

Feast of the Rioters

(1) *Barnaby Rudge*, Chapter. 54 (The Maypole sacked.)

Yes. Here was the bar—the bar that the boldest never entered without special invitation—the sanctuary, the mystery, the hallowed ground: here it was, crammed with men, clubs, sticks, torches, pistols; filled with a deafening noise, oaths, shouts, screams, hootings; changed all at once into a bear-garden, a madhouse, an infernal temple: men darting in and out, by door and window, smashing the glass, turning the taps, drinking liquor out of China punchbowls, sitting astride of casks, smoking private and personal pipes, cutting down the sacred grove of lemons, hacking and hewing at the celebrated cheese, breaking open inviolable drawers, putting things in their pockets which didn't belong to them, dividing his own money before his own eyes, wantonly wasting, breaking, pulling down and tearing up: nothing quiet, nothing private: men everywhere—above, below, overhead, in the bedrooms, in the kitchen, in the yard, in the stables—clambering in at windows when there were doors wide open; dropping out of windows when the stairs were handy; leaping over the bannisters into chasms of passages: new faces and figures presenting themselves every instant—some yelling, some singing, some fighting, some breaking glass and crockery, some laying the dust with the liquor they couldn't drink, some ringing the bells till they pulled them down, others beating them with pokers till they beat them into fragments: more men still—more, more, more—swarming on like insects: noise, smoke, light, darkness, frolic, anger, laughter, groans, plunder, fear, and ruin!



May-day and Romance of the Apprentice

(2) *Barnaby Rudge*, Chapter 1 (The Maypole)

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

(3) *Barnaby Rudge*, Chapter 49 (The three leading the mob.)

At the head of this party, in the place where Hugh, in the madness of his humour, had stationed him, and walking between that dangerous companion and the hangman [Dennis], went Barnaby; as many a man among the thousands who looked on that day afterwards remembered well.

(4) *Barnaby Rudge*, Chapter 8 (“Prentice Knights”)

The 'prentice made answer that a stranger was in attendance, who claimed admission into that secret society of 'Prentice Knights, and a free participation in their rights, privileges, and immunities.

(5) **Thomas Haywood**, *The Four Prentices of London* (1594)

The Foure Prentises of London. With the Conquest of Ierusalem. As it hath bene diuerse times Acted, at the Red Bull, by the Queenes Maiesties Seruants. Written by Thomas Heyvwood

(6) **Thomas Dekker**, *The Shoemakers' Holiday* (1600), Scene 17

EYRE Soft, the King this day comes to dine with me, to see my new buildings. His Majesty is welcome; he shall have good cheer, delicate cheer, princely cheer. This day my fellow prentices of London come to dine with me too. They shall have fine cheer, gentlemanlike cheer. I promised the mad Cappadocians, when we all served at the conduit together, that if ever I came to be Mayor of London, I would feast them all; and I'll do't, I'll do't, by the life of Pharaoh, by this beard, Sim Eyre will be no flincher. Besides, I have procured that upon every Shrove Tuesday, at the sound of the pancake bell, my fine dapper Assyrian lads shall clap up their shop windows and away. This is the day, and this day they shall do't, they shall do't! Boys, that day are you free; let masters care, And prentices shall pray for Simon Eyre.

(7) *The Shoemakers' Holiday*, Scene 14

RALPH By this shoe, said he. How am I amazed

At this strange accident! Upon my life,

This was the very shoe I gave my wife

When I was pressed for France; since when, alas,

I never could hear of her. It is the same,

And Hammon's bride no other but my Jane.

(8) *Sketches by Boz*, "The First of May"

A mystery hung over the sweeps in those days. Legends were in existence of wealthy gentlemen who had lost children, and who, after many years of sorrow and suffering, had found them in the character of sweeps. Stories were related of a young boy who, having been stolen from his parents in his infancy, and devoted to the occupation of chimney-sweeping, was sent, in the course of his professional career, to sweep the chimney of his mother's bedroom; and how, being hot and tired when he came out of the chimney, he got into the bed he had so often slept in as an infant, and was discovered and recognised therein by his mother, who once every year of her life, thereafter, requested the pleasure of the company of every London sweep, at half-past one o'clock, to roast beef, plum-pudding, porter, and sixpence.

(9) *Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor*, Vol.2.

