

# RALPH HARDELLOT'S MEDIATION

BY WILLIAM MINTO.

## CHAPTER XXV—Continued.

"Then," cried Ball impetuously turning to his colleagues, "we must have the charters with us. We must not leave London without them. It is necessary that we see the king alone." Tyler said nothing, but by a look admonished the impetuous speaker of his indiscretion in thus revealing their plans. Kirby also cast a reproving glance. The man of quiet intrigue and organization was often annoyed by the man of burning words.

Ralph did not see this by-play, but, as Ball seemed to address him, made answer by way of excusing the king, that he could not grant charters without the assent of his council.

"We will be his council!" cried the fiery orator. "We will quicken their deliberations!"

Then Kirby had a question to ask in his ordinary smooth voice. Did the king show the same willingness to remedy abuses when Ralph first conferred with him six weeks before?

Ralph assured him that it was so, an answer at which the little man's keen eyes twinkled, while he suggested to the captain that Master HardeLOT might now be dismissed with thanks to the king for his gracious message, and an answering assurance that they would ever be loyal to him and his heirs, and that he need fear no hurt from them, and that in all they did they had regard to the honor of himself and the realm.

Ralph left the presence of the insurgent leaders with a heavy heart, which all his new-found joy and hope could hardly lift above the oppression of painful foreboding. On two points it was clear that they had made up their minds inflexibly: they must see the king in person, and they must have charters of emancipation under his seal.

Further, they were not in a mood to wait; they must have satisfaction at once. How, indeed, could they wait with a huge, unprovoked mob behind them assembled to carry their demands with a rush?

When we compare the enterprise of the insurgents with the customs of the time, it looks much less revolutionary than it does in the light of modern usage, and also much less wild and impractical. It was no uncommon thing in those days—a custom surviving from Anglo-Saxon times—for the people to break in upon and overawe the judicial and legislative deliberation. It was thus not so wild a scheme as it now looks for the peasantry of England to rise and try to coerce their rulers into the concession of freedom by a single act of the sovereign power. The novelty and also the danger lay in the breadth of the combination, and the enormous numbers and mixed character of the assembled multitudes.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Thursday, the 13th of June, was the festival of Corpus Christi, when the streets and churches of every town all over the Christian world were filled with that singular pageant intended to bring before the bodily eyes of the people the eternal claims of the Redeemer and his martyrs to reverent gratitude and adoration.

It was significant of the permanence of the church throughout all political commotions and changes that this solemn procession was not intermitted in London on that memorable Thursday. Some courage it needed to persist, for of all the great ceremonies of the church there was none so likely to be subjected by an excited populace to unseemly insult or riotous interruption.

Lollardy was spreading fast among the people; and in the eyes of the ecclesiastics, who repudiated transubstantiation, the adoration of the Host was a profane rite. On ordinary occasions even there were many who kept out of the way or refused to uncover and bow the head when the sacred pyx was carried along the street. To send the procession through the city when London was surrounded by huge mobs, as bitterly hostile to the ministers of the church as they were to the ministers of the state, and possessing in both animosities the full sympathy of the populace, seemed like courting disaster. But no interruption occurred.

The officiating priests with their sacred charge, the long train of white-robed choristers, Ursula and her maidens, Catherine and her wheel, Sebastian struck full of arrows, St. George and the dragon, passed through Cheapside unmolested. It may have been that the persecutors of the martyrs trembled lest their acting should be turned into earnest, but jeers here and there from crowds buzzing with expectation of greater novelties were all the indignity they had to endure.

It was the archbishop who had insisted that the ordinance of the church should be observed. Sudbury was not in a mood to yield to popular clamor. In retiring from his high office in the state he had wrapped himself round with all the dignity of the church. If he was no longer lord high chancellor of England, he was still the legate of the pope and archbishop of Canterbury. So fierce and so openly proclaimed was the popular hatred, and so little did his late colleagues show any disposition to shield him that the full extent of his danger was only too manifest. Escape was impossible if he had wished it, and reflecting on his toilsome climb out of obscurity, on the many heavy burdens he had borne, and the bitter ingratitude and calumny that were his reward, he had little desire to live, and prepared to endure the worst with dignity.

