

BARNABY RUDGE

By CHARLES DICKENS

"Sim," rejoined Gabriel, laughing heartily. "Don't be a fool, for I'd rather see you in your senses. These young fellows," he added, turning to his daughter, "are always committing some folly or another. There was a quarrel between Joe Willet and old John last night—though I can't say Joe was much in fault either. He'll be missing one of these mornings, and will have gone away upon some wild-goose errand, seeking his fortune—Why, what's the matter, Doll? You are making faces now. The girls are as bad as the boys every bit!"

"It's the tea," said Dolly, turning alternately very red, as if very white, which is no doubt the effect of a slight scald—"so very hot."

Mr. Tappertit looked immensely big at a quarter loaf on the table, and breathed hard.

"Is that all?" returned the locksmith. "Put some more milk in it—Yes, I am sorry for Joe, because he is a likely young fellow, and gains upon one every time one sees him. But he'll start off, you'll find. Indeed he told me as much himself!"

"Indeed!" cried Dolly in a faint voice. "In—deed!"

"Is the tea tickling your throat still, my dear?" asked the locksmith.

But, before his daughter could make him any answer, she was taken with a troublesome cough, and it was such a very unpleasant cough that, when she left off, the tears were starting in her bright eyes. The good-natured locksmith was still patting her on the back and supplying such gentle restoratives, when a message arrived from Mrs. Varden, making known to all whom it might concern, that she felt too much indisposed to rise after her great agitation and anxiety of the previous night; and therefore desired to be immediately accommodated with a little black teapot of strong mixed tea, a couple of rounds of buttered toast, a middling-sized dish of beef and ham cut thin, and the Protestant Manual in two volumes, post octavo. Like some other ladies who in remote ages flourished upon this globe, Mrs. Varden was most devout when most ill-tempered. Whenever she and her husband were at unusual variance, then the Protestant Manual was in high favour.

Knowing from experience what these requests portended, the triumvirate broke up; Dolly, to see the orders executed with all despatch; Gabriel, to some out-of-door work in his little chaise; and Sim, to his daily duty in the workshop, to which retreat he carried the big loaf, although the loaf remained behind.

Indeed the big loaf increased immensely, and when he had tied his apron on, became quite gigantic. It was not until he had several times walked up and down with folded arms and the longest strides he could take, and had kicked a great many small articles out of his way, that his lip began to curl. At length a gloomy derision came upon his features, and he smiled; uttering meanwhile with supreme contempt the monosyllable "Joe!"

"I eyed her over, while he talked about the fellow," he said, "and that was of course the reason of her being confused. Joe!"

He walked up and down again much quicker than before, and if possible with longer strides; sometimes stopping to take a glance at his legs, and sometimes to jerk out and cast from him another "Joe!" In the course of a quarter of an hour or so he again assumed the paper cap and tried to work. No. It could not be done.

"I'll do nothing to-day," said Mr. Tappertit, dashing it down again, but glad. I'll grind up all the tools. Grinding will suit my present humor well. Joe!"

Whirr-r-r-r. The grindstone was soon in motion; the sparks were flying off in showers. This was the occupation for his heated spirit.

look upon it in its most cheerful mood without feeling that it had some extraordinary capacity of expressing terror. It was not on the surface. It was in no one feature that it lingered. You could not take the eyes, or mouth, or lines upon the cheek, and say if this or that were otherwise, it would not be so. Yet there it always lurked—something forever dimly seen, but ever there, and never absent for a moment. It was the faintest, palest shadow of some look, to which an instant of intense and most unutterable horror could have given birth; but indistinct and feeble as it was, it did suggest what that look must have been, and fixed it in the mind as if it had had existence in a dream.

More faintly imagined, and wanting force and purpose, as it were, because of his darkened intellect, there was this same stamp upon the son. Seen in a picture it must have had some legend with it, and would have haunted those who looked upon the canvas. They who knew the Maypole story, and could remember what the widow was, before her husband's and his master's murder, understood it well.

"He recollected how the change had come, and could call to mind that when her son was born, upon the very day the deed was known, he bore upon his wrist what seemed a smear of blood but half washed out."

"God save you, neighbor!" said the locksmith, as he followed her with the air of an old friend, into a little parlor where a cheerful fire was burning.

"And you," she answered, smiling. "Your kind heart has brought you here again. Nothing will keep you at home, I know of old, if there are friends to serve or comfort, out of doors."

"Tut, tut," returned the locksmith, rubbing his hands and warming them. "You women are such talkers. What of the patient, neighbor?"

"He is sleeping now. He was very restless towards day-light, and for some hours tossed and tumbled sadly. But the fever has left him, and the doctor says he will soon mend. He must not be removed until to-morrow."

"He has had visitors to-day—humph?" said Gabriel, slyly.

"Yes. Old Mr. Chester has been here ever since we sent for him, and had not been gone many minutes when you knocked."

"No ladies?" said Gabriel, elevating his eyebrows and looking disappointed.

