



THE
MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD
THE
OLD CURIOSITY SHOP



CLEAR TYPE EDITION

THE WORKS OF
CHARLES DICKENS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



EDWIN DROOD
THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

BOOKS, INC.
NEW YORK BOSTON

The Mystery of Edwin Drood was first published as a volume in 1870, having previously been issued in six monthly shilling parts from April to September of that year. The present Edition contains the fragment, 'How Mr. Sapsea ceased to be a member of the Eight Club,' discovered by Forster amongst the papers of Dickens after his death.

PRINTED AND BOUND IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY THE
H. WOLFF BOOK MF'G. CO., NEW YORK CITY

CONTENTS

The Mystery of Edwin Drood

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE DAWN	1
II. A DEAN, AND A CHAPTER ALSO	4
III. THE NUNS' HOUSE	14
IV. MR. SAPSEA	25
V. MR. DURDLES AND FRIEND	34
VI. PHILANTHROPY IN MINOR CANON CORNER	41
VII. MORE CONFIDENCES THAN ONE	50
VIII. DAGGERS DRAWN	59
IX. BIRDS IN THE BUSH	67
X. SMOOTHING THE WAY	81
XI. A PICTURE AND A RING	95
XII. A NIGHT WITH DURDLES	108
XIII. BOTH AT THEIR BEST	121
XIV. WHEN SHALL THESE THREE MEET AGAIN?	131
XV. IMPEACHED	143
XVI. DEVOTED	151
XVII. PHILANTHROPY, PROFESSIONAL AND UNPROFES- SIONAL	161
XVIII. A SETTLER IN CLOISTERHAM	175
XIX. SHADOW ON THE SUN-DIAL	183
XX. A FLIGHT	190
XXI. A RECOGNITION	200
XXII. A GRITTY STATE OF THINGS COMES ON	205
XXIII. THE DAWN AGAIN	222

FRAGMENT

HOW MR. SAPSEA CEASED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE EIGHT CLUB. TOLD BY HIMSELF	238
--	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The Mystery of Edwin Drood

UNDER THE TREES	<i>Frontispiece</i>
DURDLES CAUTIONS MR. SAPSEA	<i>Facing Page</i> 110
UP THE RIVER	“ “ 216

THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

The Mystery of Edwin Drood

CHAPTER I

THE DAWN

AN ancient English Cathedral Tower? How can the ancient English Cathedral tower be here! The well-known massive gray square tower of its old Cathedral? How can that be here! There is no spike of rusty iron in the air, between the eye and it, from any point of the real prospect. What is the spike that intervenes, and who has set it up? Maybe it is set up by the Sultan's orders for the impaling of a horde of Turkish robbers, one by one. It is so, for cymbals clash, and the Sultan goes by to his palace in long procession. Ten thousand scimitars flash in the sunlight, and thrice ten thousand dancing-girls strew flowers. Then, follow white elephants caparisoned in countless gorgeous colours, and infinite in number and attendants. Still the Cathedral Tower rises in the background, where it cannot be, and still no writhing figure is on the grim spike. Stay! Is the spike so low a thing as the rusty spike on the top of a post of an old bedstead that has tumbled all awry? Some vague period of drowsy laughter must be devoted to the consideration of this possibility.

Shaking from head to foot, the man whose scattered consciousness has thus fantastically pieced itself together, at length rises, supports his trembling frame upon his arms, and looks around. He is in the meanest and closest of small rooms. Through the ragged window-curtain, the light of early days steals in from a miserable

court. He lies, dressed, across a large unseemly bed, upon a bedstead that has indeed given way under the weight upon it. Lying, also dressed and also across the bed, not longwise, are a Chinaman, a Lascar, and a haggard woman. The two first are in a sleep or stupor; the last is blowing at a kind of pipe, to kindle it. And as she blows, and shading it with her lean hand, concentrates its red spark of light, it serves in the dim morning as a lamp to show him what he sees of her.

