

By WALTER BESANT.

CHAPTER L ALL THE PROPLE STANDING.



HEN the sun rose over northern England on a ertain Sunday early in May-year of grace sev enteen hundred and sixty four-it was exactly

four o'clock in the morning As regards the coast of Northumberland, he sprang with a leap out of a perfectly smooth sea into a perfectly cloudless sky, and if there were, as generally happens, certain fogs, mists, clouds and vapors lying about the moors and fells among the Cheviots, they were too far from the town of Warkworth for its people to see them. The long cold spring was over at last; the wallflower on the castle wall was in blossom. the pale primroses had not yet all gone, the lilac was

preparing to throw out its blossoms; the cuckoo was abroad, the swallows were returning with tumultuous rush, as if tney had had quite enough of the sunny south and longed again for the battlements of the castle and the banks of Coquet: the woods were full of song: the nests were full of young birds, chirping together, partly because they were always hungry, partly because they were rejoicing in the sunshine, and all the living creatures in wood and field and river were hurrying, flying, creeping, crawling, swimming, running, with intent to eat

each other out of house and home. The eye of the sun fell upon empty streets and closed houses-not even a poacher, much less a thief or burglar, visible in the whole of Northumberland; and if there might be here and there a gypsies' tent, the virtuous toes of the occupants peeped out from beneath the canvas, with never a thought of snaring bares or stealing poultry Even in New castle, which, If you come to think of it. is pretty well for wickedness, the night watchmen slept in their boxes, lanterns long since extinguished, and the wretches who had no beds, no money and slender hopes for the next day's food slept on the bunks and stalls about the market Nothing stirred except the hands of the caurch clock, and these moved steadily, the quar ters and the hour were struck But for the clocks the towns might have been so many cities of the dead, each house a tomb each bed a silent grave The Northumbrian folk began to get up-a little later than usual because it was Sunday-first in the villages and farm houses. next in the small towns, last and latest, in Newcastle, which was ever a lie abed city

Warkworth is quite a small town and a one street. At one end of it is the church and at the other end is the castle The street runs up hill from church to castle. to the year 1764 the castle was more ruinous than it showed in later years, because the keep itself stood roofless, its stairs broken and its floors fallen in-a great shell, echoing thunderously with all the winds. As for the walls, the ruined gateways, the foundations of the chapel, the yawning vaults and the gutted towers, they have always been the same since the destruction of the place The wall flowers and long grasses grew upon the broken battlements: blackberries and elder bushes occupied the most; the boys climbed up to perilous places by fragments of broken steps: the swallows flew about the lofty keep; the green woods hung upon the slopes above the river, and the winding Coquet rolled around the hill on which the castle stood-a solitary and deserted place. Yet in the evening there was one corner in which the light of a fire could always be seen It came from a chamber beside the great gateway-that which looks upon the meadows to the south. Here lived the fugleman He had fitted a small window in the wall, constructed a door, built up the broken stones, and constituted himself, without asking leave of my Lord of Northumberland, sole tenant of Warkworth castle When the first comers had looked up the street and down the street, straight through and across the other, and examined the sky and inspected the horizon. and obtained all possible information about the weather, they gave each other the good morning, and asked for opinions on the subject of hay Then one by one they went back to their houses-which are of stone, having very small windows with bull's eye glass in leaden casements. and red tiled roofs. After breakfast, for two hours by the clock, they fell to stroking of stubby chins and to wondering when the barber would be ready This could not be until stroke of 9, at least, because he had to comb. dress and powder first the vicar's wig for Sunday Heaven forbid that the church should be put off with anything short of a wig newly combed and newly curled! And next the wig of his worship, Cuthbert Carnaby, Esq., justice of the peace; and second cousin to his lordship, the Earl of Northumberland, newly

done the barber addressed himself to the chins and cheeks of the townsfolk, and this with such dexterity and dispatch that before the church bell began he had them all dispatched and turned off And then their countenances were glorious, and shone in the sun like unto the face of a mirror, and felt as smooth to the enamored finger as the chin and cheek of a maid Thus does art improve and correct nature The savage who weareth beard knows not this delight

