

RALPH HARDELOT'S MEDIATION

BY WILLIAM MINTO

CHAPTER I.

The State of England in 1380.

It was the reign of Richard II., one of the most disturbed reigns in English history. The times were dark, and were growing darker, clouds gathering and lowering on every hand, and, worse than that, eminent tremors beginning to make themselves felt in the very floor and foundation of society itself. The darkness was all the more appalling that it had been preceded by a period of unparalleled triumph and splendor. Under Edward III., in the middle of his long reign, England had been the first nation in Europe, and the king's court had been on a corresponding scale of magnificence. He had realized the kingdom of the fabulous Arthur. The kings of Scotland and France were prisoners together in his capital; his dominion stretched literally from the Orkneys to the Pyrenees; the chivalry of Europe gathered to his feasts and tournaments, and Christian potentates in the East looked to him, as the first prince in Christendom, for aid against the Saracens. But a few short years, though they witnessed no falling off in the magnificence of the court and the nobles, had seen a woeful decline in political power. The expansion had gone too far; the English rule had been spread over a wider surface than its essential strength warranted, into a film so thin that the parts could not maintain their cohesion. In reaching over into Spain, the Black Prince had loosened his hold on Aquitaine, and fortress after fortress, here a little and there a little, Edward's inheritances and conquests in France had been lost. When the great contending parties paused for a short breathing space during the last three years of Edward's reign, there was left to the English crown, of all its Continental possessions, only a few strong towns on the northern and western coasts. The war was renewed, but the record was still of disappointment and disaster. Ill-luck combined with bad management against the success of the English arms. The great captains of the prosperous time were gone; John of Gaunt—an inveterate bungler in matters of war—was a sorry substitute for the Black Prince; and Knolles, Calverley, Harlowe and Trivet, though valiant men of their hands, did not, taken altogether, make up for the loss of Sir John Chandos, the greatest general of the age, the real hero of Poitiers and Auray and Najarra, who had been slain in a miserable skirmish. Luck generally goes against men when they play badly, and it seemed as if the very wind and waves had entered into the conspiracy to bring England as low in her humiliation as she had lately been high in her glory. Relieving expeditions, calculated to arrive in the nick of time without a day to spare, were shipwrecked by storms, or detained in port, or beaten back by contrary winds. Indignities that twenty years before were never in the dreams of the gloomiest prophets of evil had become hard matters of fact, stern and urgent. Scotch cruisers chased the smacks of Filey and Scarborough from their fishing grounds, and French fleets ravaged the southern coasts, menaced the mouth of the Thames, and actually, in the autumn of 1380, the time when our story opens, had the audacity to sail up the great river, and burn and plundered as far as Gravesend. The defense of London itself had become a subject of serious consideration—a deplorable reverse from the time when the most pressing concern for the English government was the maintenance of the border fortresses of Gascony. Meantime, as in all periods of great national reverse, discontent with the management of affairs was loud throughout the kingdom. Charges of incapacity, extravagance, dishonesty, were freely made. That larger sums should be necessary for the exchequer than had ever been heard of in Edward's most prosperous days, and that yet there should be nothing to show but fresh miscarriages and disasters, was monstrous and bitterly intelligible. It went hard with the great officers of state and the minor collectors of revenue. They were accused of intercepting for their own use the money that had been raised for the defense of the realm. Frequent changes were tried, while affairs still went from bad to worse. The knights and burgesses, summoned to Parliament again and again to hear the same tale of urgent dangers followed by requests for larger and larger supplies, grew restive, and, with all the care that could be used in their selection, could not be kept from open complaint and remonstrance against "the outrageous cost of wars that the country could in no manner sustain."

And beneath the grumbling middle classes, far down among the lower strata of society, a fiercer and more dangerous dissatisfaction and unrest began to spread and take hold. Griev-

posed a new kind of impost, a poll-tax, since of longer standing than even the outrageous cost and the outrageous failure of the wars with France began to be more acutely felt as the pressure above increased the pinch on the masses below. The exasperation was especially keen among that large class of peasant population which still remained in various forms and degrees of serfdom, subject to indefinite exactions from their lords and masters. The hard-hips and irritations of their position, which for a generation had, under various influences, grown more and more intolerable, were aggravated by the general distress, and their discontent now became so intense that it was ready, at the slightest disturbing touch, to burst into destructive tempest.

Our story concerns the fortunes of a heroic spirit, who, like many others, saw the mischief that was brewing, but, unlike most, felt called upon to labor with all his might to avert the impending strife. The particulars of his strange devotion and dauntless endeavor to reconcile domestic enemies we have gathered from old and neglected chronicles, and here present to the reader in the hope that they may seem to him as they have seemed to us—not unworthy of preservation.

The most heavily-burdened man in the kingdom—very much over-burdened as the event proved—was Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord High Chancellor. He was head of the Church and at the same time head of the secular administration; and both branches of constituted authority were objects of bitter hatred and clamorous criticism.

