

RALPH HARDELLOT'S MEDIATION

BY WILLIAM MINTO.

CHAPTER XXIX.

While these intrigues were going on, Ralph Hardebot's presence near the king, and his suspected share in defeating their purposes, made him increasingly obnoxious to the party of energetic action. He became a marked man with them; they began to talk one with another about him; to curse his meddlesomeness, and to ask who he was and where he came from.

All unconscious of this dangerous suspicion and irritation, Ralph had been incessantly active throughout the troubled day. He had the warmest interests for the safety of the royal party, for with it was bound up the safety of one who was dearer to him than anything else.

The news of the capture of the Tower and the murder of his chancellor met the king as he re-entered the city from Mile End, riding by the side of his mother in her whilicote, and exchanging congratulations on the happy issue of the conference.

For a moment there was consternation. The Tower was in the hands of the mob, the king of England no longer master of his capital, no longer master of his central stronghold; rebels without and rebels within. After a brief consultation the royal party decided to trust the people. They had hardly an alternative, except to escape from London altogether; and even that was hazardous, for the whole peasant population of England was up in arms. But instead of trusting to any of the minor fortresses of London, they rode along to the unfortified residence of the princess on St. Andrew's Hill, the house known as the King's Wardrobe.

Ralph accompanied them to the house, and then, seeing no sign of disturbance there, hurried off to the Tower. The princess, when she heard of the archbishop's fate, had offered his brother shelter in her service, but Ralph doubted if he should find him alive, and sought for him anxiously through the pillaged building. At last he found the wounded squire in the hands of a barber, who had dressed his broken head, and at his own request lent him a gown to cover his livid. Thus doctored and disguised, Reginald, in answer to his brother's inquiries, confessed to being a little dazed, but announced his intention of going out to see the sport.

They arranged to go different ways and meet again in an hour at the Wardrobe. Riot ran wild in the streets. Terrified wretches were flying for their lives, shrieking for mercy, with roaring mobs at their heels, in loud enjoyment of their terror. The hunted foreigners made for the churches, but no sanctuary was respected; they were dragged out and butchered on the steps or in the streets. Reginald counted forty headless bodies in the Vintry. There especially, before the doors of the Flemish wine merchants, hellish confusion and savagery were rampant, and drunken rioters competed in deeds of ghastly brutality. Casks were rolled from the cellars and broached, and ruffians maddened with drink made neck auction of the contents, with gory heads for bush, and men and women screaming and scrambling round them. Here and there fugitives gained the roofs. Whenever such a desperate wretch was seen, packs of fiends gave chase, threw stones, shot arrows and swarmed upon to the tiles in pursuit. One hunted fugitive was seen to spring like a wildcat on his nearest pursuer, and leap with him off the roof. Another, driven to frenzy by the noise of the infernal chase, raved and bled and spat and hurled tiles in mad fury on the crowd below, till a merciful arrow put an end to his agony.

Through such sickening horrors the two brothers made their several ways to the Wardrobe. Ralph hurried along with much ado to escape the prevailing madness and throw his life away in impotent interference. Once or twice he essayed to speak and pray the madmen for the love of Christ to forbear, but the authority of his religious dress, though it saved him from violent resentment, was powerless to stay the smallest fraction of the infuriated rout. Reginald was of cooler temperament, but even he, with all his cynicism, found it difficult to hold his hand, and he was pale and silent when they met.

The disorder was appalling enough, yet the two reconnoiterers were able to reassure the princess as to its scope and limits. There was nothing as yet like a general plunder of the shops, and none of the great houses had been attacked. Further, there were few smock-frocks to be seen among the rioters; the active portion of the mob being composed mainly of the lower workmen of the city.

More than once in the course of the afternoon Ralph ventured out and each time brought back stronger assurance of the limitation of the riot.

In the evening he was employed on another mission. The princess committed him about the meeting with Tyler that had been proposed for the following morning with a view to persuading him to withdraw at once from the neighborhood of London. Ralph recognized at once that Tyler's presence there was a disturbing force, and, eager to prevent bloodshed, he readily undertook to see the captain of the commons and urge him to trust the king's promise to send the charters.

