

## Chapter LIX

It is necessary at this juncture to return to Hugh, who, having, as we have seen, called to the rioters to disperse from about the Warren, and meet again as usual, glided back into the darkness from which he had emerged, and reappeared no more that night.

He paused in the copse which sheltered him from the observation of his mad companions, and waited to ascertain whether they drew off at his bidding, or still lingered and called to him to join them. Some few, he saw, were indisposed to go away without him, and made towards the spot where he stood concealed as though they were about to follow in his footsteps, and urge him to come back; but these men, being in their turn called to by their friends, and in truth not greatly caring to venture into the dark parts of the grounds, where they might be easily surprised and taken, if any of the neighbours or retainers of the family were watching them from among the trees, soon abandoned the idea, and hastily assembling such men as they found of their mind at the moment, straggled off.

When he was satisfied that the great mass of the insurgents were imitating this example, and that the ground was rapidly clearing, he plunged into the thickest portion of the little wood; and, crashing the branches as he went, made straight towards a distant light: guided by that, and by the sullen glow of the fire behind him.

As he drew nearer and nearer to the twinkling beacon towards which he bent his course, the red glare of a few torches began to reveal itself, and the voices of men speaking together in a subdued tone broke the silence which, save for a distant shouting now and then, already prevailed. At length he cleared the wood, and, springing across a ditch, stood in a dark lane, where a small body of ill-looking vagabonds, whom he had left there some twenty minutes before, waited his coming with impatience.

They were gathered round an old post-chaise or chariot, driven by one of themselves, who sat postilion-wise upon the near horse. The blinds were drawn up, and Mr Tappertit and Dennis kept guard at the two windows. The former assumed the command of the party, for he challenged Hugh as he advanced towards them; and when he did so, those who were resting on the ground about the carriage rose to their feet and clustered round him.

'Well!' said Simon, in a low voice; 'is all right?'

'Right enough,' replied Hugh, in the same tone. 'They're dispersing now - had begun before I came away.'

'And is the coast clear?'

'Clear enough before our men, I take it,' said Hugh. 'There are not many who, knowing of their work over yonder, will want to meddle with 'em to-night. - Who's got some drink here?'

Everybody had some plunder from the cellar; half-a-dozen flasks and bottles were offered directly. He selected the largest, and putting it to his mouth, sent the wine gurgling down his throat. Having emptied it, he threw it down, and stretched out his hand for another, which he emptied likewise, at a draught. Another was given him, and this he half emptied too. Reserving what remained to finish with, he asked:

'Have you got anything to eat, any of you? I'm as ravenous as a hungry wolf. Which of you was in the larder - come?'

'I was, brother,' said Dennis, pulling off his hat, and fumbling in the crown. 'There's a matter of cold venison pasty somewhere or another here, if that'll do.'

'Do!' cried Hugh, seating himself on the pathway. 'Bring it out! Quick! Show a light here, and gather round! Let me sup in state, my lads! Ha ha ha!'

Entering into his boisterous humour, for they all had drunk deeply, and were as wild as he, they crowded about him, while two of their number who had torches, held them up, one on either side of him, that his banquet might not be despatched in the dark. Mr Dennis, having by this time succeeded in extricating from his hat a great mass of pasty, which had been wedged in so tightly that it was not easily got out, put it before him; and Hugh, having borrowed a notched and jagged knife from one of the company, fell to work upon it vigorously.

'I should recommend you to swallow a little fire every day, about an hour afore dinner, brother,' said Dennis, after a pause. 'It seems to agree with you, and to stimulate your appetite.'

Hugh looked at him, and at the blackened faces by which he was surrounded, and, stopping for a moment to flourish his knife above his head, answered with a roar of laughter.

'Keep order, there, will you?' said Simon Tappertit.

'Why, isn't a man allowed to regale himself, noble captain,' retorted his lieutenant, parting the men who stood between them, with his knife, that he might see him, - 'to regale himself a little bit after such work as mine? What a hard captain! What a strict captain! What a tyrannical captain! Ha ha ha!'