For many years, also, the sweepers were in the habit of partaking of a public dinner on the 1st of May, provided for every climbing-boy who thought proper to attend, at the expense of the Hon. Mrs. Montagu. The romantic origin of this custom, from all I could learn on the subject, is this:— The lady referred to, at the time a widow, lost her son, then a boy of tender years. Inquiries were set on foot, and all London heard of the mysterious disappearance of the child, but no clue could be found to trace him out. It was supposed that he was kidnapped, and the search at length was given up in despair. A lone time afterwards a sweeper was employed to cleanse the chimneys of Mrs. Montagu's house, by Portman-square, and for this purpose, as was usual at the time, sent a climbing-boy up the chimney, who from that moment was lost to him. The child did not return the way he went up, but it is supposed that in his descent he got into a wrong flue, and found himself, on getting out of the chimney, in one of the bedrooms. Wearied with his labour, it is said that he mechanically crept between the sheets, all black and sooty as he was. In this state he was found fast asleep by the house-keeper. The delicacy of his features and the soft tones of his voice interested the woman. She acquainted the family with the strange circumstance, and, when introduced to them with a clean face, his voice and appearance reminded them of their lost child. . . . The identity, it was understood, was proved beyond doubt. He was restored to his rank in society, and in order the better to commemorate this singular restoration, and the fact of his having been a climbing-boy, his mother annually provided an entertainment on the 1st of May, at White Conduit House, for all the climbing-boys of London who thought proper to partake of it.

Montagu, Mrs. Elizabeth 1720-1800, authoress and leader of society. . . . mindful of her poorer neighbours, she invited the youthful chimney-sweepers of London to eat roast beef and plum pudding on the lawn before her house every May-day morning. She is "the kind-hearted lady" commemorated in William Lisle Bowles's poem on the "Little Sweep". *DNB*.

Dick Whittington and George Barnwell**(10) *Barnaby Rudge*, Chapter 31 (Joe Willet and Dick Whittington)**

He [Joe Willet] went out by Islington and so on to Highgate, and sat on many stones and gates, but there were no voices in the bells to bid him turn. Since the time of noble Whittington, fair flower of merchants, bells have come to have less sympathy with humankind. They only ring for money and on state occasions. Wanderers have increased in number; ships leave the Thames for distant regions, carrying from stem to stern no other cargo; the bells are silent; they ring out no entreaties or regrets; they are used to it and have grown worldly.

(11) *The Shoemakers' Holiday*, Scene 13

Enter HODGE at his shop board, RALPH, FIRK, LACY and a BOY, at work

ALL [*Singing*] *Hey down, a-down, down derry.*

HODGE Well said, my hearts! Ply your work today — we loitered yesterday. To it, pell-mell, that we may live to be Lord Mayors, or aldermen at least.

FIRK [*Singing*] *Hey down a-down derry.*

(12) *The Shoemakers' Holiday*, Scene 18

Enter HODGE, FIRK, RALPH, and five or six shoemakers, all with cudgels, or such weapons

HODGE Come, Ralph. Stand to it, Firk. My masters, as we are the brave bloods of the shoemakers, heirs apparent to Saint Hugh, and perpetual benefactors to all good fellows, thou shalt have no wrong. Were Hammon a king of spades, he should not delve in thy close without thy sufferance. But tell me, Ralph, art thou sure 'tis thy wife?

RALPH Am I sure this is Firk? This morning, when I stroked on her shoes, I looked upon her, and she upon me, and sighed, asked me if ever I knew one Ralph. Yes, said I. For his sake, said she - tears standing in her eyes - and for

thou art somewhat like him, spend this piece of gold. I took it; my lame leg and my travel beyond sea made me unknown. All is one for that. I know she's mine.

FIRK Did she give thee this gold? O glorious glittering gold! She's thine own, 'tis thy wife, and she loves thee; for, I'll stand to't, there's no woman will give gold to any man but she thinks better of him than she thinks of them she gives silver to. And for Hammon, neither Hammon nor hangman shall wrong thee in London. Is not our old master Eyre Lord Mayor? Speak, my hearts!

ALL Yes, and Hammon shall know it to his cost.

(13) George Chapman, Ben Jonson, John Marston, *Eastward Ho* (1605), Act IV, Scene II

TOUCHSTONE. . . . Worshipful son! I cannot contain myself; I must tell thee, I hope to see thee one o' the monuments of our city, and reckoned among her worthies, to be remembered the same day with the Lady Ramsey and grave Gresham, when the famous fable of Whittington and his puss shall be forgotten, and thou and thy acts become the posies for hospitals, when thy name shall be written upon conduits, and thy deeds played i' thy lifetime, by the best companies of actors, and be called their get-penny. This I divine. This I prophesy.

[Lady Ramsey] Lady Mary Ramsey, second wife of Sir Thomas Ramsey, Lord Mayor of London in 1577; she was the benefactress of Christ's Hospital.]

[grave Gresham] Sir Thomas Gresham (1519?-1579), founder of the Royal Exchange.]

(14) *Eastward Ho*, Act V, Scene V

QUICKSILVER. [*sings.*]

Farewell, Cheapside, farewell, sweet trade
Of goldsmiths all, that never shall fade;
Farewell, dear fellow prentices all,
And be you warned by my fall:
Shun usurers, bawds, and dice, and drabs;
Avoid them as you would French scabs.
Seek not to go beyond your tether,
But cut your thongs unto your leather;
So shall you thrive by little and little,
Scape Tyburn, Counters, and the Spital.