Ralph found him as night began to fall riding here and there through his camp, warning group after group of the danger of surprise.

The idea of withdrawing without the

charters was not welcome to him. He listened to Ralph gravely, but his answers were short and irritable. The charters might all be ready by the following night; it was only another day to wait. If they had not attacked the city when all their strength was present, why should they be suspected now that half was gone? There would be much more serious danger if the charters were withheld; they would suspect some trick; he would not answer for their behavior if they had not their freedom given into their hands to carry home like their brethren.

The captain of the commons would not be moved from this conclusion. Ralph saw that it was vain to urge him, and returned to the city oppressed with a vague presentiment of evil. He dared not tell the rebel leader of the pressure that was being put upon the king for leave to break all promises and fall upon him at once. If Tyler had known this he would certainly have taken measures to be beforehand. It was much to be feared that his obstinate determination to remain till the last charter was completed would give those who wished for a collision the very opportunity they desired.

They were early astir at the Wardrobe on the Saturday morning. Ralph reported to the princess the obstinate mood in which he had found the captain of the commons, and the princess warned the king to be patient.

By half-past eight the lords were assembled, and the party rode down to Westminster to hear mass. The king again commanded Ralph to accompany him, and again there were mutterings and disgusted looks, unknown to the subject of them, at this favor shown to a heretic meddlesome priest. Ralph still wore the russet garb at the desire of the princess; she knew that it was popular, and that its presence near her son would be acceptable to the peasants as a sign of sympathy with them.

The mayor, Walworth, rode with them at the head of a party of ten or a dozen horsemen, among whom Ralph recognized his old enemy, Rainham. He saw that the horses were well armed under their housings, and his heart sank as he divined what this meant. They were prepared to encounter the weapons of the peasants. His only hope lay in the patience and pacific disposition of the king.

At the Savoy they turned off to the left and rode through the lanes toward Smithfield. Presently they arrived at the wide open market field where the insurgents lay, and after coasting along for a little as if to ride past, they suddenly halted in front of Tyler's headquarters.

Tyler, seeing the halt and recognizing the king, gave hurried orders to his marshals to put the host in array, and rode forward to learn the meaning of the visit.

The king advanced a few paces to meet him, and, as before agreed upon, expressed surprise to see so many of his subjects still there. "What do you yonder good people lack?" he asked. "Have I not promised them my letters? Why do they not proceed to their homes?"

"Sire," answered Tyler, "they await till the letters are delivered to them, as hath been done with their brethren of Essex."

"They shall have them in good time," said the king. "The letters are ordered for them, and shall be sent to them each after the other as fast as they are ready. Wherefore, good fellow, order them that they depart peaceably to their homes, for I warrant you it is my firm intent that they shall have the letters by villages and townships as I have promised. It is not meet that they remain here."

"They will not go peaceably, sire, without having the letters."

"Wherefore not?" cried the king. "Is it that they doubt my promise?"

While they talked the royal party had drawn nearer; and a few undisciplined stragglers on Tyler's side, among them the wretched looking Jaunequin Carter of Sturmer, who for some reason had lingered behind the men of his township, gathered closer to hear what was said.

Before Tyler could find words to answer the king's last direct question the Earl of Salisbury struck in: "What!" he cried; "low fellow, hear you not what the king says to you? Will you be so bold as to say that you doubt the king's pledged faith?"

"I do not doubt the king's faith," answered Tyler stoutly; "but I grievously mistrust his counselors, and that with reason."

his horse mortally wounded. Ralph Hardebot involuntarily echoed the king's cry of "Hold!" and motioned them back impetuously as they rushed on Tyler, shouting, "Back! Hold! Did you not hear the king forbid it?"

"Ha, meddlesome priest!" cried one of the council, "what have you to do to speak?"

"I but repeat the king's order," replied Ralph, hotly. "It is a foul deed, and a perilous. This rash man hath put the king's life in jeopardy!"

"Have a care of your own, meddler!" cried another in a menacing voice.

