

Chapter LXI

On that same night - events so crowd upon each other in convulsed and distracted times, that more than the stirring incidents of a whole life often become compressed into the compass of four-and-twenty hours - on that same night, Mr Haredale, having strongly bound his prisoner, with the assistance of the sexton, and forced him to mount his horse, conducted him to Chigwell; bent upon procuring a conveyance to London from that place, and carrying him at once before a justice. The disturbed state of the town would be, he knew, a sufficient reason for demanding the murderer's committal to prison before daybreak, as no man could answer for the security of any of the watch-houses or ordinary places of detention; and to convey a prisoner through the streets when the mob were again abroad, would not only be a task of great danger and hazard, but would be to challenge an attempt at rescue. Directing the sexton to lead the horse, he walked close by the murderer's side, and in this order they reached the village about the middle of the night.

The people were all awake and up, for they were fearful of being burnt in their beds, and sought to comfort and assure each other by watching in company. A few of the stoutest-hearted were armed and gathered in a body on the green. To these, who knew him well, Mr Haredale addressed himself, briefly narrating what had happened, and beseeching them to aid in conveying the criminal to London before the dawn of day.

But not a man among them dared to help him by so much as the motion of a finger. The rioters, in their passage through the village, had menaced with their fiercest vengeance, any person who should aid in extinguishing the fire, or render the least assistance to him, or any Catholic whomsoever. Their threats extended to their lives and all they possessed. They were assembled for their own protection, and could not endanger themselves by lending any aid to him. This they told him, not without hesitation and regret, as they kept aloof in the moonlight and glanced fearfully at the ghostly rider, who, with his head drooping on his breast and his hat slouched down upon his brow, neither moved nor spoke.

Finding it impossible to persuade them, and indeed hardly knowing how to do so after what they had seen of the fury of the crowd, Mr Haredale besought them that at least they would leave him free to act for himself, and would suffer him to take the only chaise and pair of horses that the place afforded. This was not acceded to without some difficulty, but in the end they told him to do what he would, and go away from them in heaven's name.

Leaving the sexton at the horse's bridle, he drew out the chaise with his own hands, and would have harnessed the horses, but that the post-boy of the village - a soft-hearted, good-for-nothing, vagabond kind of fellow - was moved by his earnestness and passion, and, throwing down a pitchfork with which he was armed, swore that the rioters might cut him into mincemeat if they liked, but he would not stand by and see an honest gentleman who had done no wrong, reduced to such extremity, without doing what he could to help him. Mr Haredale shook him warmly by the hand, and thanked him from his heart. In five minutes' time the chaise was ready, and this good scapegrace in his saddle. The murderer was put inside, the blinds were drawn up, the sexton took his seat upon the bar, Mr Haredale mounted his horse and rode close beside the door; and so they started in the dead of night, and in profound silence, for London.

The consternation was so extreme that even the horses which had escaped the flames at the Warren, could find no friends to shelter them. They passed them on the road, browsing on the stunted grass; and the driver told them, that the poor beasts had wandered to the village first, but had been driven away, lest they should bring the vengeance of the crowd on any of the inhabitants.

Nor was this feeling confined to such small places, where the people were timid, ignorant, and unprotected. When they came near London they met, in the grey light of morning, more than one poor Catholic family who, terrified by the threats and warnings of their neighbours, were quitting the city on foot, and who told them they could hire no cart or horse for the removal of their goods, and had been compelled to leave them behind, at the mercy of the crowd. Near Mile End they passed a house, the master of which, a Catholic gentleman of small means, having hired a waggon to remove his furniture by midnight, had had it all brought down into the street, to wait the vehicle's arrival, and save time in the packing. But the man with whom he made the bargain, alarmed by the fires that night, and by the sight of the rioters passing his door, had refused to keep it: and the poor gentleman, with his wife and servant and their little children, were sitting trembling among their goods in the open street, dreading the arrival of day and not knowing where to turn or what to do.