He had remained all night in the Tower, and in the chapel there on Thursday morning he celebrated early mass before the king and his court, and dismissed them with his blessing to the interview with the insurgents at Rotherhithe.

They rowed down from the Tower about ten o'clock. Ralph HardeLOT had a place in the barge near the king. With characteristic impulsiveness Richard had made a prime favorite of the young man, and feeling the need of trusting some one in such a crisis, and regarding all the statesmen around him with suspicion as being possibly secret allies of his uncle Lancaster, he trusted Ralph implicitly. His nobles did not like this childish partiality, and spoke one to another about the intruder with contemptuous anger; but it was not a time to squabble with their royal master about such an insignificant person, and the princess seemed to approve of her son's fancy to have the young man near his person.

As they rowed down the river they found the banks by Rotherhithe crowded with a rugged and ragged mob of peasants. They also had been prepared by their chaplain for the work of the day; but in place of the solemn mass their morning service had been a rousing sermon from John Ball on the iniquity of bondage and the natural equality of men. (Ball's famous text on the occasion—

"When Adam dalf and Eve span is was thanne the gentillman?"— is sometimes referred to as if it had been his own composition. It was really a familiar country proverb. The equality of man in the primitive state was equally a commonplace, to be found in most deeds of manumission. It was in the practical application that Ball differed from his contemporaries.

The attempt at a conference failed, as had been anticipated on both sides, except by the unreasonably sanguine. The nobles would not comply with the preliminary conditions of the insurgents, and the insurgents would do nothing until those conditions were granted.

The young king, indeed, was eager to land. Ralph, seeing in this the only chance of averting a collision, had warmly advised him to trust his presence with the insurgents. The king had all the fearlessness of his race, and the boldness of the measure captivated his chivalrous imagination. As the event proved afterward, it might have been done with safety. But the counsellors who accompanied the king would not hear of it.

The royal party was not long returned to the Tower when the insurgents were battering at the gates of London bridge on the south and Algate on the east, and threatening to pillage and burn the suburbs if they were not admitted.

The city gates were opened after brief parley. "What happened then? Indiscriminate pillage and massacre? No; the wealth of the capital and the lives of the citizens were at the mercy of these armies of shoeless and ragged churls—there was nothing but moral authority to restrain them; but, strange to say, they resisted the temptation. They marched through the streets in order as peaceably as a modern "demonstration" through Pall Mall and Piccadilly to Hyde Park. Their rising was in fact a demonstration, not a bloodthirsty rebellion.

Two great outrages of property were perpetrated that afternoon, but both were rough acts of exemplary punishment, both were probably deliberately planned by the leaders as safety-valves for the excitement of their followers. Such a miscellaneous mob, full of hilarious energy, rejoicing in their unworked holiday from dull routine, plied with food and drink by the sympathetic and the sycophantic, bubbling over with the laughter of a self-satisfaction that a touch might kindle into destructive savagery, was dangerous if left without definite occupation. It was well for the unprotected wealth of London that their energies were concentrated against the property of two of the greatest and most hated personages in the realm, John of Gaunt and Sir Robert Hales, the lord high treasurer.

The men of Kent, entering by London bridge, and the men of Essex, entering by Algate, marched right through London to John of Gaunt's great Palace at the Savoy, wrecked it, and set it on fire. But so sternly were the leaders bent on repressing anything that looked like private pillage that a catiff, who was found in possession of a silver cup snatched out of the wealth of jewelry, ornaments, tapestry and other treasures with which the palace was furnished, was summarily seized and flung with his plunder into the Thames. The Savoy palace demolished, the wrath of the insurgents was turned next against the belongings of the Knights of St. John, of which powerful order Hales, the lord treasurer, was the grand master. The Temple was first wrecked and burned, and next a like destruction overtook the property of the Hospitaliers in Clerkenwell.