"Yes, truly," cried a third, "this sancy priest taketh far too much on himself."

"Look yonder," cried Ralph, "there they come! Defend the king!"

Not more than forty yards off a band of bowmen who had formed Tyler's bodyguard were seen getting ready to their bows.

The king meantime sat on his horse with a perplexed air, looking ruefully at Tyler and casting doubtful glances at his lords. But the boy had the happy daring of his race. His mind was quickly made up. Ralph Hardebot had convinced him of the loyalty of the commons. He was not so certain of the fidelity of his nobles. With a sudden change of look from indecision to proud command, he cried, "Lords, on four allegiance, none of you follow me! Let me alone!" and he galloped forward to the insurgents alone.

"I am your king," he called to them as he rode up. "Ye need no captain but me. Depart in peace to your homes and your letters shall be sent to you."

The action was so unexpected that for a moment all on the king's side stood still, looking on in wonder and admiration of the boy's courage. Then when they saw that the rebels offered him no violence they began to move nearer.

Ralph was moving with the rest when his arm was rudely grasped, and, turning, he saw the angry countenance of the lord mayor, Walworth, and sir Richard Rainham behind him.

"What is this I hear, scurvy priest?" cried Walworth. "Dare you avow that the punishment of a rebel is a foul deed?"

"I dare avow," answered Ralph quietly, "that the murder of an unguarded man in friendly and peaceable conference is a foul deed in the sight of God and man."

"Ha! what say you? Have a care. I will call you to account for this." And he touched his dagger in angry menace.

The irate mayor had ridden his horse near Ralph's as he spoke. Suddenly Ralph felt another horse hustle rudely between them. Turning, he was aware of the sweep and flash of a sword, and heard the harsh voice of Rainham say, "Why waste words on such a varlet? He is one of them."

The young priest fell to the ground without a word or a cry.

His murder was not long unavenged. The horses reared and pranced, and as Rainham leaned over to see the effect of his blow, a wild figure seemed to leap out of the ground at his horse's feet and a fearful blow from an axe crushed into his open helmet. It was Jaunequin Carter; the tatterdemalio had found justice at last.

The insurrection was at end. But for the king's prompt and daring action the peasants would undoubtedly have made an effort to avenge the death of their leader. But Richard's frank gallantry disposed them to trust in his promises, and while they stood irresolute, and confused by the sudden loss of their head, debated one with another what they should do, their opportunity was gone. The royal party drew off towards the fields, leaving them to deliberate on the king's offer; and meantime Walworth and his companions galloped into the city for the assistance that had been organized over night. In half an hour they returned with Sir Robert Knolles and ten thousand armed men. The insurgents were still the more numerous body, but they were poorly armed and they had lost their captain. Resistance was useless; many of them threw down their arms at once and slunk away. A godly number still remained in an attitude of defiance, and Knolles and Walworth were eager to fall upon them and slay, but this the king firmly forbade, and on his reiterated of his promises the whole gathering dispersed.

How the king's promises, whatever his own feelings may have been when the crisis was past, were broken by his government, how his charters of manumission were revoked within a fortnight and the revocation sanctioned by parliament, how commissions were sent into all of the counties to try all who had been concerned in the rebellion, in what merciless and bloody fashion these commissions were discharged, the particulars of all this we must leave the reader to gather from history.

The policy of pacifying the rebels with fair words and thereafter taking ample vengeance was triumphant. Tyler and Straw and Ball and Kirby, and the thousands of others less prominent who suffered the extreme penalty, seemed to have troubled the realm and lost their lives in vain. And yet the hope of ultimate good which sustained Ralph Hardebot when he began to despair of any fruit from his passionate desire to reach justice through peaceful paths was fulfilled. The charters of freedom were revoked, but the pressure of bondage was shaken loose by this convulsion, and the serfs won gradually from the indulgence of their intimidated masters the freedom which they had tried in vain to achieve by a comprehensive act.

The princess, with the faithful Clara Roos, was waiting anxiously for news when the young king burst into the room with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"Away with your cares, dear mother," he cried. "My heritage was well nigh lost, but I have this day recovered it."