'I wish one of you fellers would hold a bottle to his mouth to keep him quiet,' said Simon, 'unless you want the military to be down upon us.'

'And what if they are down upon us!' retorted Hugh. 'Who cares? Who's afraid? Let 'em come, I say, let 'em come. The more, the merrier. Give me bold Barnaby at my side, and we two will settle the military, without troubling any of you. Barnaby's the man for the military. Barnaby's health!'

But as the majority of those present were by no means anxious for a second engagement that night, being already weary and exhausted, they sided with Mr Tappertit, and pressed him to make haste with his supper, for they had already delayed too long. Knowing, even in the height of his frenzy, that they incurred great danger by lingering so near the scene of the late outrages, Hugh made an end of his meal without more remonstrance, and rising, stepped up to Mr Tappertit, and smote him on the back.

'Now then,' he cried, 'I'm ready. There are brave birds inside this cage, eh? Delicate birds, - tender, loving, little doves. I caged 'em - I caged 'em - one more peep!'

He thrust the little man aside as he spoke, and mounting on the steps, which were half let down, pulled down the blind by force, and stared into the chaise like an ogre into his larder.

'Ha ha ha! and did you scratch, and pinch, and struggle, pretty mistress?' he cried, as he grasped a little hand that sought in vain to free itself from his grip: 'you, so bright-eyed, and cherry-lipped, and daintily made? But I love you better for it, mistress. Ay, I do. You should stab me and welcome, so that it pleased you, and you had to cure me afterwards. I love to see you proud and scornful. It makes you handsomer than ever; and who so handsome as you at any time, my pretty one!'

'Come!' said Mr Tappertit, who had waited during this speech with considerable impatience. 'There's enough of that. Come down.'

The little hand seconded this admonition by thrusting Hugh's great head away with all its force, and drawing up the blind, amidst his noisy laughter, and vows that he must have another look, for the last glimpse of that sweet face had provoked him past all bearing. However, as the suppressed impatience of the party now broke out into open murmurs, he abandoned this design, and taking his seat upon the bar, contented himself with tapping at the front windows of the carriage, and trying to steal a glance inside; Mr Tappertit, mounting the steps and hanging on by the door, issued his directions to the driver with a commanding voice and attitude; the rest got up

behind, or ran by the side of the carriage, as they could; some, in imitation of Hugh, endeavoured to see the face he had praised so highly, and were reminded of their impertinence by hints from the cudgel of Mr Tappertit. Thus they pursued their journey by circuitous and winding roads; preserving, except when they halted to take breath, or to quarrel about the best way of reaching London, pretty good order and tolerable silence.

In the mean time, Dolly - beautiful, bewitching, captivating little Dolly - her hair dishevelled, her dress torn, her dark eyelashes wet with tears, her bosom heaving - her face, now pale with fear, now crimsoned with indignation - her whole self a hundred times more beautiful in this heightened aspect than ever she had been before - vainly strove to comfort Emma Haredale, and to impart to her the consolation of which she stood in so much need herself. The soldiers were sure to come; they must be rescued; it would be impossible to convey them through the streets of London when they set the threats of their guards at defiance, and shrieked to the passengers for help. If they did this when they came into the more frequented ways, she was certain - she was quite certain - they must be released. So poor Dolly said, and so poor Dolly tried to think; but the invariable conclusion of all such arguments was, that Dolly burst into tears; cried, as she wrung her hands, what would they do or think, or who would comfort them, at home, at the Golden Key; and sobbed most piteously.

Miss Haredale, whose feelings were usually of a quieter kind than Dolly's, and not so much upon the surface, was dreadfully alarmed, and indeed had only just recovered from a swoon. She was very pale, and the hand which Dolly held was quite cold; but she bade her, nevertheless, remember that, under Providence, much must depend upon their own discretion; that if they remained quiet and lulled the vigilance of the ruffians into whose hands they had fallen, the chances of their being able to procure assistance when they reached the town, were very much increased; that unless society were quite unhinged, a hot pursuit must be immediately commenced; and that her uncle, she might be sure, would never rest until he had found them out and rescued them. But as she said these latter words, the idea that he had fallen in a general massacre of the Catholics that night - no very wild or improbable supposition after what they had seen and undergone - struck her dumb; and, lost in the horrors they had witnessed, and those they might be yet reserved for, she sat incapable of thought, or speech, or outward show of grief: as rigid, and almost as white and cold, as marble.

