BARNABY RUDGE

CHARLES DICKENS

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC.

INTRODUCTION

Barnaby Rudge was written by Dickens in the Spring and first flowing tide of his popularity; it came immediately after the *Old Curiosity Shop*, and only a short time after *Pickwick*. Dickens was one of those rare but often very sincere men in whom the high moment of success almost coincides with the high moment of youth. The calls upon him at this time were insistent and overwhelming; this necessarily happens at a certain stage of a successful writer's career. He was just successful enough to invite offers and not successful enough to reject them. At the beginning of his career he could throw himself into *Pickwick* because there was nothing else to throw himself into. At the end of his life he could throw himself into *The Tale of Two Cities*, because he refused to throw himself into anything else. But there was an intervening period, early in his life, when there was almost too much work for his imagination, and yet not quite enough work for his housekeeping. To this period *Barnaby Rudge* belongs. And it is a curious tribute to the quite curious greatness of Dickens that in this period of youthful strain we do not feel the strain but feel only the youth. His own amazing wish to write equalled or outstripped even his readers' amazing wish to read. Working too hard did not cure him of his abstract love of work. Unreasonable publishers asked him to write ten novels at once; but he wanted to write twenty novels at once. All this period is strangely full of his own sense at once of fertility and of futility; he did work which no one else could have done, and yet he could not be certain as yet that he was anybody.

Barnaby Rudge marks this epoch because it marks the fact that he is still confused about what kind of person he is going to be. He has already struck the note of the normal romance in *Nicholas Nickleby*; he has already created some of his highest comic characters in *Pickwick* and the *Old Curiosity Shop*, but here he betrays the fact that it is still a question what ultimate guide he shall follow. *Barnaby Rudge* is a romantic, historical novel; its design reminds us of Scott; some parts of its fulfilments remind us, alas! of Harrison Ainsworth. It is a very fine, romantic, historical novel;

Scott would have been proud of it. But it is still so far different from the general work of Dickens that it is permissible to wonder how far Dickens was proud of it. The book, admirable as it is, is almost entirely devoted to dealings with a certain artistic element, which in its mere isolation, Dickens did not commonly affect; an element which many men of infinitely less genius have often seemed to affect more successfully; I mean the element of the picturesque.

It is the custom in many quarters to speak somewhat sneeringly of that element which is broadly called the picturesque. It is always felt to be an inferior, a vulgar, and even an artificial form of art. Yet two things may be remarked about it. The first is that, with few exceptions, the greatest literary artists have been not only particularly clever at the picturesque, but particularly fond of it. Shakespeare, for instance, delighted in certain merely pictorial contrasts which are quite distinct from, even when they are akin to, the spiritual, or psychological view involved. For instance, there is admirable satire in the idea of Touchstone teaching worldly wisdom and worldly honour to the woodland yokels; there is excellent philosophy in the idea of the fool being the representative of civilisation in the forest. But quite apart from this deeper meaning in the incident, the mere figure of the jester, in his bright motley and his cap and bells, against the green background of the forest and the rude forms of the shepherds, is a strong example of the purely picturesque. There is excellent tragic irony in the confrontation of the melancholy philosopher among the tombs with the cheerful digger of the graves. But quite apart from such irony, the mere picture of the grotesque gravedigger, the black-clad prince, and the skull is a picture in the strongest sense picturesque. Caliban and the two shipwrecked drunkards are an admirable symbol; but they are also an admirable scene. Bottom, with the ass's head, sitting in a ring of elves, is an excellent moving comedy, but also an excellent stationary picture. Falstaff with his huge body, Bardolph with his burning nose, are masterpieces of the pen; but they would be fine sketches even for the pencil. King Lear, in the storm, is a landscape as well as a character study. There is something decorative even about the insistence of the swarthiness of Othello, or the deformity of Richard III. Shakespeare's work is much more than picturesque; but it is picturesque.

And the same which is said here of him by way of example is largely true of the highest class of literature. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is supremely important as a philosophy; but it is important merely as a panorama. Spenser's *Faery Queen* pleases us as an allegory; but it would please us even as a wall-paper. Stronger still is the case of Chaucer who loved the pure picturesque; which always includes something of what we commonly call the ugly. The huge stature and startling scarlet face of the Sompirour is in just the same spirit as Shakespeare's skulls and motley; the same spirit gave Chaucer's miller bagpipes, and clad his doctor in crimson. It is the spirit which, while making many other things, loves to make a picture.