His mother embraced him fondly, and he began to recount the incidents

of the day. Among these incidents the loss of his young favorite had made but a slight impression. He had missed Ralph and had asked what had become of him and learned something of the circumstances, but the hurry and fever of the day had quickly obliterated his passing anger and regret. He had gone through the tale of his adventures and his triumph before the sight of Clara recalled this unpleasant circumstance.

"Poor Ralph!" he cried, suddenly becoming grave. "Poor Clara! It is a most unhappy chance. I would have caused the miscreant to be drawn by wild horses if justice had not been anticipated."

Clara looked up in wonder. "What has happened, fair son," said the princess, "to disturb you so?"

He told what he knew.

Clara smiled. She was at work on a piece of embroidery and her hand never paused.

"Poor Clara," said the princess. But both she and her son were too overjoyed to have room in their hearts for the tender consideration of true pity. "I rejoice," she added, "that his brother escaped."

Clara still smiled. But suddenly her face became of a deadly pallor, and she threw up her arms with a moan and fell back—dead.

THE END.

A Crushing Reply. Referring to the "Pulpit and Pew" question raised by Dr. Horton's interesting experiment, a North London minister writes:

"I think we ministers rather relish criticism, but we get too little of it."

One recalls in this connection the story of the young minister walking home with one of the elders after the deliverance of his first sermon. After some moments' silence the latter observed:

"You were not long."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," replied the youthful cleric; "I was afraid I was tedious."

"Oh," was the crushing reply, "you were tedious."—Westminster Gazette.

The Marrying Age. The marrying age, according to statistics, is steadily advancing. This accounts, perhaps, for another fact, that women are beginning to look younger and more girlish in the shady twenties and the early thirties than they used to do. Twenty-five year-old woman of 32 who was unmarried would have been regarded as a hopelessly old maid. Now she is quite a girl at that age and her marriage is still thought of. If we continue to grow old in this leisurely fashion the very name "old maid" will disappear from our vocabulary, if indeed it has not done so already.

Speaking of Royalty. Damocles had been invited to dine with the King of Syracuse. On taking his seat he instantly saw the sword hanging by a hair above his head.

"I suppose," he said to the king, "you call that the hair apparent?"

Dionysius, pretending to see no humor in the remark, replied:

"I don't know about that, my boy; but if it falls upon your head it will make some crown prints."

This shows that the ancients were not averse to joking, even under trying circumstances.—New York Times.

True Philosophy. Few men are better known in the down town district of New York than James Reilly, the man who is almost an exact counterpart of the late General Grant. Mr. Reilly was long connected with a leading navigation company and is very wealthy. He is now arranging to buy three hearses, which will be for the free use of the funerals of poor persons, "for," says he, "nothing so engages me as to hear of an undertaker grabbing the last penny of a poor woman for the burial of her husband or child."

Embarrassing. A Missouri editor is responsible for the assertion that at a recent church entertainment in his town the master of ceremonies made the announcement that "Miss Bates will sing, 'O! That I Had an Angel's Wings That I Might Rise and Fly,' accompanied by the minister."—Chicago Chronicle.

First Woman to Win Scholarship. Miss Helen E. Wallace, a brilliant student at the Melbourne, Australia, university, has been awarded the Shakespeare scholarship of 150 pounds. This is the most important scholarship in the gift of the university, and it has never before been won by a woman.

Unification. "Sectional lines are vanishing. Soon there will be no north, no south, no east, no west!"

"Yes; I suppose it's only a question of time until they get up a corporation big enough to own the whole country."—Puck.

Beth's Surprise. Beth was delighted with her aunt's new changeable spring gown. "Oh, mama!" she exclaimed, excitedly, "the colors of Aunt Mary's new silk dress are all extemporaneous!"—Judge.

The Largest Dome. The largest dome in the world is that of the Lutheran church at Warsaw. Its interior diameter is 200 feet. That of the British museum library is 130 feet.

The Vanishing Weight. "This trunk is overweight."

"Now look here, let me give you a tip—"

"Oh, very well, then. In that case it isn't."—Indianapolis News.

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