succession to the title when this was

It was a day on which something out of the common was to happen a day on which expectation was on tiptoe; and when at 10 o'clock the first stroke of the church bell began, all the boys with one and the same design turned their stepsslowly at first, and as if the business did not greatly matter. yet should be seen into-toward the churchyard They were all in Sunday best, their hair smooth, their hands white, their shoes brushed and their stockings clean, they moved as if drawn by invisible ropes; as if they could not choose but go; and whereas on ordinary Sundays not a lad among them all entered the church till the very last toll of the bell, on this day they made straight for the porch at the first, and this although they knew that if they once set foot within it, they must pass straight on without lingering, into the church, and so take their seats, and have half an hour longer to wait in silence and good behavior with liability to discipline. For a rod is over ready in church as well as at home, for the back of him who shows himself void of understanding The fugleman, who wielded that rod was The

strong of arm: and no boy could call himself fortunate, or boast that he had escaped the scourge of folly till the service was fairly done. Out in the fields, and in the fair mea-

dows, and down the riverside, and along the quiet country paths, and among the woods which hang above the winding of the Coquet, the sound of the bell quickened the steps of those who were leisurely making their way to church, so that every man put best foot for and, with a 'Hurry up, lad! Lose not this morning's sight! Be in time! Quick, laggard!" an 1 so forth, each to the other

At Morwick Mill, Mistress Barbara Humble would not go to church, though flowered silk waistcoat, and gold buckles her brother did. Nor would she let any other of the household go, neither her man nor her maid, nor the stranger, if any, that was within her gates; but at 10:30 of the clock she called them together and read aloud the Peniteatial Psalms and the commination service.

The show, meantime, had begun. At the first stroke of the bell there walked forth from the vestry room a little procession of two First came a tall, spare man of 60 or so, bearing before him a pike. He was himself as straight and erect as the pike he carried: he wore his best suit. Nhame attends folly Thou art young, let very magnificent, for it was his old uniform kept for Sundays and holidays-that of a sergeant in the Fourteenth, or Berkshire Regiment of Foot, namely, a black three cornered hat, a scarlet coat, faced with yellow and with yellow cuffs, scarlet waistcoat and breeches, white garters and white cravat. On the hat was in silver the white horse of his regiment and the motto "Nec aspera terrent." He walked slowly down the aisle with the precision of a machine, and his face was remarkable, because he was on duty. for having no expression whatever You cannot draw face or in any way present the effigy of that is beyond the power of the rudest or have acquired this power over their own faces-diplomatists or soldiers they are was so good a soldier that he had been promoted, first to be corporal, then to be sergeant and lastly to be fugleman, whose place was in the front before the whole the exercises at the word of command with his pike. In his age and retirement he acted as the executive officer in all matters connected with the ecclesiastical and civic functions of the town, whether to lead the responses, to conduct a baptism, a funeral or a wedding, to set a man in the stocks and to stand over him, to cane a boy for laughing in church, to put a vagrant in pillory and stand beside him. to tie up an offender to the cart tail and give him five dozen, or, as in the present ase, to wrap a lad in a white sheet and remain with him while he did public penance for his fault. He was constable. clerk and guardian of the peace. The boy who followed him was a tall and lusty youth past 16, who might very well have passed for 18: a boy with rosy cheeks, blue eyes and brown hair; but his eyes were downcast, his cheek was flushed with shame because he was clad from head to foot in a long white sheet, and he was placed so clothed, for the space of balf an hour, while the bells rang for serrice in the church porch, and then to stand up before all the congregation to ask pardon of the people, and to repeat the Lord's Prayer aloud in token of repentance. The porch of Warkworth church is large and square. fifteen feet across, with a stone bench on either side. The boy was stationed within the porch on the eastern side, and close to the church door, so that all those who passed in must needs behold him At his left hand stood the

a "human face which shall say nothing. the most skilled artist, but some men by trade. This man was a soldier. He regiment, and whose duty it was to lead



to"mital." the rightity of his companion. but with poor success. for his month trembled, and his eyes sank, and his color came and went as the people, all of whom he knew, passed him with reproachful or pitying gaze The church and the porch and the churchyard were all eyes, he was himself a gigantic monument of shame liere was a lad found out and convicted on the clearest evidence and confession. he had made fools of the whole town, here he was before all, undergoing the sen tence pronounced upon him by his wor ship Mr Carnally, and a sentence so sel dom pronounced as to make it an occasion for wonder, and the offender was not a gypsy or a vagrom man. or one of them selves, but young Ralph Embleton, of Morwick Mill, and the offense was not robbing, or pilfering, or cheating, or smuggling, or beating and striking, but quite an unusual and even a romantic kind of offense, for which there was no name even, and an offense not falling within any law

