

RALPH HARDELLOT'S MEDIATION

BY WILLIAM MINTO.

CHAPTER XXVII—Continued.

He was celebrating mass in St. John's Chapel, in the second story of the White Tower, when the tumult arose. His attendants, foremost among them, our gay friend Reginald Harde- lot, who showed in that trying hour that he carried the heart of a brave man behind his outward show of levity, hurried to lock the door. The arch- bishop called upon them to desist. "Do not endanger your lives, my chil- dren," he said, in a gentler voice than he was accustomed to use in issuing his commands. "It is my life that they seek, and I know how to die. Let the servant of God depart in peace. I am old, and I have lived long enough. Do not anger them by resistance."

Nevertheless the door was locked. They were not kept long in suspense. For a minute or two, in spite of the deafening din from without, they heard footsteps and voices dispersed through the building in vain quest, but present- ly a thunder at the door, which sent tomb-like echoes through the vaulted chapel, announced that the blood- thirsty mob had found its victim.

Again the archbishop adjured his at- tendants to offer no resistance. Reginald drew his dagger and he and the boldest of his companions stood in line in front of the door, resolved to sell their lives dear.

The door burst open with a clang, and the foremost of the mob tumbled headlong in. The thin line of defend- ers struck out wildly, but they were borne down by the weight of the mass precipitated on them. A ringleader of the mob, a furious released prisoner from one of the jails, who was armed with his fetters and had been holding them aloft battering at the door when it suddenly gave way, was hurled upon Reginald and the fetters felled him to the floor.

A burst of yells and laughter signal- ized this triumph. Then there was an involuntary hush, produced by the spectacle that met their eyes at the upper end of the chapel. The arch- bishop stood before the altar, a cross in his left hand, his right raised in the attitude of benediction, his command- ing figure at its full height. By his side stood a chaplain, who raised aloft the corpus dominicum.

The mob was awestruck and hushed for a moment, and the doomed man seized the opportunity to speak. "I am he whom ye seek," he said, "your archbishop and father in God. What would ye, my children, with this unseemly brawl? Disperse in peace, lest—"

A voice interrupted him. "We seek the chancellor, not the archbishop." Then the clamor broke out again. "Yes, the chancellor!" they cried. "The traitor to the king!" "The plunderer of the commons!" "Where are your accounts?" "Where is the money of the commons?" They yelled and spat at him.

Then two or three stole along behind the great round pillars of the aisle, and got between him and the altar, and suddenly his arms were pinioned from behind.

A cry was raised, "To the council chamber!" and thither the unfortunate man was dragged by his yelling captors.

In the council chamber a ghastly mockery of justice was enacted. The rascal clown who had played the part of Herod seated himself in the king's chair. The other buffoon in the fan- tastic dress of the Devil kept the door as usher. Others flung themselves into the seats of the councillors, and tickled the spectators vastly with their ribald assumptions of dignity. Nothing could be imagined more hideous and appall- ing than this trifling mirth; it can- not unhappily be fairly called inhuman—man only is capable of such extremes of devilry.

Presently the mock president of the court spoke with horrible stares and frowns in his Herodian character: "Sir Chancellor, you are on your trial before the commons of England, impeached of being a heinous traitor to the king, and a most outrageous ex- tortioner of the commons. Have you aught to say why you should not be adjudged to the death of such male- factors?"

The archbishop looked at him sternly. "Profane and ribald wretch," he began, "I am no traitor!" But his voice was lost in a tempest of angry sound.

Herod frowned and commanded silence in a voice of thunder. "Dost dare," he cried, "to insult your royal majesty?"

The archbishop turned from him in contempt, and addressed the throng with unbending dignity. "Take heed," he said, "my children, what ye do this day, lest for your sins the Holy Father lay all the realm of England under an interdict."

The threat of papal interference crowned his offenses. "Enough! Enough!" came from the throng. "Away with him!" Frantic applause greeted the humor of the Devil, who capered forward to claim his victim.

That nothing might be wanted to complete this travesty of judicial forms, the implements of legal punishment were now produced. In ransacking the chamber of the Tower some of the mob had lighted on a block and sword that were ordinarily used in the punishment of traitors. These were hand- ed into the council chamber over the heads of the crowd that filled the stair- ways, and carried by the blackened limbs of the peasant to the foot of the throne, amid loud vociferations of de-

light. It must be admitted that of many who suffered death on this same block, there were several who, though they had more of the ceremonial decen- cy of justice, had very little more of the reality.

