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BLEAK HOUSE

BY

C H A R L E S D I C K E N S .

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I N F O U R V O L U M E S .

V O L . I I I .



L E I P Z I G

B E R N H A R D T A U C H N I T Z

1852.

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BLEAK HOUSE.

VOL. III.

CHAPTER I.

Interlopers.

Now do those two gentlemen not very neat about the cuffs and buttons who attended the last Coroner's Inquest at the Sol's Arms, reappear in the precincts with surprising swiftness (being, in fact, breathlessly fetched by the active and intelligent beadle), and institute perquisitions through the court, and dive into the Sol's parlour, and write with ravenous little pens on tissue-paper. Now do they note down, in the watches of the night, how the neighbourhood of Chancery Lane was yesterday, at about midnight, thrown into a state of the most intense agitation and excitement by the following alarming and horrible discovery. Now do they set forth how it will doubtless be remembered, that some time back a painful sensation was created in the public mind, by a case of mysterious death from opium occurring in the first floor of the house occupied as a rag, bottle, and general marine store-shop, by an eccentric individual of intemperate habits, far advanced in life, named Krook; and how, by a remarkable coincidence, Krook was examined at the inquest, which it may be recollected was held on that occasion at the Sol's Arms, a well-conducted tavern,

immediately adjoining the premises in question, on the west side, and licensed to a highly respectable landlord, Mr. James George Bogsby. Now do they show (in as many words as possible), how during some hours of yesterday evening a very peculiar smell was observed by the inhabitants of the court, in which the tragical occurrence which forms the subject of that present account transpired; and which odour was at one time so powerful, that Mr. Swills, a comic vocalist, professionally engaged by Mr. J. G. Bogsby, has himself stated to our reporter that he mentioned to Miss M. Melvilleson, a lady of some pretensions to musical ability, likewise engaged by Mr. J. G. Bogsby to sing at a series of concerts called Harmonic Assemblies or Meetings, which it would appear are held at the Sol's Arms, under Mr. Bogsby's direction, pursuant to the Act of George the Second, that he (Mr. Swills) found his voice seriously affected by the impure state of the atmosphere; his jocose expression, at the time, being, "that he was like an empty post-office, for he hadn't a single note in him." How this account of Mr. Swills is entirely corroborated by two intelligent married females residing in the same court, and known respectively by the names of Mrs. Piper and Mrs. Perkins; both of whom observed the foetid effluvia, and regarded them as being emitted from the premises in the occupation of Krook, the unfortunate deceased. All this and a great deal more, the two gentlemen, who have formed an amicable partnership in the melancholy catastrophe, write down on the spot; and the boy population of the court (out of bed in a moment) swarm up the shutters of the Sol's Arms parlour, to behold the tops of their heads while they are about it.