



The Mystery of Edwin Drood (With the original illustrations)

Charles Dickens

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-Illustrated with the original Illustrations by Cattermole

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The Mystery of Edwin Drood is the final novel by Charles Dickens.[1][2] The novel was unfinished at the time of Dickens' death (9 June 1870) and his ending for it remains unknown. Consequently, the identity of the murderer remains subject to debate.

The novel begins as John Jasper leaves a London opium den.[4] The next evening, Edwin Drood visits Jasper, who is the choirmaster at Cloisterham Cathedral. Edwin confides that he has misgivings about his betrothal to Rosa Bud. The next day, Edwin visits Rosa at the Nuns' House, the boarding school where she lives. They quarrel good-naturedly, which they apparently do frequently during his visits. Meanwhile, having an interest in the cathedral crypt, Jasper seeks the company of Durdles, a man who knows more about the crypt than anyone else.

Neville Landless and his twin sister Helena are sent to Cloisterham for their education. Neville will study with the minor canon, Rev. Mr Crisparkle; Helena will live at the Nuns' House with Rosa. Neville confides to Rev. Mr Crisparkle that he had hated his cruel stepfather, while Rosa confides to Helena that she loathes and fears her music-master, Jasper. Neville is immediately smitten with Rosa and is indignant that Edwin prizes his betrothal lightly. Edwin provokes him and he reacts violently, giving Jasper the opportunity to spread rumours about Neville's reputation of having a violent temper. Rev. Mr Crisparkle tries to reconcile Edwin and Neville, who agrees to apologise to Edwin if the former will forgive him. It is arranged that they will dine together for this purpose on Christmas Eve at Jasper's home.

Rosa's guardian, Mr. Grewgious, tells her that she has a substantial inheritance from her father. When she asks whether there would be any forfeiture if she did not marry Edwin, he replies that there would be none on either side. Back at his office in London, Mr. Grewgious gives Edwin a ring which Rosa's father had given to her mother, with the proviso that Edwin must either give the ring to Rosa as a sign of his irrevocable commitment to her or return it to Mr. Grewgious. Mr. Bazzard, Mr. Grewgious's clerk, witnesses this transaction.

Next day, Rosa and Edwin amicably agree to end their betrothal.

They decide to ask Mr. Grewgious to break the news to Jasper, and Edwin intends to return the ring to Mr. Grewgious. Meanwhile, Durdles takes Jasper into the cathedral crypt. On the way there Durdles points out a mound of quicklime. Jasper provides a bottle of wine to Durdles. The wine is mysteriously potent and Durdles soon loses consciousness; while unconscious he dreams that Jasper goes off by himself in the crypt. As they return from the crypt, they encounter a boy called Deputy and Jasper, thinking he was spying on them, takes him by the throat but seeing that this will strangle him, lets him go.

On Christmas Eve, Neville buys himself a heavy walking stick; he plans to spend his Christmas break hiking around the countryside. Meanwhile, Edwin visits a jeweller to repair his pocket watch; it is mentioned that the only pieces of jewellery that he wears are the watch and chain and a shirt pin. By chance he meets a woman, who is an opium user from London. She asks Drood's Christian name and he replies that it is

'Edwin'; she says he is fortunate it is not 'Ned,' for 'Ned' is in great danger. He thinks nothing of this, for the only person who calls him 'Ned' is Jasper. Meanwhile, Jasper buys himself a black scarf of strong silk, which is not seen again during the course of the novel. The reconciliation dinner is successful and at midnight, Drood and Neville Landless leave together to go down to the river and look at a wind storm that rages that night.

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