Night fell at last on this day of terror for all who had anything to lose, and the citizens were left within their bolted and barricaded doors, trembling but untouched. Late in the evening, within sound of the terrific outbursts of discordant howling from the hill opposite, a council was held in the Tower, to which the lord mayor and other magnates of the city were invited. The young king went with a plan to propose and a royal determination to have his own way.

The easy capture of the city gates had increased his suspicions of his regular counsellors, and thrown him still more unreservedly upon the confidence of his young favorite.

With Ralph the meditative sadness of the previous evening had given place to his natural energy and eagerness, and a high-strung resolution to be of service. There was no one near the king to point out what he saw to be the clear path, and when the princess consulted him he did not hesitate to speak out with all his force, and urge that the king should put trust in the loyal professions of the insurgent commons.

His conduct during the day was all in favor of the honesty of their declarations, and showed also that the leaders had sufficient control over their followers to be able to guarantee what they promised. The damage inflicted on the king's uncle and on the order to which the treasurer belonged was quite in accordance with their good faith and their power to maintain discipline. Better, Ralph urged, grant what the leaders asked while their authority was still supreme; if the leaders made no way with their demands the control would probably soon pass out of their hands, and ungoverned and ungoverned fury take the place of docile obedience. He volunteered to go out into the confusion, and find the leaders, beg them to say through him what would give satisfaction, and arrange for a personal conference with the king if they required this for their followers as a public testimony of the king's good will.

The argument approved itself to the king's temper. The princess also was persuaded of its reasonableness. Before the meeting of the council Ralph made his way to the leaders, and brought back from them their conditions for conference on the following day. More than once he encountered members of the council about the Tower, and their haughty looks showed him that his activity was observed and not approved of. They had heard of what he was doing, and of the king's willingness to meet the commons personally and grant the desired emancipation. The princess saw them severally, and urged that it was better to yield this than to lose all, as in their desperate case they seemed likely to do.

Then the wise men talked together in private chambers and in corners, and gradually they arrived at an understanding that could not be openly expressed. They agreed to accede to the king's wish, and allow him to grant the charters of emancipation in his own name, but as for sanctioning those charters when they had served the purpose of sending the rabble back to their homes contented—that could be left for future consideration.

Of this private understanding, however, nothing was said at the meeting of the council, and the sturdy representatives of the city, Walworth and Bramber and Philpot, who were not in the secret, were astonished at the pusillanimity of the king's guardians. Walworth was all for vigorous action. With so many men-at-arms in the Tower and in private houses there was no cause for fear. Not one in twenty of the peasants was armed, and if a sally were made at night they might be killed by the score, he contemptuously said, "like fleas."

But the cautious Salisbury did not care to run the risks of this heroic policy; and his more excellent way, to pacify the churls with fair words in the meantime, was approved by the majority. The killing could be done more conveniently afterwards, when they were separated.

Ralph waited on the finding of the council in the apartments of the princess, looking out from a high window in the White Tower on the clamorous mob in the distance. Clara Roos was there. They understood one another at last, though their love was still unspoken. The princess looked on benignantly; it was a relief for her cares and fears to witness the mute interchange of tenderness and trust.

(To be Continued.)

### The Scepter.

The scepter was the emblem of power. As the silver wand, so familiar in cathedrals, was once hollow, containing the "virge," or rod with which chastisement was inflicted upon the choristers and younger members of the foundation, so the royal scepter represented the right to inflict punishment. Hence the expression, "to sway the scepter," implied the holding of regal dignity. The scepter with the dove possessed the additional signification of the Holy Ghost, as controlling the actions of the sovereign. The same idea was conveyed by Rheims by the beautiful ceremony of letting loose a number of doves at the coronation of the French kings.—Good Words.

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A "blackboard" of green artificial slate, which, it is claimed, is more restful to the eye than the old boards, has been invented by A. W. Parshall and was first adopted by the public schools in Little Rock, Ark. In fact, many large cities have utilized this new invention and oculists give it the highest recommendation. It is believed that children with weak eyes are often subjected to serious personal injury through the constant use of blackboards, which are known to be injurious to the eyes. Green is nature's color and is naturally restful to the eyes. So far the invention has met with favor among those who have experimented with it.

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