Now the second thing to be remarked in apology for the picturesque is, that the very thing which makes it seem trivial ought really to make it seem important; I mean the fact that it consists necessarily of contrasts. It brings together types that stand out from their background, but are abruptly different from each other, like the clown among the fairies or the fool in the forest. And his audacious reconciliation is a mark not of frivolity but of extreme seriousness. A man who deals in harmonies, who only matches stars with angels or lambs with spring flowers, he indeed may be frivolous; for he is taking one mood at a time, and perhaps forgetting each mood as it passes. But a man who ventures to combine an angel and an octopus must have some serious view of the universe. The man who should write a dialogue between two early Christians might be a mere writer of dialogues. But a man who should write a dialogue between an early Christian and the Missing Link would have to be a philosopher. The more widely different the types talked of, the more serious and universal must be the philosophy which talks of them. The mark of the light and thoughtless writer is the harmony of his subject matter; the mark of the thoughtful writer is its apparent diversity. The most flippant lyric poet might write a pretty poem about sheep; but it requires something bolder and graver than a poet, it requires an ecstatic prophet, to talk about the lion lying down with the lamb.

Dickens, at any rate, strongly supports this conception: that great literary men as such do not despise the purely pictorial. No man's works have so much the quality of illustrating themselves. Few men's works have been more

thoroughly and eagerly illustrated; few men's works can it have been better fun to illustrate. As a rule this fascinating quality in the mere fantastic figures of the tale was inseparable from their farcical quality in the tale. Stiggins's red nose is distinctly connected with the fact that he is a member of the Ebenezer Temperance Association; Quilp is little, because a little of him goes a long way. Mr. Carker smiles and smiles and is a villain; Mr. Chadband is fat because in his case to be fat is to be hated. The story is unmeasurably more important than the picture; it is not merely indulgence in the picturesque. Generally it is an intellectual love of the comic; not a pure love of the grotesque.

But in one place Dickens suddenly confesses that he likes the grotesque even without the comic. In one case he makes clear that he enjoys pure pictures with a pure love of the picturesque. That place is *Barnaby Rudge*. There had indeed been hints of it in many episodes in his books; notably, for example, in that fine scene of the death of Quilp—a scene in which the dwarf remains fantastic long after he has ceased to be in any way funny. Still, the dwarf was meant to be funny. Humour of a horrible kind, but still humour, is the purpose of Quilp's existence and position in the book. Laughter is the object of all his oddities. But laughter is not the object of Barnaby Rudge's oddities. His idiot costume and his ugly raven are used for the purpose of the pure grotesque; solely to make a certain kind of picture.

It is commonly this love of pictures that drive men back upon the historical novel. But it is very typical of Dickens's living interest in his own time, that though he wrote two historical novels they were neither of them of very ancient history. They were both indeed of very recent history; only they were those parts of recent history which were specially picturesque. I do not think that this was due to any mere consciousness on his part that he knew no history. Undoubtedly he did know no history; and he may or may not have been conscious of the fact. But the consciousness did not prevent him from writing a *History of England*. Nor did it prevent him from interlarding all or any of his works with tales of the pictorial past, such as the tale of the broken swords in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, or the indefensibly delightful nightmare of the lady in the stage-coach, which helps to soften the slow end of Pickwick. Neither, worst of

all, did it prevent him from dogmatising anywhere and everywhere about the past, of which he knew nothing; it did not prevent him from telling the bells to tell Trotty Veck that the Middle Ages were a failure, nor from solemnly declaring that the best thing that the mediæval monks ever did was to create the mean and snobbish quietude of a modern cathedral city. No, it was not historical reverence that held him back from dealing with the remote past; but rather something much better—a living interest in the living century in which he was born. He would have thought himself quite intellectually capable of writing a novel about the Council of Trent or the First Crusade. He would have thought himself quite equal to analysing the psychology of Abelard or giving a bright, satiric sketch of St. Augustine. It must frankly be confessed that it was not a sense of his own unworthiness that held him back; I fear it was rather a sense of St. Augustine's unworthiness. He could not see the point of any history before the first slow swell of the French Revolution. He could understand the revolutions of the eighteenth century; all the other revolutions of history (so many and so splendid) were unmeaning to him. But the revolutions of the eighteenth century he did understand; and to them therefore he went back, as all historical novelists go back, in search of the picturesque. And from this fact an important result follows.