"A letter," replied the widow. "Come. That's better than nothing!" cried the locksmith. "Who was the bearer?"

"Barnaby, of course."

"Barnaby's a jewel!" said Varden; "and comes and goes with ease where we who think ourselves much wiser would make but a poor hand of it. He is not out wandering, again, I hope?"

"Thank Heaven he is in his bed; having been up all night, as you know, and on his feet all day. He is quite tired out. Ah, neighbor, if I could but see him oftener so—if I could but tame down that terrible restlessness!"

"In good time," said the locksmith, kindly. "In good time—don't be down-hearted. To my mind he grows wiser every day."

The widow shook her head. And yet, though she knew the locksmith sought to cheer her, and spoke from no conviction of his own, she was glad to hear even this praise of her poor benighted son.

"He will be a 'cute man yet,'" resumed the locksmith. "Take care when we are growing old and foolish, Barnaby doesn't put us to the blush, that's all. But our other friend," he added, looking under the table and about the floor—"sharpest and cunningest of all the sharo and cunning ones—where's he?"

"In Barnaby's room," rejoined the widow, with a faint smile.

"Ah! He's a knowing blade!" said Varden, shaking his head. "I should be sorry to talk secrets before him. Oh! He's a deep customer, I've no doubt he can read, and write, and cast accounts of his choices. What was that—him tapping at the door?"

"No," returned the widow. "It was in the street. I think. Hark! Yes. There again! This some one knocking softly at the shutter. Who can it be?"

They had been speaking in a low tone, for the invalid lay overhead, and the walls and ceilings being thin and poorly built, the sound of their voices might otherwise have disturbed his slumber. The party without, whoever it was, could have stood close to the shutter without hearing anything spoken; and seeing the light through the chinks and finding all so quiet, might have been persuaded that only one person was there.

"Some thief or ruffian, maybe," said the locksmith. "Give me the light."

"No, no," she returned hastily. "Such visitors have never come to this poor dwelling. Do you stay here. You're within call, at the worst. I would rather go myself—alone."

"Why?" said the locksmith, unwillingly relinquishing the candle he had caught up from the table.

"Because—I don't know why—because the wish is strong upon me," she rejoined. "There again—do not detain me, I beg of you!"

Gabriel looked at her in great surprise to see one who was usually so mild and quiet thus agitated, and with so little cause. She left the room and closed the door behind her. She stood for a moment as if hesitating, with her hand upon the lock. In this short interval the knocking came again, and a voice close to the window—a voice the locksmith seemed to recollect, and to have some disagreeable association with—whispered "Make haste."

The words were uttered in that low distinct voice which finds its way so readily to sleepers' ears, and wakes them in a fright. For a moment it startled even the locksmith, who involuntarily drew back from the window, and listened.

suppressed something which was not a sarcasm, or groan, or cry for help, and yet might have been either or all three; and the words "My God!" uttered in a voice it chilled him to hear.

He rushed out upon the instant. There, at last, was that dreadful look—the very one he seemed to know so well and yet had never seen before—upon her face. There she stood, frozen to the ground, gazing with starting eyes, and livid cheeks, and every feature pale; and ghastly, upon the man he had encountered in the dark last night. His eyes met those of the locksmith. It was but a flash, an instant, a breath upon a polished glass, and he was gone.

"The other way—the other way," she cried. "He went the other way. Turn—turn!"

"The other way! I see him now," rejoined the locksmith, pointing—"yonder—there—there is his shadow passing by that light. What—who is this? Let me go."

"Come back, come back!" exclaimed the woman, clasping him. "Do not touch him on your life. I charge you, come back. He carries other lives besides his own. Come back!"

"What does this mean?" cried the locksmith.

"No matter what it means, don't ask. Don't speak, don't think about it. He is not to be followed, checked, or stopped. Come back!"

The old man looked at her in wonder, as she writhed and clung about him; and, borne down by her passion, suffered her to drag him into the house. It was not until she had chained and double-locked the door, fastened every bolt and bar with the heat and fury of a maniac, and drawn him back into the room, that she turned upon him, once again, that stony look of horror, and sinking down into a chair, covered her face and shuddered as though the hand of death were on her.

"Upstairs. He wants you. Stay—where's his shadow? Come. You're a wise man; tell me that."

"Beside him, Barnaby; beside him, I suppose," returned the locksmith.

"No!" he replied, shaking his head. "Guess again."

"Gone out a walking, maybe?"

"He has changed shadows with a woman. The idiot whispered in his ear, and then fell back with a look of triumph. 'Her shadow's always with him, and his with her. That's sport, I think, eh?'"

"Barnaby?" said the locksmith, with a grave look. "Come hither, lad."

Table with 4 columns: DAY OF MONTH, DAY OF WEEK, COLOR OF VESTMENTS, and names of saints. Includes sections for Second Sunday After Easter, Third Sunday After Easter, Fourth Sunday After Easter, and Fifth Sunday After Easter.