It was the same, they heard, with the public conveyances. The panic was so great that the mails and stage-coaches were afraid to carry passengers who professed the obnoxious religion. If the drivers knew them, or they admitted that they held that creed, they would not take them, no, though they offered large sums; and yesterday, people had been afraid to recognise Catholic acquaintance in the streets, lest they should be marked by spies, and burnt out, as it was called, in consequence. One mild old man - a priest, whose chapel was destroyed; a very feeble, patient, inoffensive creature - who was

trudging away, alone, designing to walk some distance from town, and then try his fortune with the coaches, told Mr Haredale that he feared he might not find a magistrate who would have the hardihood to commit a prisoner to jail, on his complaint. But notwithstanding these discouraging accounts they went on, and reached the Mansion House soon after sunrise.

Mr Haredale threw himself from his horse, but he had no need to knock at the door, for it was already open, and there stood upon the step a portly old man, with a very red, or rather purple face, who with an anxious expression of countenance, was remonstrating with some unseen personage upstairs, while the porter essayed to close the door by degrees and get rid of him. With the intense impatience and excitement natural to one in his condition, Mr Haredale thrust himself forward and was about to speak, when the fat old gentleman interposed:

'My good sir,' said he, 'pray let me get an answer. This is the sixth time I have been here. I was here five times yesterday. My house is threatened with destruction. It is to be burned down to-night, and was to have been last night, but they had other business on their hands. Pray let me get an answer.'

'My good sir,' returned Mr Haredale, shaking his head, 'my house is burned to the ground. But heaven forbid that yours should be. Get your answer. Be brief, in mercy to me.'

'Now, you hear this, my lord?' - said the old gentleman, calling up the stairs, to where the skirt of a dressing-gown fluttered on the landing-place. 'Here is a gentleman here, whose house was actually burnt down last night.'

'Dear me, dear me,' replied a testy voice, 'I am very sorry for it, but what am I to do? I can't build it up again. The chief magistrate of the city can't go and be a rebuilding of people's houses, my good sir. Stuff and nonsense!'

'But the chief magistrate of the city can prevent people's houses from having any need to be rebuilt, if the chief magistrate's a man, and not a dummy - can't he, my lord?' cried the old gentleman in a choleric manner.

'You are disrespectful, sir,' said the Lord Mayor - 'leastways, disrespectful I mean.'

'Disrespectful, my lord!' returned the old gentleman. 'I was respectful five times yesterday. I can't be respectful for ever. Men can't stand on being respectful when their houses are going to be burnt over their

heads, with them in 'em. What am I to do, my lord? AM I to have any protection!

'I told you yesterday, sir,' said the Lord Mayor, 'that you might have an alderman in your house, if you could get one to come.'

'What the devil's the good of an alderman?' returned the choleric old gentleman.

' - To awe the crowd, sir,' said the Lord Mayor.

'Oh Lord ha' mercy!' whimpered the old gentleman, as he wiped his forehead in a state of ludicrous distress, 'to think of sending an alderman to awe a crowd! Why, my lord, if they were even so many babies, fed on mother's milk, what do you think they'd care for an alderman! Will YOU come?'

'I!' said the Lord Mayor, most emphatically: 'Certainly not.'

'Then what,' returned the old gentleman, 'what am I to do? Am I a citizen of England? Am I to have the benefit of the laws? Am I to have any return for the King's taxes?'

'I don't know, I am sure,' said the Lord Mayor; 'what a pity it is you're a Catholic! Why couldn't you be a Protestant, and then you wouldn't have got yourself into such a mess? I'm sure I don't know what's to be done. - There are great people at the bottom of these riots. - Oh dear me, what a thing it is to be a public character! - You must look in again in the course of the day. - Would a javelin-man do? - Or there's Philips the constable, - HE'S disengaged, - he's not very old for a man at his time of life, except in his legs, and if you put him up at a window he'd look quite young by candle-light, and might frighten 'em very much. - Oh dear! - well! - we'll see about it.'

'Stop!' cried Mr Haredale, pressing the door open as the porter strove to shut it, and speaking rapidly, 'My Lord Mayor, I beg you not to go away. I have a man here, who committed a murder eight-and-twenty years ago. Half-a-dozen words from me, on oath, will justify you in committing him to prison for re-examination. I only seek, just now, to have him consigned to a place of safety. The least delay may involve his being rescued by the rioters.'

