

## Chapter XLIII

Next morning brought no satisfaction to the locksmith's thoughts, nor next day, nor the next, nor many others. Often after nightfall he entered the street, and turned his eyes towards the well-known house; and as surely as he did so, there was the solitary light, still gleaming through the crevices of the window-shutter, while all within was motionless, noiseless, cheerless, as a grave. Unwilling to hazard Mr Haredale's favour by disobeying his strict injunction, he never ventured to knock at the door or to make his presence known in any way. But whenever strong interest and curiosity attracted him to the spot - which was not seldom - the light was always there.

If he could have known what passed within, the knowledge would have yielded him no clue to this mysterious vigil. At twilight, Mr Haredale shut himself up, and at daybreak he came forth. He never missed a night, always came and went alone, and never varied his proceedings in the least degree.

The manner of his watch was this. At dusk, he entered the house in the same way as when the locksmith bore him company, kindled a light, went through the rooms, and narrowly examined them. That done, he returned to the chamber on the ground-floor, and laying his sword and pistols on the table, sat by it until morning.

He usually had a book with him, and often tried to read, but never fixed his eyes or thoughts upon it for five minutes together. The slightest noise without doors, caught his ear; a step upon the pavement seemed to make his heart leap.

He was not without some refreshment during the long lonely hours; generally carrying in his pocket a sandwich of bread and meat, and a small flask of wine. The latter diluted with large quantities of water, he drank in a heated, feverish way, as though his throat were dried; but he scarcely ever broke his fast, by so much as a crumb of bread.

If this voluntary sacrifice of sleep and comfort had its origin, as the locksmith on consideration was disposed to think, in any superstitious expectation of the fulfilment of a dream or vision connected with the event on which he had brooded for so many years, and if he waited for some ghostly visitor who walked abroad when men lay sleeping in their beds, he showed no trace of fear or wavering. His stern features expressed inflexible resolution; his brows were puckered, and his lips compressed, with deep and settled purpose; and when he started at a noise and listened, it was not with the start of fear but hope, and catching up his sword as though the hour had come at last, he would clutch it in his tight-clenched hand, and listen with sparkling eyes and eager looks, until it died away.

These disappointments were numerous, for they ensued on almost every sound, but his constancy was not shaken. Still, every night he was at his post, the same stern, sleepless, sentinel; and still night passed, and morning dawned, and he must watch again.

This went on for weeks; he had taken a lodging at Vauxhall in which to pass the day and rest himself; and from this place, when the tide served, he usually came to London Bridge from Westminster by water, in order that he might avoid the busy streets.

One evening, shortly before twilight, he came his accustomed road upon the river's bank, intending to pass through Westminster Hall into Palace Yard, and there take boat to London Bridge as usual. There was a pretty large concourse of people assembled round the Houses of Parliament, looking at the members as they entered and departed, and giving vent to rather noisy demonstrations of approval or dislike, according to their known opinions. As he made his way among the throng, he heard once or twice the No-Popery cry, which was then becoming pretty familiar to the ears of most men; but holding it in very slight regard, and observing that the idlers were of the lowest grade, he neither thought nor cared about it, but made his way along, with perfect indifference.

There were many little knots and groups of persons in Westminster Hall: some few looking upward at its noble ceiling, and at the rays of evening light, tinted by the setting sun, which streamed in aslant through its small windows, and growing dimmer by degrees, were quenched in the gathering gloom below; some, noisy passengers, mechanics going home from work, and otherwise, who hurried quickly through, waking the echoes with their voices, and soon darkening the small door in the distance, as they passed into the street beyond; some, in busy conference together on political or private matters, pacing slowly up and down with eyes that sought the ground, and seeming, by their attitudes, to listen earnestly from head to foot. Here, a dozen squabbling urchins made a very Babel in the air; there, a solitary man, half clerk, half mendicant, paced up and down with hungry dejection in his look and gait; at his elbow passed an errand-lad, swinging his basket round and round, and with his shrill whistle riving the very timbers of the roof; while a more observant schoolboy, half-way through, pocketed his ball, and eyed the distant beadle as he came looming on. It was that time of evening when, if you shut your eyes and open them again, the darkness of an hour appears to have gathered in a second. The smooth-worn pavement, dusty with footsteps, still called upon the lofty walls to reiterate the shuffle and the tread of feet unceasingly, save when the closing of some heavy door resounded through the building like a clap of thunder, and drowned all other noises in its rolling sound.