(15) George Lillo, *The London Merchant or the History of George Barnwell* (1731), Act V, Scene v

BARNWELL. . . . From our example may all be taught to fly the first approach of vice, but, if o'ertaken

By strong temptation, weakness, or surprise, / Lament their guilt and by repentance rise, / Th'impenitent alone die unforgiven; / To sin's like man, and to forgive like Heaven.

(16) Samuel Richardson, *Apprentice's Vade Mecum, or A Young Man's Pocket-Companion* (1734)

I know but of one Instance, and that a very late one, where the, Stage has condescended to make itself useful to the City-Youth, by a dreadful Example of the Artifices of a lewd Woman. and the Seduction of an unwary young Man ; and it would favour too much of Partiality, not to mention it. I mean, the Play of George Barnwell, which has met with the Success that I think it well deserves ; and I could be content to compound with the young City Gentry, that they should go to this Play once a Year, if they would condition, not to desire to go oftner, till another Play of an equally good Moral and Design were acted on the Stage.

(17) *Barnaby Rudge*, Chapter 4 (Simon Tappertit and George Barnwell)

'Sir,' said Sim, looking up with amazing politeness, and a peculiar little bow cut short off at the neck, 'I shall attend you immediately.'

'I suppose,' muttered Gabriel, 'that's out of the 'Prentice's Garland or the 'Prentice's Delight, or the 'Prentice's Warbler, or the 'Prentice's Guide to the Gallows, or some such improving textbook. Now he's going to beautify himself—here's a precious locksmith!'

. . . .

Sim Tappertit, among the other fancies upon which his before- mentioned soul was for ever feasting and regaling itself (and which fancies, like the liver of Prometheus, grew as they were fed upon), had a mighty notion of his order; and had been heard by the servant-maid openly expressing his regret that the 'prentices no longer carried clubs wherewith to mace the citizens: that was his strong expression. He was likewise reported to have said that in former times a stigma had been cast upon the body by the execution of George Barnwell, to which they should not have basely submitted, but should have demanded him of the legislature— temperately at first; then by an appeal to arms, if necessary—to be dealt with as they in their wisdom might think fit.

The Green Man

(18) *Barnaby Rudge*, Chapter 11 (Hugh)

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 sunburnt 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.



(19) Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*

With reference to the May-day festival of the sweepers the same author [Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*] says: — “The chimney-sweepers of London have also singled out the first of May for their festival, at which time they parade the streets in companies, disguised in various manners. . . . Some of the larger companies have a fiddler with them, and a Jack in the Green, as well as a Lord and Lady of the May, who follow the minstrel with great stateliness, and dance as occasion requires. The Jack in the Green is a piece of pageantry consisting of a hollow frame of wood or wicker-work, made in the form of a sugar-loaf, but open at the bottom, and sufficiently large and high to receive a man. The frame is covered with green leaves and bunches of flowers, interwoven

with each other, so that the man within may be completely concealed, who dances with his companions; and the populace are mightily pleased with the oddity of the moving pyramid.”

(20) Anonymous, *Mucedorus* (1590)

Enter Brema a wild man.

Bre. With restlesse rage I wander through these woods,
 No creature heere but feareth Bremoes force,
 Man, woman, child, beast and bird,
 And euery thing that doth approach my sight,
 Are forst to fall it [if] Brema once but frowne,
 Come cudgel come, my partner in my spoiles,
 For heere I see this daie it will not be,
 But when it falles that I encounter anie,
 One pat suffised for to worke my wil.

(21) *Barnaby Rudge*, Chapter 67 (Hugh at the head)

Full twenty times, the rioters, headed by one man who wielded an axe in his right hand, and bestrode a brewer's horse of great size and strength, caparisoned with fetters taken out of Newgate, which clanked and jingled as he went, made an attempt to force a passage at this point, and fire the vintner's house. . . .

This man was Hugh; and in every part of the riot, he was seen. . . . Driven from Holborn for the twentieth time, he rode at the head of a great crowd straight upon Saint Paul's, attacked a guard of soldiers who kept watch over a body of prisoners within the iron railings, forced them to retreat, rescued the men they had in custody, and with this accession to his party, came back again, mad with liquor and excitement, and hallooing them on like a demon.

(22) *Barnaby Rudge*, Chapter 55 (The orgy of the rioters.)

If Bedlam gates had been flung wide open, there would not have issued forth such maniacs as the frenzy of that night had made. . . . There were men who cast their lighted torches in the air, and suffered them to fall upon their heads and faces, blistering the skin with deep unseemly burns. There were men who rushed up to the fire, and paddled in it with their hands as if in water; and others who were restrained by force from plunging in, to gratify their deadly longing. On the skull of one drunken lad—not twenty, by his looks—who lay upon the ground with a bottle to his mouth, the lead from the roof came streaming down in a shower of liquid fire, white hot; melting his head like wax.



Illustration by Cruikshank, Sketches by Boz