'Oh dear me!' cried the Lord Mayor. 'God bless my soul - and body - oh Lor! - well I! - there are great people at the bottom of these riots, you know. - You really mustn't.'

'My lord,' said Mr Haredale, 'the murdered gentleman was my brother; I succeeded to his inheritance; there were not wanting slanderous

tongues at that time, to whisper that the guilt of this most foul and cruel deed was mine - mine, who loved him, as he knows, in Heaven, dearly. The time has come, after all these years of gloom and misery, for avenging him, and bringing to light a crime so artful and so devilish that it has no parallel. Every second's delay on your part loosens this man's bloody hands again, and leads to his escape. My lord, I charge you hear me, and despatch this matter on the instant.'

'Oh dear me!' cried the chief magistrate; 'these an't business hours, you know - I wonder at you - how ungentlemanly it is of you - you mustn't - you really mustn't. - And I suppose you are a Catholic too?'

'I am,' said Mr Haredale.

'God bless my soul, I believe people turn Catholics a'purpose to vex and worrit me,' cried the Lord Mayor. 'I wish you wouldn't come here; they'll be setting the Mansion House afire next, and we shall have you to thank for it. You must lock your prisoner up, sir - give him to a watchman - and - call again at a proper time. Then we'll see about it!'

Before Mr Haredale could answer, the sharp closing of a door and drawing of its bolts, gave notice that the Lord Mayor had retreated to his bedroom, and that further remonstrance would be unavailing. The two clients retreated likewise, and the porter shut them out into the street.

'That's the way he puts me off,' said the old gentleman, 'I can get no redress and no help. What are you going to do, sir?'

'To try elsewhere,' answered Mr Haredale, who was by this time on horseback.

'I feel for you, I assure you - and well I may, for we are in a common cause,' said the old gentleman. 'I may not have a house to offer you to-night; let me tender it while I can. On second thoughts though,' he added, putting up a pocket-book he had produced while speaking, 'I'll not give you a card, for if it was found upon you, it might get you into trouble. Langdale - that's my name - vintner and distiller - Holborn Hill - you're heartily welcome, if you'll come.'

Mr Haredale bowed, and rode off, close beside the chaise as before; determining to repair to the house of Sir John Fielding, who had the reputation of being a bold and active magistrate, and fully resolved, in case the rioters should come upon them, to do execution on the murderer with his own hands, rather than suffer him to be released.

They arrived at the magistrate's dwelling, however, without molestation (for the mob, as we have seen, were then intent on deeper

schemes), and knocked at the door. As it had been pretty generally rumoured that Sir John was proscribed by the rioters, a body of thief-takers had been keeping watch in the house all night. To one of them Mr Haredale stated his business, which appearing to the man of sufficient moment to warrant his arousing the justice, procured him an immediate audience.

No time was lost in committing the murderer to Newgate; then a new building, recently completed at a vast expense, and considered to be of enormous strength. The warrant being made out, three of the thief-takers bound him afresh (he had been struggling, it seemed, in the chaise, and had loosened his manacles); gagged him lest they should meet with any of the mob, and he should call to them for help; and seated themselves, along with him, in the carriage. These men being all well armed, made a formidable escort; but they drew up the blinds again, as though the carriage were empty, and directed Mr Haredale to ride forward, that he might not attract attention by seeming to belong to it.

The wisdom of this proceeding was sufficiently obvious, for as they hurried through the city they passed among several groups of men, who, if they had not supposed the chaise to be quite empty, would certainly have stopped it. But those within keeping quite close, and the driver tarrying to be asked no questions, they reached the prison without interruption, and, once there, had him out, and safe within its gloomy walls, in a twinkling.

With eager eyes and strained attention, Mr Haredale saw him chained, and locked and barred up in his cell. Nay, when he had left the jail, and stood in the free street, without, he felt the iron plates upon the doors, with his hands, and drew them over the stone wall, to assure himself that it was real; and to exult in its being so strong, and rough, and cold. It was not until he turned his back upon the jail, and glanced along the empty streets, so lifeless and quiet in the bright morning, that he felt the weight upon his heart; that he knew he was tortured by anxiety for those he had left at home; and that home itself was but another bead in the long rosary of his regrets.