The result that follows is this: that his only two historical novels are both tales of revolutions—of eighteenth-century revolutions. These two eighteenth-century revolutions may seem to differ, and perhaps do differ in everything except in being revolutions and of the eighteenth century. The French Revolution, which is the theme of *The Tale of Two Cities*, was a revolt in favour of all that is now called enlightenment and liberation. The great Gordon Riot, which is the theme of *Barnaby Rudge*, was a revolt in favour of something which would now be called mere ignorant and obscurantist Protestantism. Nevertheless both belonged more typically to the age out of which Dickens came—the great sceptical and yet creative eighteenth century of Europe. Whether the mob rose on the right side or the wrong they both belonged to the time in which a mob could rise, in which a mob could conquer. No growth of intellectual science or of moral cowardice had made it impossible to fight in the streets, whether for the republic or for the Bible. If we wish to know what was the

real link, existing actually in ultimate truth, existing unconsciously in Dickens's mind, which connected the Gordon Riots with the French Revolution, the link may be defined though not with any great adequacy. The nearest and truest way of stating it is that neither of the two could possibly happen in Fleet Street to-morrow evening.

Another point of resemblance between the two books might be found in the fact that they both contain the sketch of the same kind of eighteenth-century aristocrat, if indeed that kind of aristocrat really existed in the eighteenth century. The diabolical dandy with the rapier and the sneer is at any rate a necessity of all normal plays and romances; hence Mr. Chester has a right to exist in this romance, and Foulon a right to exist in a page of history almost as cloudy and disputable as a romance. What Dickens and other romancers do probably omit from the picture of the eighteenth-century oligarch is probably his liberality. It must never be forgotten that even when he was a despot in practice he was generally a liberal in theory. Dickens and romancers make the pre-revolution tyrant a sincere believer in tyranny; generally he was not. He was a sceptic about everything, even about his own position. The romantic Foulon says of the people, "Let them eat grass," with bitter and deliberate contempt. The real Foulon (if he ever said it at all) probably said it as a sort of dreary joke because he couldn't think of any other way out of the problem. Similarly Mr. Chester, a cynic as he is, believes seriously in the beauty of being a gentleman; a real man of that type probably disbelieved in that as in everything else. Dickens was too bracing, one may say too bouncing, himself to understand the psychology of fatigue in a protected and leisured class. He could understand a tyrant like Quilp, a tyrant who is on his throne because he had climbed up into it, like a monkey; he could not understand a tyrant who was on his throne because he was too weary to get out of it. The old aristocrats were in a dead way quite good-natured. They were even humanitarians; which perhaps accounts for the extent to which they roused against themselves the healthy hatred of humanity. But they were tired humanitarians; tired with doing nothing. Figures like that of Mr. Chester, therefore, fail somewhat to give the true sense of something hopeless and helpless which led men to despair of the upper class. He has a boyish pleasure in play-acting;

he has an interest in life; being a villain is his hobby. But the true man of that type had found all hobby fail him. He had wearied of himself as he had wearied of a hundred women. He was graceful and could not even admire himself in the glass. He was witty and could not even laugh at his own jokes. Dickens could never understand tedium.

There is no mark more strange and perhaps sinister of the interesting and not very sane condition of our modern literature, than the fact that tedium has been admirably described in it. Our best modern writers are never so exciting as they are about dulness. Mr. Rudyard Kipling is never so powerful as when he is painting yawning deserts, aching silences, sleepless nights, or infernal isolation. The excitement in one of the stories of Mr. Henry James becomes tense, thrilling, and almost intolerable in all the half hours during which nothing whatever is said or done. We are entering again into the mind, into the real mind of Foulon and Mr. Chester. We begin to understand the deep despair of those tyrants whom our fathers pulled down. But Dickens could never have understood that despair; it was not in his soul. And it is an interesting coincidence that here, in this book of *Barnaby Rudge*, there is a character meant to be wholly grotesque, who, nevertheless, expresses much of that element in Dickens which prevented him from being a true interpreter of the tired and sceptical aristocrat.