As primate he had his troubles—recalcitrant monks to be browbeat, a pestilent heresy to suppress, difficulties between the pope and the clergy to adjust, difficulties between the pope and the government, jealousies between the higher clergy and the baronage; but, grave as some of these troubles were, they were light compared with the desperate cares of the chancellorship, at that time the highest of the great offices of state, as measured by the weight and number of its responsibilities.

There was not in those days the same subdivision of duties that exists now among the king's ministers, and the responsibility of ways and means to replenish the empty treasury fell upon the lord high chancellor. This base necessity was the problem of problems for the government.

To find employment for the restless English chivalry, and to give the youngest of the king's uncles, Thomas of Woodstock, Earl of Buckingham, a taste of the glorious game of war, a splendid expedition had been sent across into France early in the summer. But the glorious game is costly; the expenses were not yet paid, nor was there any money in the treasury wherewithal to pay them. The crown jewels were in pawn.

Further, Buckingham's expedition did not promise to be a success. The French would not fight; at least in pitched battle. This was the pusillanimous policy of Charles the Sage, which had rendered so many grand and gallant expeditions abortive—to keep within walled towns and fortresses, to remove to safe shelters all that could conveniently be removed, to leave the rest to the mercy of the invaders, and to keep the track of devastation as narrow as possible by hanging on their flanks and cutting off adventurous excursion parties of plunder. No barbarity of fire and sword perpetrated on the defenseless country had availed as yet to tempt the Sage King out of this cold-blooded policy of endurance. Nothing had been achieved by the expedition to put Parliament in better humor to pay the outrageous cost of the war.

Other debts were urgent, notably the wages of the few English garrisons remaining in France—Calais and Cherbourg, and Brest and Bayonne—which were a year and a quarter in arrear. They were so hemmed in that they could not, as in happier times, make up for the want of pay by pillaging the country.

The noble institution of national credit, whereby such bills might have been left to posterity, was as yet undeveloped. The ministers of Richard II. had no such resource. The pawning of the crown jewels shows how very rudimentary were their methods of finance.

The government had no choice but to go once more to Parliament. Their last reception had not been encouraging, but there was no alternative. And the money had to be raised at once by taxation from a people who had protested last time that they really could pay no more.

It was a desperate case, but the chancellor, trained in the exchequer of the pope, experienced in diplomacy, patient, cautious, and conciliatory, though near his wits' end, did not absolutely despair.

One of his predecessors, three years before, had conceived, or at least pro-

posed a new kind of impost, a poll-tax, since of longer standing than even the outrageous cost and the outrageous failure of the wars with France began to be more acutely felt as the pressure above increased the pinch on the masses below. The exasperation was especially keen among that large class of peasant population which still remained in various forms and degrees of serfdom, subject to indefinite exactions from their lords and masters. The hard-hips and irritations of their position, which for a generation had, under various influences, grown more and more intolerable, were aggravated by the general distress, and their discontent now became so intense that it was ready, at the slightest disturbing touch, to burst into destructive tempest.

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WEPT HIS WAY TO VICTORY.

Candidate Was Doped, but His Tear Were Eloquent.

"There are all sorts of tricks in a political campaign," said the ex-member of the Legislature, "and one was played upon me when I was doing my first stumping that was intended to lay me out flatter than a pancake. I was obliged to speak at a certain village, and I prepared a first-rate talk for the occasion. Half an hour before I was to take the platform I was invited to have a nip to brace me up, and ten minutes after imbibing I didn't know whether I was on foot or riding a camel. As a matter of fact, I had been 'doped' in order to prevent me from speaking. When I began to rail-fence around and talk nonsense they tried to take me away, but I became as stubborn as a mule and insisted upon speaking. It would be a nail in my coffin to show me off in a drunken condition, and I was finally pushed forward. I was simply conscious of the fact that I was making a fool of myself, and after uttering a dozen words I began to weep. There was a good deal of laughter at first, but pretty soon a man called out:

"'Look here, fellers, this man ain't crying for nothing.'

"'You bet he ain't,' shouted another.

"'He must be weeping over our high taxes,' suggested a third.

"'That's it, and it shows his true feeling,' added a fourth. Here's one who pledges himself to work and vote for him.'

"'And here's another,' called out twenty men in chorus as I was led away with tears streaming down my cheeks.

"'That was my speech,' said the ex-solon, according to the Detroit Free Press. 'The people laid it all to emotion, and that town gave me a majority to make my hair stand up. I couldn't reduce their taxes, but I got a bill through against any one owning a bull without keeping an iron ring in his nose, and did not lose any of my admirers.'

PICTURESQUE OLD WINDMILL NEAR BLOOMINGTON.



One of the most curious industrial plants in the West is the old Holland type of grist mill at Benson, near Bloomington, Ill. It was erected upward of thirty years ago, and is still doing business. It is operated by wind power, re-enforced by a small engine, which can be called into use whenever nature's agent fails in its adequacy. The tall circular building is surmounted by four huge wings, each of which is forty feet in length, or eighty in the length of each pair. The mill is sixty feet high and is quite attractive for artists who desire a picturesque bit of rural scenery.

SWITZERLAND'S NEW PRESIDENT.