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The young man smiled and shook his head, at the same time moving his chair as if in pain.

"It's no great matter," he said, in answer to the locksmith's sympathizing look, "a mere uneasiness arising at least as much from being cooped up here, as from the slight wound I have, or from the loss of blood. Be seated, Mr. Varden."

"I may make so bold, Mr. Edward, as to lean upon your chair," returned the locksmith, accommodating his action to his speech, and bending over him, "I'll stand here, for the convenience of speaking low. Barnaby is not in his quietest humor to-night, and at such times talking never does him good."

They both glanced at the subject of this remark, who had taken a seat on the other side of the fire, and, smiling vacantly, was making puzzles on his fingers with a skein of string.

"Pray, tell me, sir," said Varden, dropping his voice still lower, "exactly what happened last night. I have my reason for enquiring. You left the Maypole alone?"

"And walked homeward alone, until I had nearly reached the place where you found me, when I heard the gallop of a horse."

"Behind you?" said the locksmith.

"Indeed, yes—behind me. It was a single rider, who soon overtook me, and checking his horse, inquired the way to London."

"You were on the alert, sir, knowing how many highwaymen there are, scouring the roads in all directions?"

"Except," said Gabriel, bending down yet more, and looking cautiously towards their silent neighbor, "except in respect of the robber himself. What like was he, sir? Speak low, if you please. Barnaby means no harm, but I have watched him oftener than you, and I know, little as you would think it, that he's listening now."

that! Oh, he's a dreadful fellow! The raven, with his head very much on one side, and his bright eye shining like a diamond, preserved a thoughtful silence for a few seconds, and then replied in a voice so hoarse and distant, that it seemed to come through his thick feathers rather than out of his mouth.

"Halloo, halloo, halloo! What's the matter here! Keep up your spirits. Never say die. Bow, wow, wow. I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil. Hurrah!"—And then, as if exulting in his infernal character, he began to whistle.

"I more than half believe he speaks the truth. Upon my word I do," said Varden. "Do you see how he looks at me, as if he knew what I was saying?"

To which the bird, balancing himself on tiptoe, as it were, and moving his body up and down in a sort of grave dance, rejoined, "I'm a devil. I'm a devil, I'm a devil," and flapped his wings against his sides as if he were bursting with laughter. Barnaby clapped his hands, and fairly rolled upon the ground in an ecstasy of delight.

"Strange companions, sir," said the locksmith, shaking his head and looking from one to the other. "The bird has all the wit."

"Strange, indeed!" said Edward, holding out his forefinger to the raven, who, in acknowledgment of the attention, made a dive at it immediately with his iron bill. "Is he old?"

"A mere boy, sir," replied the locksmith. "A hundred and twenty, or thereabouts. Call him down, Barnaby, my man!"

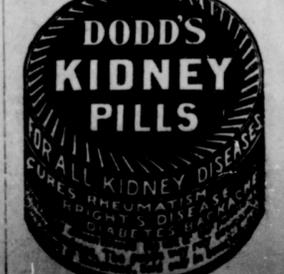
"Call him!" echoed Barnaby, sitting upright upon the floor, and staring vacantly at Gabriel, as he thrust his hair back from his face. "But who can make him come! He calls me, and makes me go where he will. He goes on before, and I follow. He's the master, and I'm the man. Is that the truth, Grip?"

The raven gave a short, comfortable, confidential kind of croak: a most expressive croak, which seemed to say, "You needn't let these fellows into our secrets. We understand each other. It's all right."

"I make him come?" cried Barnaby, pointing to the bird. "Him, who never goes to sleep, or so much as winks!—Why, any time of night, you may see his eyes in my dark room, shining like two sparks. And every night, and all night too, he's broad awake, talking to himself, thinking what he shall do to-morrow, where we shall go, and what he shall steal, and hide, and bury. I make him come! Ha, ha, ha!"

On second thoughts, the bird appeared disposed to come of himself. After a short survey of the ground, and a few side-long looks at the ceiling and at everybody present in turn, he fluttered to the floor, and went to Barnaby—not in a hop, or walk, or run, but in a pace that of a very particular gentleman with exceedingly tight boots on, trying to walk fast over loose pebbles. Then, stepping into his extended hand, and descending to be held out at arm's length, he gave vent to a succession of sounds, not unlike the drawing of some eight or ten dozen of long corks, and again asserted his brimstone birth and parentage with great distinctness.

(To Be Continued.)



Mother—Well, Johnnie, what are you going to give your teacher for a Christmas present? Johnnie—it is too soon to talk about that yet, mamma; it all depends on how she behaves herself between now and Christmas.

Some persons have periodical attacks of Canadian cholera, dysentery or diarrhoea, and have to use great precautions to avoid the disease. Change of water, cooking, and green fruit, is sure to bring on the attacks. To such persons we would recommend Dr. J. D. Kellogg's Dysentery Cordial as being the best medicine in the market for all summer complaints. If a few drops are taken in water when the symptoms are noticed no further trouble will be experienced.