Sim Tappertit is a fool, but a perfectly honourable fool. It requires some sincerity to pose. Posing means that one has not dried up in oneself all the youthful and innocent vanities with the slow paralysis of mere pride. Posing means that one is still fresh enough to enjoy the good opinion of one's fellows. On the other hand, the true cynic has not enough truth in him to attempt affectation; he has never even seen the truth, far less tried to imitate it. Now we might very well take the type of Mr. Chester on the one hand, and of Sim Tappertit on the other, as marking the issue, the conflict, and the victory which really ushered in the nineteenth century. Dickens was very like Sim Tappertit. The Liberal Revolution was very like a Sim Tappertit revolution. It was vulgar, it was overdone, it was absurd, but it was alive. Dickens was vulgar, was absurd, overdid everything, but he was alive. The aristocrats were perfectly correct, but quite dead; dead long before they were guillotined. The classics

and critics who lamented that Dickens was no gentleman were quite right, but quite dead. The revolution thought itself rational; but so did Sim Tappertit. It was really a huge revolt of romanticism against a reason which had grown sick even of itself. Sim Tappertit rose against Mr. Chester; and, thank God! he put his foot upon his neck.

1909. G. K. CHESTERTON.

The following is a list of the works of Charles Dickens :—

Sketches by Boz, 1835, 2nd series, 1836 (from *Monthly Magazine*, *Morning Chronicle*, *Evening Chronicle*, *Bell's Life in London*, and *The Library of Fiction*); *Sunday under Three Heads*, etc., 1836; *The Village Coquettes*, comic opera, 1836; *The Strange Gentleman*, comic burletta, 1837; *Is she his Wife? or Something Singular?* comic burletta, acted 1837; *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, monthly numbers, 1836–7; *Mudfog Papers* (Bentley's *Miscellany*), 1837–9; *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, edited by Boz, 1838; *Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress*, 1838 (from Bentley's *Miscellany*); *Sketches of Young Gentlemen*, 1838; *Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, monthly numbers, 1838–9; *Sketches of Young Couples*, etc., 1840; *Master Humphrey's Clock*, weekly numbers, 1840–1; volume form, 1840, 1841 (*Old Curiosity Shop*, *Barnaby Rudge*); *The Pic-nic Papers* (preface and first story), 1841; *American Notes for General Circulation*, 1842; *A Christmas Carol in Prose*, 1843; *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, monthly numbers, 1843–4; *The Chimes: a Goblin Story of some Bells*, etc., 1844; *The Cricket on the Hearth: a Fairy Tale of Home*, 1845; *Pictures from Italy*, 1846 (from *Daily News*); *The Battle of Life: a Love Story*, 1846; *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey & Son*, etc., monthly numbers, 1846–8; *The Haunted Man, and the Ghost's Bargain*, 1848; *The Personal History of David Copperfield*, monthly numbers, 1849–50; Christmas Stories in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, 1850–67; *Bleak House*, monthly numbers, 1852–3; *A Child's History of England*, 1854 (from *Household Words*); *Hard Times for these Times*, 1854 (from *Household Words*); *Little Dorritt*, monthly numbers, 1855–7; *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859 (from *All the Year Round*); *Great Expectations*, 1861 (from *All the Year Round*); *Our Mutual Friend*, monthly numbers, 1864–5; *Religious Opinions of the late Rev. Chauncey Hare Townsend*, ed. C. D., 1869; 'Landor's Life,' last contribution to *All the Year Round*; *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (unfinished), in monthly numbers, April to September, 1870.

Other papers were contributed to *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.

First Collective Ed., 1847–74; Library Ed., 1857, etc.; 'Charles Dickens,' Ed., 1868–70.

Letters, ed. Georgina Hogarth and Mamie Dickens, 1882, 1893; ed. W. Dexter, 3 vols., 1938.

LIFE. J. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 2 vols., 1872–4 (new edition, ed. J. W. T. Ley, 1928); G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens*, 1906; Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, *Dickens' Own Story*, 1927; R. Straus, *Dickens, a Portrait in Pencil*, 1928; Sir H. F. Dickens, *Memories of my Father*, 1928; E. Wagenknecht, *The Man Charles Dickens*, 1929; Osbert Sitwell, *Dickens*, 1932; Una Pope-Hennessy, *Charles Dickens*, 1945.