Mr Haredale, glancing only at such of these groups as he passed nearest to, and then in a manner betokening that his thoughts were elsewhere, had nearly traversed the Hall, when two persons before him caught his attention. One of these, a gentleman in elegant attire, carried in his hand a cane, which he twirled in a jaunty manner as he loitered on; the other, an obsequious, crouching, fawning figure, listened to what he said - at times throwing in a humble word himself - and, with his shoulders shrugged up to his ears, rubbed his hands submissively, or answered at intervals by an inclination of the head, half-way between a nod of acquiescence, and a bow of most profound respect.

In the abstract there was nothing very remarkable in this pair, for servility waiting on a handsome suit of clothes and a cane - not to speak of gold and silver sticks, or wands of office - is common enough. But there was that about the well-dressed man, yes, and about the other likewise, which struck Mr Haredale with no pleasant feeling. He hesitated, stopped, and would have stepped aside and turned out of his path, but at the moment, the other two faced about quickly, and stumbled upon him before he could avoid them.

The gentleman with the cane lifted his hat and had begun to tender an apology, which Mr Haredale had begun as hastily to acknowledge and walk away, when he stopped short and cried, 'Haredale! Gad bless me, this is strange indeed!'

'It is,' he returned impatiently; 'yes - a - '

'My dear friend,' cried the other, detaining him, 'why such great speed? One minute, Haredale, for the sake of old acquaintance.'

'I am in haste,' he said. 'Neither of us has sought this meeting. Let it be a brief one. Good night!'

'Fie, fie!' replied Sir John (for it was he), 'how very churlish! We were speaking of you. Your name was on my lips - perhaps you heard me mention it? No? I am sorry for that. I am really sorry. - You know our friend here, Haredale? This is really a most remarkable meeting!'

The friend, plainly very ill at ease, had made bold to press Sir John's arm, and to give him other significant hints that he was desirous of avoiding this introduction. As it did not suit Sir John's purpose, however, that it should be evaded, he appeared quite unconscious of these silent remonstrances, and inclined his hand towards him, as he spoke, to call attention to him more particularly.

The friend, therefore, had nothing for it, but to muster up the pleasantest smile he could, and to make a conciliatory bow, as Mr

Haredale turned his eyes upon him. Seeing that he was recognised, he put out his hand in an awkward and embarrassed manner, which was not mended by its contemptuous rejection.

'Mr Gashford!' said Haredale, coldly. 'It is as I have heard then. You have left the darkness for the light, sir, and hate those whose opinions you formerly held, with all the bitterness of a renegade. You are an honour, sir, to any cause. I wish the one you espouse at present, much joy of the acquisition it has made.'

The secretary rubbed his hands and bowed, as though he would disarm his adversary by humbling himself before him. Sir John Chester again exclaimed, with an air of great gaiety, 'Now, really, this is a most remarkable meeting!' and took a pinch of snuff with his usual self-possession.

'Mr Haredale,' said Gashford, stealthily raising his eyes, and letting them drop again when they met the other's steady gaze, is too conscientious, too honourable, too manly, I am sure, to attach unworthy motives to an honest change of opinions, even though it implies a doubt of those he holds himself. Mr Haredale is too just, too generous, too clear-sighted in his moral vision, to - '

'Yes, sir?' he rejoined with a sarcastic smile, finding the secretary stopped. 'You were saying' -

Gashford meekly shrugged his shoulders, and looking on the ground again, was silent.

