

stood wavering—should she, or should she not? The dear, good, motherly Boss would take golden care of the jewel, she would know.

"As my own, I will," said Mrs. Boss, "and my own I have, thank God, who ploughs the salt, salt ocean at this moment, in one of his blessed Majesty's ships."

"I have soaked the tops and bottoms," said Emma, "and you will only have to keep the saucepan simmering. And if you should want it, the Godfrey's on the mantlesheff."

"No, my dear," replied Mrs. Boss, "I won't hear of it. That's not my plan. Some may, but I never do. Godfrey, I always will maintain, is unnatural."

When Emma joined her husband, she found him engaged in reading a note, which a lad had just delivered to him.

"Emma," he said, "you must go alone to Peasnap's."

"Eh?" she exclaimed. "William, dear?"

"You must go alone to Peasnap's," he repeated.

"Why cannot you come?" she anxiously inquired.

"I can't," he curtly answered. "Remember me kindly, and say that sudden business—particular business—there you know what to say."

"I don't indeed," she replied innocently. "And you frighten me, William. For God's sake tell me what you mean! Are you going to prison?"

"To prison," he rejoined, laughing. "No, no. Say at Peasnap's that I couldn't come. There is no need to be more explicit."

She looked at the lad, who had retired to a little distance, but his face revealed nothing.

"I will call and fetch you home," added Harding.

"Very well," she said, dolefully. "You know best."

"And act for the best," he returned. "Come, I will see you to Peasnap's."

He spoke apart to the lad, who immediately shot forward with boyish alacrity. Then he walked with his wife, in silence, to the corner of the street where Peasnap dwelt, and quitting her there, hurried in the direction of Boldero's residence.

In the front of the house where Boldero lodged, a man was standing dressed like an artisan, who, when he saw Harding approaching, advanced and met him.

"Mr. Harding?" he said.

"That is my name," replied William.

"Secretary of the P.F.D.?"

"What motive have you in questioning me?"

"You have just received a note from Mr. Boldero?"

"I have."

"You were about to visit him when I accosted you."

"I was."

"Mr. Boldero has been suddenly called from home. He will see you at the usual hour and the usual place."

"You,"—said Harding, "are you of the P. F. D.?"

"I joined last Monday. Mr. Boldero knows me well. I have already been trusted."

"I am glad of it. I like your face. Give me your hand."

"With pleasure. I hear of you everywhere. My motto, like yours, is *Death to the Tyrants*," Harding slightly frowned.

"I shall perhaps meet you to-night," he said.

"Undoubtedly. I shall be present."

"I will then talk further of this *Death to the Tyrants*."

It was now five o'clock, and Harding had three hours to wait before he could join Boldero. He thought, at first, of retracing his steps, and sitting down to Peasnap's dinner. But he re-considered. Whom should he meet there? What was Peasnap himself but a witless jester? He would be plagued to death with his host's conundrums. He shuddered as he thought of the dull addled brains which the wine would heat into unnatural activity. He walked irresolutely down two or three streets. It began to rain, and he had no umbrella. Should he return home to Mrs. Boss? Her gossip would distract him. He turned into a better sort of tavern, and ordered a glass of brandy and water and a cigar. The parlor was filled with people, but as he was not spoken to he felt himself alone. The newspaper was engaged, but the waiter offered him the Black Book—the Newgate Calendar of the priests and the aristocracy. He turned over its well-thumbed pages. Its contents he already knew well—its column of legalised depredation in the shape of pensions.

He read and read. His hair almost stood erect. Has no yours over the same pages? Mine has.

"Death to the tyrants," cried a voice near him. The speaker was seated at the next table.

"We of the P.F.D. say so," added another voice.

Harding looked at these men. They were unknown to him. But the P.F.D. had augmented their numbers greatly during the last week, for the popular commotion was at its highest.

At half-past seven, he directed his course towards Westminster. It had ceased to rain, and the stars shone down brightly, beautifully. People were gathered in the streets, talking sedition. Above, the sky was calm, holy. But there were perhaps miserable beings in those distant worlds—if they were worlds—and wretched girls, who, driven to crime for want of the difficult bread drowned themselves. The great God knew.

"The Bill will be again thrown out," said a man, addressing a group of his fellows, as Harding passed.

"Then——" The speaker made a noise with his tongue resembling the cocking of a gun.

"Yes. Death to the tyrants," added a third. "We of the P.F.D. say so."

Harding hurried on.

Into a lighted room, where hundreds of men were assembled. On a raised platform were the committee of the P.F.D., and amongst them Boldero. Harding was greeted by the whole assemblage with a loud clapping of hands. Every moment the numbers increased. The room presently became densely thronged.

"We shall move in three months from this time," said Boldero apart to Harding. "The delegates have made their returns. Birmingham alone has added nine thousand since our last meeting."

"You intend to move then?" said Harding.

"Undoubtedly," replied Boldero, looking astonishment. "Otherwise we have wasted our time and money."

"But this *death to the tyrants*—is it so well, then, to use violence? We seek, do we not, to make men better?"

"Do you shrink," said Boldero.

From violence I do. From blood I do," replied Harding.

"Are you afraid?"

"No, no; but when have the people ever won their cause by an appeal to arms?"

"In Cromwell's time," said Boldero: "you are a coward, Harding."

"I am not; you do me wrong. But let us try what Moral Force can do."

"Moral Force!" returned Boldero, fiercely. "We are P. F. D., Physical Force Democrats."

"You perjure that holy word, Democracy. Yours will be Mob Law and Mob Strength,—the law and strength of brutes."

"You knew our resolution when you accepted my invitation to join us. Why are you a turncoat?"

"I knew it; yes. I believe it was the will of God. But I erred. I blasphemed. Love, my friend, is the Law of the Supreme. We must conquer only through love. We must be better men than our oppressors. I have thought deeply of what I now utter. Elevated natures rely on the moral law. The weapon and the fist are left to ruder beings, as we see the dog worry with his teeth, and do not wish to imitate him."

"And do you think to prevail with our oppressors by persuasion—by entreaty?" returned Boldero, with a sneer. "Will they give us our rights because we ask them and behave ourselves like good children? When they yield to the pressure from without, as it is called, is it not because they fear the growing discontent, and know what tough and stubborn sinews knit the frames of Englishmen? It is the fear of a resort to physical force that makes them yield, when they yield to moral force."

"Legislators are amenable, as we all are, to the law of progress," replied Harding. "You will find that as the age moves forward, legislation, though it may lag in the rear, and will never anticipate, will yet be obliged to follow at a respectable distance."

The business of the meeting commenced, and they talked no more. The speakers were noisy, for they were demagogues, and appealed to the coarser passions of their audience.