he left her, into such a burst of mental anguish (which she gave them to understand was occasioned by certain tender things he had had the presumption and audacity to say), that little Dolly's heart was quite melted. Indeed, she said and did so much to soothe the outraged feelings of Miss Miggs, and looked so beautiful while doing so, that if that young maid had not had ample vent for her surpassing spite, in a knowledge of the mischief that was brewing, she must have scratched her features on the spot.

CHAPTER XIII.

All next day Emma Haredeale, Dolly and Miggs remained cooped up together in what had now been their prison for so many days, without seeing any person, or hearing any sound but the murmured conversation in an outer room, of the men who kept watch over them. There appeared to be more of these fellows than there had been hitherto; and they could no longer hear the voices of women, which they had before plainly distinguished. Some new excitement, too, seemed to prevail among them, for there was much stealthy going in and out, and a constant questioning of those who were newly arrived. They had previously been quite reckless in their behavior; often making a great uproar, quarrelling among themselves, fighting, dancing, and singing. They were now very subdued and silent, conversing almost in whispers, and stealing in and out with a soft and stealthy tread, very different from the boisterous tramping in which their arrivals and departures had hitherto been announced to the trembling captives.

Whether this change was occasioned by the presence among them of some person of authority in their ranks, or by any other cause, they were unable to decide. Sometimes they thought it was in part attributable to there being a sick man in the chamber, for last night there had been a shuffling of feet, as though a burden were brought in, and afterwards a moaning noise. But they had no means of ascertaining the truth, for any question or entreaty on their part only provoked a storm of execrations, or something worse, and they were too happy to be left alone, unassailed by threats or admiration, to risk even that comfort, by any voluntary communication with those who held them in duration.

It was sufficiently evident, both to Emma and to the locksmith's poor little daughter herself, that she, Dolly, was the great object of attraction, and that so soon as they should have leisure to indulge in the softer passion, Hugh and Mr. Tappertit would certainly fall to blows for her sake, in which latter case it was not very difficult to foresee whose prize she would become. With all her old horror of that man revived, and deepened into a degree of aversion and abhorrence which no language can describe, with a thousand old recollections and regrets, and causes of distress, anxiety, and fear, besetting her on all sides, poor Dolly Varden—sweet, blooming, buxom Dolly—began to hang her head, and fade, and droop like a beautiful flower. The color fled from her cheeks, her courage forsook her, her gentle heart failed. Unmindful of all her provoking caprices, forgetful of all her conquests and inconsistency, with all her winning little vanities quite gone, she nestled all the livelong day in Emma Haredeale's bosom; and sometimes called on her dear old gray-haired father, sometimes on her mother, and sometimes even on her old home, pined slowly away, like a poor bird in its cage.

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upon flowers, blush in summer air, life of the winged insect, whose whole existence is a day—how soon ye sink in troubled water! Poor Dolly's heart—a little, gentle, idle, fickle thing, giddy, restless, fluttering constant to nothing but bright looks, and smiles, and laughter—Dolly's heart was breaking.

Emma had known grief, and could bear it better. She had little comfort to impart, but she could soothe and tend her, and she did so, and Dolly clung to her like a child to its nurse. In endeavoring to inspire her with some fortitude, she increased her own, and though the nights were long, and the days dismal, and she felt the wasting influence of watching and fatigue, and had perhaps a more defined and clear perception of their destitute condition and its worst dangers, she uttered no complaint. Before the ruffians, in whose power they were, she bore herself so calmly and with such an appearance, in the midst of all her terror, of a secret conviction that they dared not harm her, that there was not a man among them but held her in some degree of dread; and more than one believed she had a weapon hidden in her dress, and was prepared to use it.

Such was their condition when they were joined by Miss Miggs, who gave them to understand that she too had been taken prisoner, because of her charms, and detailed such feats of resistance she had performed (her virtue having given her supernatural strength), that they felt quite a happiness to have her for a champion. Nor was this the only comfort they derived at first from Miggs' presence and society, for that young lady displayed such resignation and long-suffering, and so much meek endurance, under her trials, and breathed in all her chaste discourse a spirit of such holy confidence and resignation, and devout belief that all would happen for the best, that Emma felt her courage strengthened by the bright example, never doubting but that everything she said was true, and that she, like them, was torn from all she loved, and agonized by doubt and apprehension. As to poor Dolly, she was roused, at first, by seeing one who came from home; but when she heard under what circumstances she had left it, and into whose hands her father had fallen, she wept more bitterly than ever, and refused all comfort.

(To be Continued.)



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