Dr. Joseph Zemp, Head of the Mountain State's Government.

The Swiss Republic has a new President. His name is Dr. Joseph Zemp and he is regarded as a statesman of superior ability, who is well qualified to preside over the national council which initiates all legislation in the little mountain State. Dr. Zemp is 67 years old and is a native of Lucerne Province. A year ago he was elected Vice President and he steps into the higher office by virtue of the unwritten law that the Vice President shall succeed to the higher office, unless he has rendered himself obnoxious in the subordinate position. As Vice President he was head of the Department of State Railways and Telegraphs, where he was well tested in the art of government and acquitted himself creditably. He is a Conservative.



DR. ZEMP.

Pharaohs in Mourning.
The Pharaohs wore their beards when in mourning for a relative. Court mourning in Egypt seems to have lasted a year.

Fruit Trees in Georgia.
The official entomologists of Georgia predict that within a few years the Empire State of the South will contain more than 100,000,000 fruit trees.



She—I suppose you will commit suicide if I refuse you? He—That has been my custom.

"Pa, what is a pre-glacial man?"

"Why, man before he had to pay ice bills, of course."

"Miss White, I believe?" "No, I am Miss Green." "Oh, pawdon me! I'm color blind, y'know."

"Let me but own the earth," said the financier, with characteristic bravado, "and I care not who writes the people's songs!"

Teacher—What is a synonym? Bright Boy—It's a word you use in place of another one when you don't know how to spell the other one.

Grandpa's birthday: "Many happy returns of the day, grandpa; and mamma says if you give us each fifty cents we musn't lose it."—Harlem Life.

"Mother is always telling me not to bolt my food," said a small boy, "and now she has gone and bolted the cupboard that has got all the victuals."

The Artist—And, then, have you given sufficient attention to the technique? Prospective Customer—Well—er—perhaps not. I was thinking of the price!

Ocular Demonstration: "Mrs. Decollete, over there, puts every cent her husband makes on her back." "He's making very little, then."—Philadelphia Press.

Mr. Botts—I think, my dear, I have at last found the key to success. Mrs. Botts—Well, just as like as not you'll not be able to find the keyhole.—Yonkers Statesman.

Proud of the Boy: Doctor—Pears to me laik de boy dun got acute indegslun. Aunt Lucy (smiling through her tears)—Dat's it, doctah! Dgt boy, sick er well, dun eb'ryting cute.—Judge.

Prostrated: First Fly—Come quick, mother! Sister has been drinking some of that poison they tried to fool us with. Second Fly—Oh! Where is she? First Fly—She's on the ceiling in a dead faint.—Life.

The Important Question: Mrs. Dashleigh—Do you believe it is possible, as Mrs. Roosevelt says, for a woman to dress on three hundred dollars a year? Mrs. Kaffippe—It may be possible, but what's the use.—Exchange.

Drain on the Empire: "If the war continues," groaned the British peer, "we shall run out of metal." "For making guns for the men?" asked the friend. "No; for making medals for the officers."—Chicago News.

Dr. A.—Why do you always make such particular inquiries as to what your patients eat? Does that assist you in your diagnosis? Dr. B.—Not much; but it enables me to ascertain their social position and arrange my fees accordingly.—Tit-Bits.

The lesson had been about the prodigal son, and the entire Sunday school had been properly impressed. The superintendent asked: "Now, my little friends, who stood by, objecting to this proposed banquet to the prodigal?" And a voice in a far corner answered, "The calf."

Pure Accident: Flanagan—Hivins! man, phwat's the matter wid yer face? Hanagan—F'alib. 'twas an accident. Th' ould woman throwed a plate at me. Flanagan—An d'ye call that an accident? Hanagan—Av course! Didn't she hit phat she aimed at?—Philadelphia Press.

His Mission: "It is your aim, of course," said his intimate friend, "to make people think." "No," replied the popular lecturer, in a burst of confidence, "my business is to make people think they think—or, rather, to make them think I think they think."—Chicago Tribune.

"No," said the stubborn citizen, "I never confess that I am in the wrong." "Why not?" "There is no use of it. If a man makes a mistake in this life there are thousands of people ready to take hold and advertise it, without his lifting his voice to swell the clamor."—Washington Star.

"You know, John, you promised me a seal-skin wrap, and—" "And you promised to keep my stockings darned and you haven't done it." "Well, you don't mean to say you'll break your promise on that account?" "Well, it's just like this: "You don't give a darn and I don't give a wrap."

City Magistrate—Of course I don't wish to stand in the way of my daughter's happiness, but I know so little of you, Mr. Hawkins. What is your vocation? Mr. Hawkins (airily)—Oh, I write—er—poetry, novels—er—plays, and that sort of thing. City Magistrate—Indeed! Most interesting. And how do you live?—Punch.

It Got There Just the Same: Mabel—Such a joke on Mr. Gayboy. We were out on the balcony between the dances, and he got the sieve of his dresscoat all over red paint from one of the posts that were just painted. Maud—And did you go near the post? Mabel—No. Why? Maud—Because you have red paint all over the back of your waist.—Harlem Life.