See also George Gissing, *Charles Dickens: a Critical Study*, 1898; Sir J. A. Hammerton, *The Dickens Companion*, 1910; G. K. Chesterton, *Criticisms and Appreciations of the Works of Charles Dickens*, 1911; W. G. Wilkins (ed.), *Dickens in America*, 1911; J. W. T. Ley, *The Dickens Circle: The Novelist's Friendships*, 1919.

PREFACE

If the object an author has had, in writing a book, cannot be discovered from its perusal, the probability is that it is either very deep, or very shallow. Hoping that mine may lie somewhere between these two extremes, I shall say very little about it, and that, only in reference to one point.

No account of the Gordon Riots having been to my knowledge introduced into any Work of Fiction, and the subject presenting very extraordinary and remarkable features, I was led to project this Tale.

It is unnecessary to say, that these shameful tumults, while they reflect indelible disgrace upon the time in which they occurred, and all who had act or part in them, teach a good lesson. That what we falsely call a religious cry is easily raised by men who have no religion, and who in their daily practice set at nought the commonest principles of right and wrong; that it is begotten of intolerance and persecution; that it is senseless, besotted, inveterate, and unmerciful; all History teaches us. But perhaps we do not know it in our hearts too well, to profit by even so humble and familiar example as the "No Popery" Riots of Seventeen Hundred and Eighty.

However imperfectly those disturbances are set forth in the following pages, they are impartially painted by one who has no sympathy with the Romish Church, although he acknowledges, as most men do, some esteemed friend among the followers of its creed.

It may be observed that, in the description of the principal outrages, reference has been made to the best authorities of that time, such as they are; and that the account given in this Tale, of all the main features of the Riots, is substantially correct.

It may be further remarked, that Mr. Dennis's allusions to the flourishing condition of his trade in those days, have their foundation in Truth, not in the Author's fancy. Any file of old Newspapers, or odd volume of the Annual Register, will prove this with terrible ease.

Even the case of Mary Jones, dwelt upon with so much pleasure by the same character, is no effort of invention. The

facts were stated, exactly as they are stated here, in the House of Commons. Whether they afforded as much entertainment to the merry gentlemen assembled there, as some other most affecting circumstances of a similar nature mentioned by Sir Samuel Romilly, is not recorded.

It is a great pleasure to me to add in this place—for which I have reserved the acknowledgment—that for a beautiful thought, in the last chapter but one of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, I am indebted to Mr. Rogers. It is taken from his charming Tale, *Ginevra* :—

> "And long might'st thou have seen
> An old man wandering *as in quest of something*,
> Something he could not find—he knew not what"

DEVONSHIRE TERRACE, YORK GATE,

November 1841.

Printed in Great Britain
by Richard Clay and Company, Ltd.,
Bungay, Suffolk
for
J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
Aldine House, Bedford St., London

First published in this edition 1906
Last reprinted 1946
Re-set and reprinted 1950

BARNABY RUDGE

CHAPTER I

In the year 1775, there stood upon the borders of Epping Forest, at a distance of about twelve miles from London—measuring from the Standard in Cornhill, or rather from the spot on or near to which the Standard used to be in days of yore—a house of public entertainment called the Maypole; which fact was demonstrated to all such travellers as could neither read nor write (and sixty years ago a vast number both of travellers and stay-at-homes were in this condition) by the emblem reared on the roadside over against the house, which, if not of those goodly proportions that Maypoles were wont to present in olden times, was a fair young ash, thirty feet in height, and straight as any arrow that ever English yeoman drew.