'No, but let us really,' interposed Sir John at this juncture, 'let us really, for a moment, contemplate the very remarkable character of this meeting. Haredale, my dear friend, pardon me if I think you are not sufficiently impressed with its singularity. Here we stand, by no previous appointment or arrangement, three old schoolfellows, in Westminster Hall; three old boarders in a remarkably dull and shady seminary at Saint Omer's, where you, being Catholics and of necessity educated out of England, were brought up; and where I, being a promising young Protestant at that time, was sent to learn the French tongue from a native of Paris!'

'Add to the singularity, Sir John,' said Mr Haredale, 'that some of you Protestants of promise are at this moment leagued in yonder building, to prevent our having the surpassing and unheard-of privilege of teaching our children to read and write - here - in this land, where thousands of us enter your service every year, and to preserve the freedom of which, we die in bloody battles abroad, in heaps: and that others of you, to the number of some thousands as I learn, are led on to look on all men of my creed as wolves and beasts of prey, by this

man Gashford. Add to it besides the bare fact that this man lives in society, walks the streets in broad day - I was about to say, holds up his head, but that he does not - and it will be strange, and very strange, I grant you.'

'Oh! you are hard upon our friend,' replied Sir John, with an engaging smile. 'You are really very hard upon our friend!'

'Let him go on, Sir John,' said Gashford, fumbling with his gloves. 'Let him go on. I can make allowances, Sir John. I am honoured with your good opinion, and I can dispense with Mr Haredale's. Mr Haredale is a sufferer from the penal laws, and I can't expect his favour.'

'You have so much of my favour, sir,' retorted Mr Haredale, with a bitter glance at the third party in their conversation, 'that I am glad to see you in such good company. You are the essence of your great Association, in yourselves.'

'Now, there you mistake,' said Sir John, in his most benignant way. 'There - which is a most remarkable circumstance for a man of your punctuality and exactness, Haredale - you fall into error. I don't belong to the body; I have an immense respect for its members, but I don't belong to it; although I am, it is certainly true, the conscientious opponent of your being relieved. I feel it my duty to be so; it is a most unfortunate necessity; and cost me a bitter struggle. - Will you try this box? If you don't object to a trifling infusion of a very chaste scent, you'll find its flavour exquisite.'

'I ask your pardon, Sir John,' said Mr Haredale, declining the proffer with a motion of his hand, 'for having ranked you among the humble instruments who are obvious and in all men's sight. I should have done more justice to your genius. Men of your capacity plot in secrecy and safety, and leave exposed posts to the duller wits.'

'Don't apologise, for the world,' replied Sir John sweetly; 'old friends like you and I, may be allowed some freedoms, or the deuce is in it.'

Gashford, who had been very restless all this time, but had not once looked up, now turned to Sir John, and ventured to mutter something to the effect that he must go, or my lord would perhaps be waiting.

'Don't distress yourself, good sir,' said Mr Haredale, 'I'll take my leave, and put you at your ease - ' which he was about to do without ceremony, when he was stayed by a buzz and murmur at the upper end of the hall, and, looking in that direction, saw Lord George Gordon coming in, with a crowd of people round him.

There was a lurking look of triumph, though very differently expressed, in the faces of his two companions, which made it a natural impulse on Mr Haredale's part not to give way before this leader, but to stand there while he passed. He drew himself up and, clasping his hands behind him, looked on with a proud and scornful aspect, while Lord George slowly advanced (for the press was great about him) towards the spot where they were standing.

He had left the House of Commons but that moment, and had come straight down into the Hall, bringing with him, as his custom was, intelligence of what had been said that night in reference to the Papists, and what petitions had been presented in their favour, and who had supported them, and when the bill was to be brought in, and when it would be advisable to present their own Great Protestant petition. All this he told the persons about him in a loud voice, and with great abundance of ungainly gesture. Those who were nearest him made comments to each other, and vented threats and murmurings; those who were outside the crowd cried, 'Silence,' and 'Stand back,' or closed in upon the rest, endeavouring to make a forcible exchange of places: and so they came driving on in a very disorderly and irregular way, as it is the manner of a crowd to do.