Oh, how many, many times, in that long ride, did Dolly think of her old lover, - poor, fond, slighted Joe! How many, many times, did she recall that night when she ran into his arms from the very man now projecting his hateful gaze into the darkness where she sat, and

leering through the glass in monstrous admiration! And when she thought of Joe, and what a brave fellow he was, and how he would have rode boldly up, and dashed in among these villains now, yes, though they were double the number - and here she clenched her little hand, and pressed her foot upon the ground - the pride she felt for a moment in having won his heart, faded in a burst of tears, and she sobbed more bitterly than ever.

As the night wore on, and they proceeded by ways which were quite unknown to them - for they could recognise none of the objects of which they sometimes caught a hurried glimpse - their fears increased; nor were they without good foundation; it was not difficult for two beautiful young women to find, in their being borne they knew not whither by a band of daring villains who eyed them as some among these fellows did, reasons for the worst alarm. When they at last entered London, by a suburb with which they were wholly unacquainted, it was past midnight, and the streets were dark and empty. Nor was this the worst, for the carriage stopping in a lonely spot, Hugh suddenly opened the door, jumped in, and took his seat between them.

It was in vain they cried for help. He put his arm about the neck of each, and swore to stifle them with kisses if they were not as silent as the grave.

'I come here to keep you quiet,' he said, 'and that's the means I shall take. So don't be quiet, pretty mistresses - make a noise - do - and I shall like it all the better.'

They were proceeding at a rapid pace, and apparently with fewer attendants than before, though it was so dark (the torches being extinguished) that this was mere conjecture. They shrunk from his touch, each into the farthest corner of the carriage; but shrink as Dolly would, his arm encircled her waist, and held her fast. She neither cried nor spoke, for terror and disgust deprived her of the power; but she plucked at his hand as though she would die in the effort to disengage herself; and crouching on the ground, with her head averted and held down, repelled him with a strength she wondered at as much as he. The carriage stopped again.

'Lift this one out,' said Hugh to the man who opened the door, as he took Miss Haredale's hand, and felt how heavily it fell. 'She's fainted.'

'So much the better,' growled Dennis - it was that amiable gentleman. 'She's quiet. I always like 'em to faint, unless they're very tender and composed.'

'Can you take her by yourself?' asked Hugh.

'I don't know till I try. I ought to be able to; I've lifted up a good many in my time,' said the hangman. 'Up then! She's no small weight, brother; none of these here fine gals are. Up again! Now we have her.'

Having by this time hoisted the young lady into his arms, he staggered off with his burden.

'Look ye, pretty bird,' said Hugh, drawing Dolly towards him. 'Remember what I told you - a kiss for every cry. Scream, if you love me, darling. Scream once, mistress. Pretty mistress, only once, if you love me.'

Thrusting his face away with all her force, and holding down her head, Dolly submitted to be carried out of the chaise, and borne after Miss Haredale into a miserable cottage, where Hugh, after hugging her to his breast, set her gently down upon the floor.

Poor Dolly! Do what she would, she only looked the better for it, and tempted them the more. When her eyes flashed angrily, and her ripe lips slightly parted, to give her rapid breathing vent, who could resist it? When she wept and sobbed as though her heart would break, and bemoaned her miseries in the sweetest voice that ever fell upon a listener's ear, who could be insensible to the little winning pettishness which now and then displayed itself, even in the sincerity and earnestness of her grief? When, forgetful for a moment of herself, as she was now, she fell on her knees beside her friend, and bent over her, and laid her cheek to hers, and put her arms about her, what mortal eyes could have avoided wandering to the delicate bodice, the streaming hair, the neglected dress, the perfect abandonment and unconsciousness of the blooming little beauty? Who could look on and see her lavish caresses and endearments, and not desire to be in Emma Haredale's place; to be either her or Dolly; either the hugging or the hugged? Not Hugh. Not Dennis.