The Maypole—by which term from henceforth is meant the house, and not its sign—the Maypole was an old building, with more gable ends than a lazy man would care to count on a sunny day; huge zigzag chimneys, out of which it seemed as though even smoke could not choose but come in more than naturally fantastic shapes, imparted to it in its tortuous progress; and vast stables, gloomy, ruinous, and empty. The place was said to have been built in the days of King Henry the Eighth; and there was a legend, not only that Queen Elizabeth had slept there one night while upon a hunting excursion, to wit, in a certain oak-panelled room with a deep bay window, but that next morning, while standing on a mounting-block before the door with one foot in the stirrup, the Virgin Monarch had then and there boxed and cuffed an unlucky page for some neglect of duty. The matter-of-fact and doubtful folks, of whom there were a few among the Maypole customers, as unluckily there always are in every little community, were inclined to look upon this tradition as rather apocryphal; but whenever the landlord of that ancient hostelry appealed to the mounting-block itself as evidence, and triumphantly pointed out that

there it stood in the same place to that very day, the doubters never failed to be put down by a large majority, and all true believers exulted as in a victory.

Whether these, and many other stories of the like nature, were true or untrue, the Maypole was really an old house, a very old house, perhaps as old as it claimed to be, and perhaps older, which will sometimes happen with houses of an uncertain, as with ladies of a certain age. Its windows were old diamond-pane lattices, its floors were sunken and uneven, its ceilings blackened by the hand of Time, and heavy with massive beams. Over the doorway was an ancient porch, quaintly and grotesquely carved; and here on summer evenings the more favoured customers smoked and drank—ay, and sang many a good song too, sometimes—reposing on two grim-looking high-backed settles, which, like the twin dragons of some fairy tale, guarded the entrance to the mansion.

In the chimneys of the disused rooms swallows had built their nests for many a long year, and from earliest spring to latest autumn whole colonies of sparrows chirped and twittered in the eaves. There were more pigeons about the dreary stable-yard and outbuildings than anybody but the landlord could reckon up. The wheeling and circling flights of runts, fantails, tumblers, and pouters, were perhaps not quite consistent with the grave and sober character of the building, but the monotonous cooing, which never ceased to be raised by some among them all day long, suited it exactly, and seemed to lull it to rest. With its overhanging stories, drowsy little panes of glass, and front bulging out and projecting over the pathway, the old house looked as if it were nodding in its sleep. Indeed it needed no very great stretch of fancy to detect in it other resemblances to humanity. The bricks of which it was built had originally been a deep dark red, but had grown yellow and discoloured like an old man's skin; the sturdy timbers had decayed like teeth; and here and there the ivy, like a warm garment to comfort it in its age, wrapt its green leaves closely round the time-worn walls.

It was a hale and hearty age though, still: and in the summer or autumn evenings, when the glow of the setting sun fell upon the oak and chestnut trees of the adjacent forest, the old house, partaking of its lustre, seemed their fit companion, and to have many good years of life in him yet.

The evening with which we have to do, was neither a summer

nor an autumn one, but the twilight of a day in March, when the wind howled dismally among the bare branches of the trees, and rumbling in the wide chimneys and driving the rain against the windows of the Maypole Inn, gave such of its frequenters as chanced to be there at the moment an undeniable reason for prolonging their stay, and caused the landlord to prophesy that the night would certainly clear at eleven o'clock precisely, —which by a remarkable coincidence was the hour at which he always closed his house.

The name of him upon whom the spirit of prophecy thus descended was John Willet, a burly, large-headed man with a fat face, which betokened profound obstinacy and slowness of apprehension, combined with a very strong reliance upon his own merits. It was John Willet's ordinary boast in his more placid moods that if he were slow he was sure; which assertion could in one sense at least be by no means gainsaid, seeing that he was in everything unquestionably the reverse of fast, and withal one of the most dogged and positive fellows in existence —always sure that what he thought or said or did was right, and holding it as a thing quite settled and ordained by the laws of nature and Providence, that anybody who said or did or thought otherwise must be inevitably and of necessity wrong.

Mr. Willet walked slowly up to the window, flattened his fat nose against the cold glass, and shading his eyes that his sight might not be affected by the ruddy glow of the fire, looked abroad. Then he walked slowly back to his old seat in the chimney-corner, and, composing himself in it with a slight shiver, such as a man might give way to and so acquire an additional relish for the warm blaze, said, looking round upon his guests:

"It'll clear at eleven o'clock. No sooner and no later. Not before and not arterwards."

"How do you make out that?" said a little man in the opposite corner. "The moon is past the full, and she rises at nine."

John looked sedately and solemnly at his questioner until he had brought his mind to bear upon the whole of his observation, and then made answer, in a tone which seemed to imply that the moon was peculiarly his business and nobody else's:

"Never you mind about the moon. Don't you trouble yourself about her. You let the moon alone, and I'll let you alone.