Toward the close of the ringing there entered the church, walking majestically through the lane formed by the rustics. Mr Cuthbert Carnaby, justice of the peace, with madam his good lady He was attired in a full wig and a purple coat with laced ruffles. laced cravat, a in his shoes, in his hand he carried a heavy gold headed stick, and under his arm he have his laced hat, his ample cheeks were red, and red was his double chin Though his bearing was full of au thority his eyes were kind, and when he saw the boy standing in the porch he felt inclined to remit the remainder of the punishment

"So Raiph," he said stopping to ad monish him. "thy father was a worthy man he hath not lived to see this But courage, boy, and do the like no more this be a lesson After punishment and repentance cometh forgiveness, so cheer up. my lad."

"Raiph," said his wife, with a smile in her eyes and a frown on her brow, "I could find it in my heart to flog thee soundly, but then thou art punished enough Ghosts indeed! and not a maid would go past the castle after dark, for fear of this boy! Let us hear no more about ghosts.

She shook her finger-they both shook their fingers-she mijusted her hoop, and entered the church The boy's heart felt lighter. Mr Carnaby and madam would forgive him His worship went on, bear ing before him his gold headed stick and walked up the aisle to his pew, a large room within the chancel, provided with chairs and cushions, curtains to keep off the draught, and a fireplace for winter After Mr. Barnaby there walked into the porch a man dressed in good broad cloth with white stockings, and shoes with silver buckles And his coat had sliver buttons, which marked him for a man of substance His cheeks were full and his face fiery, as if he was one who although young, lived well, and his eyes were small and too close together, which made him look like a pig It was Mathew Humble, Ralph's cousin and guardian At sight of him the boy's face flushed and his lips parted, but he restrained nimself and said nothing, while the fugle man gave him an admonitory nudge with his elbow

"Standing, too: "Fhe Lord's prayer-in the church-aloud-before all the people -standing! This is a pretty beginning. fugleman, for sixteen years

If the Lord's prayer in itself were something to be ashamed of he could not have spoken with greater contempt. The boy, however, looked straight up into the roof of the porch, made no answer nor seemed to hear

The speaker held up both hands, shook his head, sighed and slowly withdrew into the church

Then there came down the street an old lady in a white cap, a white apron, a shawl and black mittens, an old lady with a face lined all over, with kind soft eyes and white hair, but her face was troubled. Beside her walked a girl of 12 or thereabouts, dressed in white frock and straw hat trimmed with white rilloon, and white cotton mittens, and she was crying and sobbing

"Thou mayest stand up in the church." said the old lady, "when he repeats the Lord's Prayer, but not beside him in the porch

"But I helped him." she cried "Oh. I am as bad as he! I am worse, because I laughed at him and encouraged him."

"But thou hast not been sentenced." said the old lady "It is thy punish ment, child-and a heavy one-to feel that Ralph bears thy shame and his own. too.

"I was on one side of the hedge when Dame Ridley dropped her basket." the child went on, crying more bitterly was on one side and he on the other Ohl oh! oh! She said there were two ghosts-I was one."

When they reached the porch the girl, at sight of the boy in the sheet, ran and threw her arms about his neck and kissed him, and cried aloud enough for all within to hear

"Oh, Ralph, Ralph, it is wicked of them!"