'I tell you what it is, young women,' said Mr Dennis, 'I an't much of a lady's man myself, nor am I a party in the present business further than lending a willing hand to my friends: but if I see much more of this here sort of thing, I shall become a principal instead of a accessory. I tell you candid.'

'Why have you brought us here?' said Emma. 'Are we to be murdered?'

'Murdered!' cried Dennis, sitting down upon a stool, and regarding her with great favour. 'Why, my dear, who'd murder sich chickabiddies as you? If you was to ask me, now, whether you was brought here to be married, there might be something in it.'

And here he exchanged a grin with Hugh, who removed his eyes from Dolly for the purpose.

'No, no,' said Dennis, 'there'll be no murdering, my pets. Nothing of that sort. Quite the contrary.'

'You are an older man than your companion, sir,' said Emma, trembling. 'Have you no pity for us? Do you not consider that we are women?'

'I do indeed, my dear,' retorted Dennis. 'It would be very hard not to, with two such specimens afore my eyes. Ha ha! Oh yes, I consider that. We all consider that, miss.'

He shook his head waggishly, leered at Hugh again, and laughed very much, as if he had said a noble thing, and rather thought he was coming out.

'There'll be no murdering, my dear. Not a bit on it. I tell you what though, brother,' said Dennis, cocking his hat for the convenience of scratching his head, and looking gravely at Hugh, 'it's worthy of notice, as a proof of the amazing equalness and dignity of our law, that it don't make no distinction between men and women. I've heerd the judge say, sometimes, to a highwayman or housebreaker as had tied the ladies neck and heels - you'll excuse me making mention of it, my darlings - and put 'em in a cellar, that he showed no consideration to women. Now, I say that there judge didn't know his business, brother; and that if I had been that there highwayman or housebreaker, I should have made answer: 'What are you a talking of, my lord? I showed the women as much consideration as the law does, and what more would you have me do?' If you was to count up in the newspapers the number of females as have been worked off in this here city alone, in the last ten year,' said Mr Dennis thoughtfully, 'you'd be surprised at the total - quite amazed, you would. There's a dignified and equal thing; a beautiful thing! But we've no security for its lasting. Now that they've begun to favour these here Papists, I shouldn't wonder if they went and altered even THAT, one of these days. Upon my soul, I shouldn't.'

The subject, perhaps from being of too exclusive and professional a nature, failed to interest Hugh as much as his friend had anticipated. But he had no time to pursue it, for at this crisis Mr Tappertit entered precipitately; at sight of whom Dolly uttered a scream of joy, and fairly threw herself into his arms.

'I knew it, I was sure of it!' cried Dolly. 'My dear father's at the door. Thank God, thank God! Bless you, Sim. Heaven bless you for this!'

Simon Tappertit, who had at first implicitly believed that the locksmith's daughter, unable any longer to suppress her secret passion for himself, was about to give it full vent in its intensity, and to declare that she was his for ever, looked extremely foolish when she said these words; - the more so, as they were received by Hugh and Dennis with a loud laugh, which made her draw back, and regard him with a fixed and earnest look.

'Miss Haredale,' said Sim, after a very awkward silence, 'I hope you're as comfortable as circumstances will permit of. Dolly Varden, my darling - my own, my lovely one - I hope YOU'RE pretty comfortable likewise.'

Poor little Dolly! She saw how it was; hid her face in her hands; and sobbed more bitterly than ever.

'You meet in me, Miss V.,' said Simon, laying his hand upon his breast, 'not a 'prentice, not a workman, not a slave, not the wictim of your father's tyrannical behaviour, but the leader of a great people, the captain of a noble band, in which these gentlemen are, as I may say, corporals and serjeants. You behold in me, not a private individual, but a public character; not a mender of locks, but a healer of the wounds of his unhappy country. Dolly V., sweet Dolly V., for how many years have I looked forward to this present meeting! For how many years has it been my intention to exalt and ennoble you! I redeem it. Behold in me, your husband. Yes, beautiful Dolly - charmer - enslaver - S. Tappertit is all your own!'