"To the Tower Hill!" shouted the mock president. "Away with him!" A procession was now formed. The unhappy chancellor submitted passively to his fate. His face wore the calm expression of a man for whom the bit- terness of death is past. His dim eyes were turned heavenward; he seemed not to hear or see what was passing around.

Such grave dignity and unmoved courage as he showed in this supreme moment would have won him the sym- pathy, or at least the respect, of the populace, if they had not themselves been the executioners. But as it was they had no pity for his gray hairs, no respect for his tranquil dignity; they yelled at him, spit at him, pelted him with filth. And ever the devil of the pageant capred with ghastly ribaldry in front.

Arrived at the place of execution, the brazen-lunged Herod proclaimed silence, the prisoner's arms were un- bound, and it was signified to him that he might address the people after the manner of criminals in a just speech and dying confession. But he only looked round calmly and said that he forgave his tormentors, that they knew not what they did, then knelt for a minute in silent prayer, and laid his head on the block.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was an unhappy chance for the in- surgent cause that left the mob gath- ered in the city free to work its will. It has prejudiced the leaders with posterity, and at the time it destroyed all prospect of good result from the concessions of the king.

After all, the lawless violence of the mob, delirious and ruthless as it was, restrained itself within limits that do not appear so excessive when compared with what their betters were in the habit of doing with more decorous form and ceremony of justice. Four more victims of distinction were added to their list of executions, all typical men in the government that had become so hateful. Sir Robert Hales, the king's treasurer; Sir John Leg, the tax com- missioner; Richard Lyons, a notorious monopolist and jobber of the public revenues; and Friar Wm. Appledore, whose crime was being the confessor of John of Gaunt. This exemplary sacrifice of heads was not more intemperate than we find customary with the most highly respectable factions of nobles and prelates when they gained the up- per hand, and proceeded to a change of government. Such changes seldom took place in the middle ages without some judicial slaughter of the weaker party. Seven years later one of the king's uncles was master of the situation, and several of those who advised Richard in punishing the rebel peasants were doomed to death by the axe or the slower torture of exile. Sir Simon Burley, De la Pole, Tresilian, the king's favorite, young De Vere, and the doughty alderman, Sir Nicholas Bramber, were not more guilty than Sudbury or Hales when they fell before the ambition of the Duke of Gloucester as corrupt and dangerous traitors; they had a more formal impeachment and a more protracted trial, but their judges were not less prejudiced. There was in truth more of the spirit of justice in the rough retribution of King Mob, who in all matters of procedure generally follows the fashion of his social superiors.

But though the reign of terror was thus far not indiscriminate, but regu- lated by precedent, it was not to be expected that the upper classes, who were furious at the idea of emancipating the serfs, and were beginning to recover from their first panic when they saw that the simple rustics were less formid- able than had at first appeared, it was not to be expected that they would miss the advantage given them by the riots for bringing over the wavering among their own number to a firmer policy. The leaders of the insurgents were not really responsible for the ex- cesses of the mob within the walls while they lay without, but the excesses of the mob could be made to cover the whole movement.

The reaction was headed by the mayor, and the leading aldermen of the city, Walworth and Bramber and Philpot, who from the first had de- spised the insurgents and advocated energetic measures. They secured the co-operation of Sir Robert Knolles, whose military experience and fame made him a valuable ally. They then proceeded to reason over the leading members of the king's council.

But first they learned all they could about the actual strength and the feel- ings of the rebels. This was more easily done now. Among the insur- gents were, as we have before said, a good many gentlemen who, like Sir John Newton, had been forced to join them. Of the alternatives, joining or fighting for their lives, they had preferred the former.

After the king had agreed to abolish bondage, and the purpose of the rising was thus gained, these unwilling con- ductors were free to return to their class, and they sought amends for their de- gradation, and at the same time recov- ery of favor, by urging that the insur- gents should now be attacked, and re- presenting how easy it would be to put them to rout.

Sir Richard Rainham was peculiarly

eager to be revenged for the indignities he had suffered, and had special reason to fear that it might be difficult to make his peace at court. It galled him to remember that the knaves had asked him to join, because by birth he was one of themselves; and the recollection that to save his life he had helped to order them on the march, awoke other feelings than wounded pride. When, therefore, his old captain, Sir Robert Knolles, to whom he had obsequiously attached himself, questioned him about the strength of the rebels, he spoke of their array with the utmost contempt. They had no store of victuals; the more provident of them had brought small bags of coarse meal on their backs, from which they had to feed the less provident as well as themselves. Half of them did not know what they had risen for, and would be only too glad to be safely back in their homes again. To lie within walls in fear of such a herd as if they were a regular army was ridiculous. A handful of men-at-arms would ride through them like a flock of sheep.