"No offence I hope?" said the little man.

Again John waited leisurely until the observation had thoroughly penetrated to his brain, and then replying, "No offence *as yet*," applied a light to his pipe and smoked in placid silence; now and then casting a sidelong look at a man wrapped in a loose riding-coat with huge cuffs ornamented with tarnished silver lace and large metal buttons, who sat apart from the regular frequenters of the house, and wearing a hat flapped over his face, which was still further shaded by the hand on which his forehead rested, looked unsociable enough.

There was another guest, who sat, booted and spurred, at some distance from the fire also, and whose thoughts—to judge from his folded arms and knitted brows, and from the untasted liquor before him—were occupied with other matters than the topics under discussion or the persons who discussed them. This was a young man of about eight-and-twenty, rather above the middle height, and though of a somewhat slight figure, gracefully and strongly made. He wore his own dark hair, and was accoutred in a riding-dress, which, together with his large boots (resembling in shape and fashion those worn by our Life Guardsmen at the present day), showed indisputable traces of the bad condition of the roads. But travel-stained though he was, he was well and even richly attired, and without being over-dressed looked a gallant gentleman.

Lying upon the table beside him, as he had carelessly thrown them down, were a heavy riding-whip and a slouched hat, the latter worn no doubt as being best suited to the inclemency of the weather. There, too, were a pair of pistols in a holster-case, and a short riding-cloak. Little of his face was visible, except the long dark lashes which concealed his downcast eyes, but an air of careless ease and natural gracefulness of demeanour pervaded the figure, and seemed to comprehend even these slight accessories, which were all handsome, and in good keeping.

Towards this young gentleman the eyes of Mr. Willet wandered but once, and then as if in mute inquiry whether he had observed his silent neighbour. It was plain that John and the young gentleman had often met before. Finding that his look was not returned, or indeed observed by the person to whom it was addressed, John gradually concentrated the whole power of his eyes into one focus, and brought it to bear upon the man in the flapped hat, at whom he came to stare in course of time with an intensity so remarkable, that it affected his fire-side cronies, who all, as with one accord, took their pipes from

their lips, and stared with open mouths at the stranger likewise.

The sturdy landlord had a large pair of dull fish-like eyes, and the little man who had hazarded the remark about the moon (and who was the parish-clerk and bell-ringer of Chigwell; a village hard by) had little round black shiny eyes like beads; moreover this little man wore at the knees of his rusty black breeches, and on his rusty black coat, and all down his long flapped waistcoat, little queer buttons like nothing except his eyes; but so like them, that as they twinkled and glistened in the light of the fire, which shone too in his bright shoe-buckles, he seemed all eyes from head to foot, and to be gazing with every one of them at the unknown customer. No wonder that a man should grow restless under such an inspection as this, to say nothing of the eyes belonging to short Tom Cobb the general chandler and post-office keeper, and long Phil Parkes the ranger, both of whom, infected by the example of their companions, regarded him of the flapped hat no less attentively.

The stranger became restless; perhaps from being exposed to this raking fire of eyes, perhaps from the nature of his previous meditations—most probably from the latter cause, for as he changed his position and looked hastily round, he started to find himself the object of such keen regard, and darted an angry and suspicious glance at the fireside group. It had the effect of immediately diverting all eyes to the chimney, except those of John Willet, who finding himself, as it were, caught in the fact, and not being (as has been already observed) of a very ready nature, remained staring at his guest in a particularly awkward and disconcerted manner.

"Well?" said the stranger.

Well. There was not much in well. It was not a long speech. "I thought you gave an order," said the landlord, after a pause of two or three minutes for consideration.

The stranger took off his hat, and disclosed the hard features of a man of sixty or thereabouts, much weatherbeaten and worn by time, and the naturally harsh expression of which was not improved by a dark handkerchief which was bound tightly round his head, and, while it served the purpose of a wig, shaded his forehead, and almost hid his eyebrows. If it were intended to conceal or divert attention from a deep gash, now healed into an ugly seam, which when it was first inflicted must have laid bare his cheekbone, the object was but indifferently attained, for it could scarcely fail to be noted at a glance.