When they were very near to where the secretary, Sir John, and Mr Haredale stood, Lord George turned round and, making a few remarks of a sufficiently violent and incoherent kind, concluded with the usual sentiment, and called for three cheers to back it. While these were in the act of being given with great energy, he extricated himself from the press, and stepped up to Gashford's side. Both he and Sir John being well known to the populace, they fell back a little, and left the four standing together.

'Mr Haredale, Lord George,' said Sir John Chester, seeing that the nobleman regarded him with an inquisitive look. 'A Catholic gentleman unfortunately - most unhappily a Catholic - but an esteemed acquaintance of mine, and once of Mr Gashford's. My dear Haredale, this is Lord George Gordon.'

'I should have known that, had I been ignorant of his lordship's person,' said Mr Haredale. 'I hope there is but one gentleman in England who, addressing an ignorant and excited throng, would speak of a large body of his fellow-subjects in such injurious language as I heard this moment. For shame, my lord, for shame!'

'I cannot talk to you, sir,' replied Lord George in a loud voice, and waving his hand in a disturbed and agitated manner; 'we have nothing in common.'

'We have much in common - many things - all that the Almighty gave us,' said Mr Haredale; 'and common charity, not to say common sense and common decency, should teach you to refrain from these proceedings. If every one of those men had arms in their hands at this moment, as they have them in their heads, I would not leave this place without telling you that you disgrace your station.'

'I don't hear you, sir,' he replied in the same manner as before; 'I can't hear you. It is indifferent to me what you say. Don't retort, Gashford,' for the secretary had made a show of wishing to do so; 'I can hold no communion with the worshippers of idols.'

As he said this, he glanced at Sir John, who lifted his hands and eyebrows, as if deploring the intemperate conduct of Mr Haredale, and smiled in admiration of the crowd and of their leader.

'HE retort!' cried Haredale. 'Look you here, my lord. Do you know this man?'

Lord George replied by laying his hand upon the shoulder of his cringing secretary, and viewing him with a smile of confidence.

'This man,' said Mr Haredale, eyeing him from top to toe, 'who in his boyhood was a thief, and has been from that time to this, a servile, false, and truckling knave: this man, who has crawled and crept through life, wounding the hands he licked, and biting those he fawned upon: this sycophant, who never knew what honour, truth, or courage meant; who robbed his benefactor's daughter of her virtue, and married her to break her heart, and did it, with stripes and cruelty: this creature, who has whined at kitchen windows for the broken food, and begged for halfpence at our chapel doors: this apostle of the faith, whose tender conscience cannot bear the altars where his vicious life was publicly denounced - Do you know this man?'

'Oh, really - you are very, very hard upon our friend!' exclaimed Sir John.

'Let Mr Haredale go on,' said Gashford, upon whose unwholesome face the perspiration had broken out during this speech, in blotches of wet; 'I don't mind him, Sir John; it's quite as indifferent to me what he says, as it is to my lord. If he reviles my lord, as you have heard, Sir John, how can I hope to escape?'

'Is it not enough, my lord,' Mr Haredale continued, 'that I, as good a gentleman as you, must hold my property, such as it is, by a trick at which the state connives because of these hard laws; and that we may not teach our youth in schools the common principles of right and

wrong; but must we be denounced and ridden by such men as this! Here is a man to head your No-Popery cry! For shame. For shame!

The infatuated nobleman had glanced more than once at Sir John Chester, as if to inquire whether there was any truth in these statements concerning Gashford, and Sir John had as often plainly answered by a shrug or look, 'Oh dear me! no.' He now said, in the same loud key, and in the same strange manner as before:

'I have nothing to say, sir, in reply, and no desire to hear anything more. I beg you won't obtrude your conversation, or these personal attacks, upon me. I shall not be deterred from doing my duty to my country and my countrymen, by any such attempts, whether they proceed from emissaries of the Pope or not, I assure you. Come, Gashford!'

They had walked on a few paces while speaking, and were now at the Hall-door, through which they passed together. Mr Haredale, without any leave-taking, turned away to the river stairs, which were close at hand, and hailed the only boatman who remained there.