These words were heard all over the church, and Mathew Humble sprang to his feet, as if demanding that the speaker should be carried off to instant execution for contempt of court All eyes were turned upon his worship's pew. and I know not what would have happened, be cause his periwig was seen to be agitated and the gold head of his stick appeared above the pew; but luckily, just then the bells clashed all together, frightening the swallows about the tower so that they flew straight to the castle and stayed there, and the vicar came out of the vestry and sat down in the reading desk. and, as was his custom, surveyed his church and congregation for a few minutes before the service began

It is an old church of Norman work in parts, patched up and rebuilt from time to time by the Percies, but there are no monuments of them The vicar's eyes fell upon a plain whitewashed building. pro vided with rows of ancient and worm eaten benches, worn black by many gen erations of worshipers The choir and the music sat at the west end in front of the chancel was a square space in which was set a long stool While the vicar waited the fugleman marched up the aisle, followed by the boy in the sheet, and both sat on this stool of repentance Then the vicar rose-he was a benignant old man with white bair-and began to read in a full and musical voice how sin ners may repent and find forgiveness Bat the people thought he meant his words to apply this morning especially and only the boy in the sheet This them feel surprisingly virtuous and in clined to sing praises with a glad heart So, too, with the lessons one of which dealt with the fate of a wicked king All the people looked at the boy in the sheet. and felt that, under auother name, it was his own story told beforehand prophetleally, and when they stood up to sing in thanksgiving their gratitudo took the form of being glad that they were not upon the stool When the psalms were read the people paid unusual attention. letting the boy have the benefit of all the penitential utterances, but taking the joy ous verses to themselves And the litany they regarded as composed, as well as read, exclusively for this convicted sinner Among the elder ladies there was hope that the offended ghosts might-some at least-be present in the church and see this bumiliation, which would not fail to dispose their ghost linesses to a benevolent attitude, and even influence the weather It seemed to the boy as if that service never would end To the congregation it seemed, on account of this unusual episode, as if there never had been a service so short and so exciting When the commandments had been re cited. Ralph almost expected to hear an additional one, "Thou shalt not pretend to be a ghost," and to be called on to pray. all by himself. for an inclination of the heart to keep that injunction But the vicar threw away the opportunity and ended as usual with the tenth command ment He gave out the psalm and retired to put on his black gown The music-con aisting of a violin, a violoncello and a clariouet-struck up the tune, and the choir, among whom Ralph ought to have been, bemmed and cleared their voices. The Northumbrians, as is well known, have good voices and good ears The tune was 'Warwick," and the psalm was that which began.

als partner" no." eyes wore " ill of tours and at sight of her grief his own eyes be came bumid

He did not take any part at all in the hymn

When it was finished, the vicar stood in his pulpit waiting his worship stood up in his pew, his face turned toward the entprit, in his hand his great gold headed cane All the people stared at the culprit with curious eyes as boys stare al one of their companions when he is about to be dogged Just then the girl left her seat and stepped deliberately up the atsle and stood beside the boy in the sheet And the congregation nurmured wonder

The fugleman touched the boy's shoulder and brought his pike to 'tention.

"Say after me," he said aloud Then to the congregation he added "And all the people standing

"I confess my fault," he began

"I confess my fault," repeated boy and girl together

"And am heartily sorry, and do beg forgiveness

And then the Lord's Prayer

The boy spoke out the words clearly and boldly, and with his was heard the girl's voice as well but both were nearly drowned by the loud voice of the fugleman

It was over then All sat down; the girl beside Ralph on the stool of repentance, and the sermon began.

When the vicar had drubbed the pulpit to the very end of his manuscript, and the service was over, the three stood up again and remained standing till the people were all gone

"Come, lass," said the fugleman when the church was empty. "we can all go now Off with that rag. Master Ralph." He unbent; his face assumed a human expression, he laid down the pike.

"What odds, I say, is a white sheet? Why, think, 'twas a show for the lads which they haven't had for many a year. And May nigh gone already, and never a man in the stocks yet, and the pillory rotting for want of custom, and never a thief flogged, nor a bear baiting If it 'twam't for the cocks of a Sunday afternoon and the wrestling, there would have been nothing for the poor fellows but your ghosts to keep 'em out of mischief And, lad," he pointed in the direction of the mill, "your cousin means more mischief. It was him that laid information before his worship "

"Oh!" said Ralph, clutching his fists. "Ay, him it was, and his worship thought it mean, but he was bound to take notice. for why, says his worship, 'he can't let this boy frighten all the

maids out of their silly senses. Yet, for his own consin and his guardian' ---- that's what his worship said

"Oh!" Again Ralph clinched his fists "Should I, an old soldier, preach mutiny? Never But seeing that your cousin is no rightful officer of yourn, nor yet commissloned to carry pike in your company. why, I, for one"

"What. fugleman?"