As he said these words he advanced towards her. Dolly retreated till she could go no farther, and then sank down upon the floor. Thinking it very possible that this might be maiden modesty, Simon essayed to raise her; on which Dolly, goaded to desperation, wound her hands in his hair, and crying out amidst her tears that he was a dreadful little wretch, and always had been, shook, and pulled, and beat him, until he was fain to call for help, most lustily. Hugh had never admired her half so much as at that moment.

'She's in an excited state to-night,' said Simon, as he smoothed his rumpled feathers, 'and don't know when she's well off. Let her be by herself till to-morrow, and that'll bring her down a little. Carry her into the next house!'

Hugh had her in his arms directly. It might be that Mr Tappertit's heart was really softened by her distress, or it might be that he felt it in some degree indecorous that his intended bride should be struggling in the grasp of another man. He commanded him, on second thoughts, to put her down again, and looked moodily on as



she flew to Miss Haredale's side, and clinging to her dress, hid her flushed face in its folds.

'They shall remain here together till to-morrow,' said Simon, who had now quite recovered his dignity - 'till to-morrow. Come away!'

'Ay!' cried Hugh. 'Come away, captain. Ha ha ha!'

'What are you laughing at?' demanded Simon sternly.

'Nothing, captain, nothing,' Hugh rejoined; and as he spoke, and clapped his hand upon the shoulder of the little man, he laughed again, for some unknown reason, with tenfold violence.

Mr Tappertit surveyed him from head to foot with lofty scorn (this only made him laugh the more), and turning to the prisoners, said:

'You'll take notice, ladies, that this place is well watched on every side, and that the least noise is certain to be attended with unpleasant consequences. You'll hear - both of you - more of our intentions to-morrow. In the mean time, don't show yourselves at the window, or appeal to any of the people you may see pass it; for if you do, it'll be known directly that you come from a Catholic house, and all the exertions our men can make, may not be able to save your lives.'

With this last caution, which was true enough, he turned to the door, followed by Hugh and Dennis. They paused for a moment, going out, to look at them clasped in each other's arms, and then left the cottage; fastening the door, and setting a good watch upon it, and indeed all round the house.

'I say,' growled Dennis, as they walked away in company, 'that's a dainty pair. Muster Gashford's one is as handsome as the other, eh?'

'Hush!' said Hugh, hastily. 'Don't you mention names. It's a bad habit.'

'I wouldn't like to be HIM, then (as you don't like names), when he breaks it out to her; that's all,' said Dennis. 'She's one of them fine, black-eyed, proud gals, as I wouldn't trust at such times with a knife too near 'em. I've seen some of that sort, afore now. I recollect one that was worked off, many year ago - and there was a gentleman in that case too - that says to me, with her lip a trembling, but her hand as steady as ever I see one: 'Dennis, I'm near my end, but if I had a dagger in these fingers, and he was within my reach, I'd strike him dead afore me;' - ah, she did - and she'd have done it too!'

'Strike who dead?' demanded Hugh.

'How should I know, brother?' answered Dennis. 'SHE never said; not she.'

Hugh looked, for a moment, as though he would have made some further inquiry into this incoherent recollection; but Simon Tappertit, who had been meditating deeply, gave his thoughts a new direction.

'Hugh!' said Sim. 'You have done well to-day. You shall be rewarded. So have you, Dennis. - There's no young woman YOU want to carry off, is there?'

'N - no,' returned that gentleman, stroking his grizzly beard, which was some two inches long. 'None in partickler, I think.'

'Very good,' said Sim; 'then we'll find some other way of making it up to you. As to you, old boy' - he turned to Hugh - 'you shall have Miggs (her that I promised you, you know) within three days. Mind. I pass my word for it.'

Hugh thanked him heartily; and as he did so, his laughing fit returned with such violence that he was obliged to hold his side with one hand, and to lean with the other on the shoulder of his small captain, without whose support he would certainly have rolled upon the ground.