Now it had been the policy of Salis- bury and others about the king to give the rebels what they asked, and when the simple churls had dispersed to their homes to revoke their charters and take ample revenge for their presumption. But when these representations were pressed by Knolles and the aldermen, the king's councillors began to think that they had been too timid, and to be ashamed of, and angry at, their former caution.

Already on Friday afternoon the gathering that had so frightened them began to melt away. The peasants were filing away, district by district, as fast as their charters were ready. By Friday night nearly all the men of Essex were gone, marching off with their documents in peaceful triumph. There still remained bivouacked around Smithfield, under Tyler's command, a force computed at thirty thousand men. On this point the leaders of the commons were firm—none would go with- out their charters; they would stay till they saw their charters executed, and had them delivered for a triumphant march back to their homes, no longer bondmen, freemen in the eye of the law.

But the industry of the clerks had greatly reduced the numbers thus in waiting. The good and true men at the disposal of the government could easily deal with all that remained. Why, then, delay vengeance? Why not throw off the mask at once and un- deceive the presumptuous rascals while their foolish conceit was still hot with- in them? The leaders were there; let a signal example be made of them without delay.

This was mooted to the king. He indignantly refused his consent. The boy's unsophisticated sense of honor was outraged. He had passed his royal word. The word of a Plantagenet was sacred. In vain they argued that the promise had been extorted from him, and thus was not binding on his con- science; he would keep it nevertheless. Richard's sense of honor, unhappily, became blunter in his more mature years; how could it have remained un- corrupted in such an atmosphere? This, his first great experience of affairs, was a memorable lesson in treachery—afterwards, one is glad to know, put in practice at the cost of some of his tutors.

The more experienced statesmen, men of the mediæval world, chafed at the boy's scrupulosity, and tried another tack. If he would not break his word outright, he must be managed into giving them an equivalent oppor- tunity.

It was represented to him that Tyler's presence in Smithfield with an armed and half starved host was a menace to the peace of the city. The excesses of the mob had shown how grave the menace was. Granting Tyler honest, could he answer for the good behavior of his rabble?

They were staying there for their charters. Honesty on one side deserved confidence on the other. Why would they not trust the king's promise that the charters should be sent to them?

This was touching the chivalrous Richard on a tender point. He agreed to go with them next morning to Smithfield, and reason of the matter with the captain of the commons. To avoid the very appearance of provoca- tion, they were to go unarmed.

(To be continued.)

Satisfied, Anyhow.

"Maria," said the colored citizen, "I feel lak my time has come at las; I is mighty low."

"Ain't yo' been eatin' de cunnel's watermillions?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, didn't yo' know be done plis'ned de las' one er dem?"

"Did he pisen um?"

"He sho' did."

"Dat settles me. But, Maria—"

"What do you want?"

"I wuz all day at um, en I eat nine befo' I quit."—Atlanta Constitution.

Almost True.

"Now," commenced the attorney for the green goods men, "it is stated that when you discovered that the tin box held sawdust you exploded with laugh- ter. How do you reconcile this state- ment with your claim that you were in- flamed with wrath?"

"It ain't exactly the facts, judge," said the plaintiff. "I acknowledged that I was busted, but I deny that I laughed."—Baltimore American.

A Delicate Point.

"It seems to make Scaddington's wife as mad as a hornet every time he boasts that he began at the foot and worked his way up."

"Well, he started as a bootblack, you know."—Chicago Record-Herald.

A Substitute.

Friend—Got any defense? Criminal—No; but I've got a first-class lawyer.—Puck.

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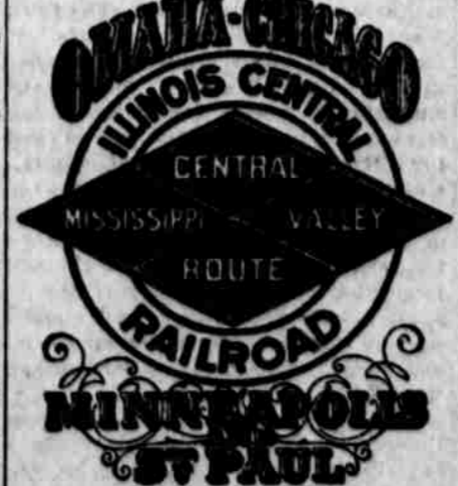
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