'Another?' says this woman, in a querulous, rattling whisper. 'Have another?'

He looks about him, with his hand to his forehead.

'Ye 've smoked as many as five since ye come in at midnight,' the woman goes on, as she chronically complains. 'Poor me, poor me, my head is so bad. Them two come in aiter ye. Ah, poor me, the business is slack, is slack! Few Chinamen about the Docks, and fewer Lascars, and no ships coming in, these say! Here 's another ready for ye, deary. Ye 'll remember like a good soul, won't ye, that the market price is dreffle high just now? More nor three shillings and sixpence for a thimbleful! And ye 'll remember that nobody but me (and Jack Chinaman t' other side the court; but he can't do it as well as me) has the true secret of mixing it? Ye 'll pay up according, deary, won't ye?'

She blows at the pipe as she speaks, and, occasionally bubbling at it, inhales much of its contents.

'O me, O me, my lungs is weak, my lungs is bad! It 's nearly ready for ye, deary. Ah poor me, poor me, my poor hand shakes like to drop off! I see ye coming-to, and I ses to my poor self, "I 'll have another ready for him, and he 'll bear in mind the market price of opium, and pay according." O my poor head! I makes my pipes of old penny inkbottles, ye see, deary—this is one—and I fits-in a mouthpiece, this way, and I takes my mixer out of this thimble with this little horn spoon: and so I fills, deary. Ah, my poor nerves! I got Heavens-hard drunk for sixteen year afore I took to this; but this don't hurt me, not to speak of. And it takes away the hunger as well as wittles, deary.'

She hands him the nearly-emptied pipe, and sinks back, turning over on her face.

He rises unsteadily from the bed, lays the pipe upon the hearthstone, draws back the ragged curtain, and looks with repugnance at his three companions. He notices that the woman has opium-smoked herself into a strange likeness of the Chinaman. His form

of cheek, eye, and temple, and his colour, are repeated in her. Said Chinaman convulsively wrestles with one of his many Gods or Devils, perhaps, and snarls horribly. The Lascar laughs and dribbles at the mouth. The hostess is still.

‘What visions can *she* have?’ the waking man muses, as he turns her face towards him, and stands looking down at it. ‘Visions of many butchers’ shops, and public-houses, and much credit? Of an increase of hideous customers, and this horrible bedstead set upright again, and this horrible court swept clean? What can she rise to, under any quantity of opium, higher than that!—Eh?’

He bends down his ear, to listen to her mutterings.

‘Unintelligible!’

As he watches the spasmodic shoots and darts that break out of her face and limbs, like fitful lightning out of a dark sky, some contagion in them seizes upon him: insomuch that he has to withdraw himself to a lean arm-chair by the hearth—placed there, perhaps, for such emergencies—and to sit in it, holding tight, until he has got the better of this unclean spirit of imitation.

Then he comes back, pounces on the Chinaman, and seizing him with both hands by the throat, turns him violently on the bed. The Chinaman clutches the aggressive hands, resists, gasps, and protests.

‘What do you say?’

A watchful pause.

‘Unintelligible!’

Slowly loosening his grasp as he listens to the incoherent jargon with an attentive frown, he turns to the Lascar and fairly drags him forth upon the floor. As he falls, the Lascar starts into a half-risen attitude, glares with his eyes, lashes about him fiercely with his arms, and draws a phantom knife. It then becomes apparent that the woman has taken possession of this knife, for safety sake; for, she too starting up, and restraining and expostulating with him, the knife is visible in her dress, not in his, when they drowsily drop back, side by side.

There has been chattering and clattering enough between them, but to no purpose. When any distinct word has been flung into the air, it has had no sense or sequence. Wherefore ‘unintelligible!’ is again the comment of the watcher, made with some reassured nodding of his head, and a gloomy smile. He then lays certain silver money on the table, finds his hat, gropes his way down the broken stairs, gives a good morning to some rat-ridden door-

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