"L for one, if I was a well grown boy, nigh upon 17, the next time he gave orders for another six dozen, or even three dozen, I would ask him if he was strong enough to tie up a mutineer."

The boy nodded his head "Cousin thaf he be," continued the fugleman. "captain or lieutenant is he not

The boy had by this time divested himelf of his sheet, and stood dr long brown coat and plaunly cut wanstcoat. he too wore silver buckles to his shoes. like his cousin, but, not silver buttons, his hair was tied with a black ribbon, and his bat was plain, without lace or ornament

fugleman, plke grounded and "head drect, looking straight before him, and saying nothing except at the beginning. when discipline for a moment gave way to friendship and he murmured: "Heart up, Master Ralphi What odds is a white sheet?"

Then be became rigid, and neither spake nor moved. As for the penitent, he tried

The man looked at Ralph from top to oe, as if examining into the arrange nents and anxious to see that all was property and scientifically carried out

"Ta ta ta!" he said with an air of dis sutisfaction "What is this? Call you this penance? Where is the candle? Did is worship say nothing about the candle?" "Nothing." replied the fugleman with shortness

'He ought to have carried a candle Dear me! this is irregular This spoils all But- Ah!-bareheaded"-he stood is far back as the breadth of the porch would allow so as to get the full effect and to observe the picture from the best point of view-"in a long white sheet! Ah! bareheaded and in a long white sheet! Oh, what a disgraceful day! These are things, fugleman, which end in the gal lows For an Embleton, too! If the old man can see it what will he think of the boy to whom he left the mill? And to beg pardon"-he smacked his lips with satisfaction-"to beg pardon of the people! Ah, and to repeat the Lord's prayer in the church-the Lord's prayer-in the church aloud! The Lord's prayer-in the church -aloud-before all the people! Ah! Dear me-dear me!"

He wagged his head, as if he could not tear hinself away from the spectacle of so much degradation Then he added with a smile of perfect satisfaction a detail which he had forgotten.

Lord, in the morning thou shalt hear My voice ascend to thee,

The boy trembled because the words seemed to refer to the part he was about to play. His own voice would, immediately, be ascending high, but all by itself. He saw the face of his consin, Mathew Humble, fixed upon him with ill concealed and malignant joy Why did Mathew hate him with such a bitter hatred? Also he saw the face of the girl who had been

When his adviser had finished, he walked slowly down the empty church. hand in hand with the girl

in the porch he stopped, threw his arm round her neck and kissed her twice.

"No one but you, Drusy," he said, would have done it. I'll never forget It, never, as long as I live Go home togranny, my dear, and have your dinner."

"And you will go home, too, Ralph?"

"Yes, 1 am going home I've got to have a talk with Mathew Humble.

Left alone in the church, the fugleman sat down irreverently on the steps of the pulpit, and laughed aloud.

"Mathew Humble," he said, "is going to be astonished."

CHAPTER IL

THE ASTONISUMENT OF MATHEW HUMBLE.

Ralph walked bomeward with head erect, eyes flashing and clinched fists. He was thinking what he should do, how he should begin his mutiny: what would be the issue of the fight Whatever the result, there would be joy in bringing, if only for once, hand, fist, or stick into contact with the face or figure of his cousin. It was he, was it, who informed against him to his worship? It was no other than his cousin who had compassed this most disagreeable of mornings And now, doubtless, he waited, with a great cane, his arrival at home, in order to administer another of those "corrections" of which he was so fond. Hitherto, Ralph had submitted quietly; but he had been growing: he was within a month of 17; was it to be endured that he should be beaten. and flogged like a child of 10, because his cousin hated him?

When he left the fields and turned into the lane leading down into the river, he began to look about among the trees and underwood as if searching for something, Presently he espied a long, pliant ald branch in its second year of growth which seemed promising He cut it to a length of about three feet, trimmed off leaves and twigs, balanced it critically with a. sutative flourish or two in the sir.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)