But the throng of people - the foremost of whom had heard every word that Lord George Gordon said, and among all of whom the rumour had been rapidly dispersed that the stranger was a Papist who was bearding him for his advocacy of the popular cause - came pouring out pell-mell, and, forcing the nobleman, his secretary, and Sir John Chester on before them, so that they appeared to be at their head, crowded to the top of the stairs where Mr Haredale waited until the boat was ready, and there stood still, leaving him on a little clear space by himself.

They were not silent, however, though inactive. At first some indistinct mutterings arose among them, which were followed by a hiss or two, and these swelled by degrees into a perfect storm. Then one voice said, 'Down with the Papists!' and there was a pretty general cheer, but nothing more. After a lull of a few moments, one man cried out, 'Stone him;' another, 'Duck him;' another, in a stentorian voice, 'No Popery!' This favourite cry the rest re-echoed, and the mob, which might have been two hundred strong, joined in a general shout.

Mr Haredale had stood calmly on the brink of the steps, until they made this demonstration, when he looked round contemptuously, and walked at a slow pace down the stairs. He was pretty near the boat, when Gashford, as if without intention, turned about, and directly afterwards a great stone was thrown by some hand, in the crowd, which struck him on the head, and made him stagger like a drunken man.



The blood sprung freely from the wound, and trickled down his coat. He turned directly, and rushing up the steps with a boldness and passion which made them all fall back, demanded:

'Who did that? Show me the man who hit me.'

Not a soul moved; except some in the rear who slunk off, and, escaping to the other side of the way, looked on like indifferent spectators.

'Who did that?' he repeated. 'Show me the man who did it. Dog, was it you? It was your deed, if not your hand - I know you.'

He threw himself on Gashford as he said the words, and hurled him to the ground. There was a sudden motion in the crowd, and some laid hands upon him, but his sword was out, and they fell off again.

'My lord - Sir John,' - he cried, 'draw, one of you - you are responsible for this outrage, and I look to you. Draw, if you are gentlemen.' With that he struck Sir John upon the breast with the flat of his weapon, and with a burning face and flashing eyes stood upon his guard; alone, before them all.

For an instant, for the briefest space of time the mind can readily conceive, there was a change in Sir John's smooth face, such as no man ever saw there. The next moment, he stepped forward, and laid one hand on Mr Haredale's arm, while with the other he endeavoured to appease the crowd.

'My dear friend, my good Haredale, you are blinded with passion - it's very natural, extremely natural - but you don't know friends from foes.'

'I know them all, sir, I can distinguish well - ' he retorted, almost mad with rage. 'Sir John, Lord George - do you hear me? Are you cowards?'

'Never mind, sir,' said a man, forcing his way between and pushing him towards the stairs with friendly violence, 'never mind asking that. For God's sake, get away. What CAN you do against this number? And there are as many more in the next street, who'll be round directly,' - indeed they began to pour in as he said the words - 'you'd be giddy from that cut, in the first heat of a scuffle. Now do retire, sir, or take my word for it you'll be worse used than you would be if every man in the crowd was a woman, and that woman Bloody Mary. Come, sir, make haste - as quick as you can.'

Mr Haredale, who began to turn faint and sick, felt how sensible this advice was, and descended the steps with his unknown friend's

assistance. John Grueby (for John it was) helped him into the boat, and giving her a shove off, which sent her thirty feet into the tide, bade the waterman pull away like a Briton; and walked up again as composedly as if he had just landed.

There was at first a slight disposition on the part of the mob to resent this interference; but John looking particularly strong and cool, and wearing besides Lord George's livery, they thought better of it, and contented themselves with sending a shower of small missiles after the boat, which plashed harmlessly in the water; for she had by this time cleared the bridge, and was darting swiftly down the centre of the stream.

From this amusement, they proceeded to giving Protestant knocks at the doors of private houses, breaking a few lamps, and assaulting some stray constables. But, it being whispered that a detachment of Life Guards had been sent for, they took to their heels with great expedition, and left the street quite clear.