

agents of the Government; you propose to tell them who and where I am; how, in heaven's name, am I to know whether you are really betraying me or them?"

"Pardon your excellency, I am not exactly betraying them; for I mean to tell them the truth, so far as I tell them anything. Neither am I now paid by them. They think I am trying to curry favour by a brilliant stroke, after having got into disgrace; but I have made no promises to them beyond the one—that if I discovered you by their aid, I would undertake to go and see the chief after I had seen you and been engaged."

"What that means is obvious, said Lord Langton, growing more and more uneasy and dissatisfied with his new acquaintance.

"It is so, your excellency; and therefore, I say, you must not compel me to be too scrupulous. I know King James, God bless him! would justify any amount of hard swearing to his foes that was intended for his benefit."

"You have no right to say that. But, in any case, I am not King James."

"No, your excellency, but so the matter stands. I can open communications for you with the men you most want to see—I can in a thousand ways shorten the anxiety of your great experiment; but if you won't be content with the only tools that exist for the work, why then, farewell! I have lost my labour."

"You mean, then, you must play a double part?"

"I mean, my lord, you must leave all that to me, assured I will in no way compromise your honour."

"Surely never was man asked so much! You surround yourself with every conceivable motive to suspicion, and then demand an almost angelic trust. Come, let me look at you again."

He took the youth by both his hands, drew him towards the light of the wax candles, and took a prolonged look.

"Is this a treacherous face? Is this lip a lying one? Is that eye, that seems to beam with honesty and faithfulness, only gazing at me with the thought—'How long before I may strike?' No, 'perdition catch my soul,' as Othello says, 'but I do love thee,' or, at least, feel strangely inclined to do so. So now, return this double clasp, and swear to me fidelity."

The youth dropped on his knees, still holding his master's hands, and said, in a tone of fervent emotion, and with upraised eyes that looked almost divine in their expression—

"I swear!"

"And I trust!"

CHAPTER LXVIII.—PLAYS HE TRUE OR FALSE.

Clarence Harvey left Lord Langton, promising to return within a couple of hours. Of course, he understood perfectly his master's anxiety to see him back as soon as possible, and his last words were to say, with a bright smile—

"You have given me two hours, but I shall be back within one."

The one hour passed and he had not returned. The second hour passed, and still he was absent.

Lord Langton could no longer be on his couch. He got up, took possession of his sword, went to the window, and tried to look up and down Pall Mall by the aid of the miserable lamps; but he could distinguish nothing clearly so he gently raised the sash, and put his head out into the darkness, and listened.

He heard nothing calculated to alarm him. No men clustering and whispering under the eaves, nothing but a late sedan-chair going along preceded by a link-boy, and the march of the sentinel opposite the front of St. James's Palace.

Then it struck him how easily within the quadrangle of the palace men might be lurking to entrap him; or, possibly, even a file of soldiers be there standing ready, waiting only for the signal.

He left the window open and went to the door of his stately apartment, and opened that. At first he fancied he heard the rustle of a dress,

which was passing away from him, and he was half inclined to follow it.

What should he do? Was he not tempting Providence to stay here, and be arrested through the agency of a boy, who had actually told him what he was going to do? Why, he would be the laughing stock of Europe to be thus caught. Even the ghastliness of the scaffold would scarcely destroy the sense of a grotesque absurdity in such an ending to such a mission.

Half-past four, and still no Clarence Harvey. He will go forth. Better sacrifice what properly he has brought with him, slip out of the house, change his garb once more, and so tattle even Clarence Harvey, his chief, and the whole gang of spies.

Writing a hurried note to say he borrowed the cloak and hat, and would return them in a day or two, leaving meanwhile his own things in charge, he descended the stairs, meeting no one, and got into the hall.

There the sense of extreme quiet in the house and in the streets again made him pause, and ask himself whether Clarence Harvey might not have the best of reasons to give for his delay when he should come; and whether, indeed, it was not clear after all, for another reason, that he could not be playing him false, for if he were, would he not have taken care to have had the arrest made instantly, and not give two hours and a half of chances for escape?

These reasons restored his confidence somewhat, and he went up the stairs again, reminding himself that to lose Clarence Harvey might be to lose the power to take immediate possession of the strings that controlled the movements of the London Jacobites.

But he could not go to bed—could not hope to sleep—could not even venture to trust himself to sleep till this mysterious and dangerous looking incident was ended. So he amused himself by going to his bedroom at the back of the house, and studying the outlook from it in case he needed to fly.

The room seemed, as well as he could make out the facts through the obscurity of the night, to look upon a back yard that itself seemed to have communication by a winding passage with the open square beyond. This was St. James's Square.

The comfort this suggested was of course lessened on consideration that the first thought of the leader of a party sent to arrest him would be to secure this very route.

A new thought then struck Lord Langton. He saw that the other houses—which, like the one in which he was, were very old—had similar means of exit to the square; and he further saw that, by the projecting balconies of these houses, he might, with a little courage, vigour, and address, pass along to the furthest, and then try whether the way into the square was there free.

And then again his thoughts relapsed into a state of hope and confidence, and he had half determined to go to bed, not taking off his clothes, and trust to his power of instant wakefulness to give him the alarm in case of need, when he felt a thrill run through his blood at the sound of a piercing cry, which seemed almost certainly to come from Clarence Harvey, and which was followed by the sound of clashing swords.

In a wonderfully brief space of time Lord Langton was descending the stairs, as though his feet scarcely needed to touch them; the heavy locks, bars, bolts, and chains were withdrawn as by a magical touch; and he stood at the door, sword in hand, gazing for one brief moment at the combatants through the uncertain light, doubtful as to the one against whom he should direct his attack.

CHAPTER LXIX. CLARENCE HARVEY AND HIS CHIEF.

Although it was between two and three hours past midnight, the chief of the Secret Service Department was as busy in his little den as if he had only just arisen, and breakfasted, and been mightily refreshed, and was going to his work in a spirit of real enjoyment.

A cup of coffee was near him, of which he

frequently sipped; also a basin of water, in which he frequently washed his head. And with these appliances, and a hard captain's biscuit, he would go on at times for forty-eight hours together, writing, dictating, giving interviews, and issuing orders.

Touching his bell, his satellite comes.

"Jenkins been yet?"

"No, sir; but I've heard of him. He was on his beat, and keeping close watch."

"That's right. Always keep a good spy on your spies. Mistress Preston—have you seen her lately?"

"No, sir."

"What was that young fellow's Christian name whom you said wanted to see me the other day when I was busy?"

"Clarence Harvey."

"True, Clarence Harvey."

"But you did see him, didn't you, sir, when I was at home in bed?"

"Not I!"

"Then he came to me with a lie, for he said you had sent him to Lord Langton, and I was to direct him in great secrecy where his lordship was to be found."

"And were you idiot enough to believe such a message through a stranger?"

"I shouldn't have done so, but that I fancied you had some special object in keeping yourself in the dark, and that he gave me one of those signals which are only known to our most confidential spies."

"This looks bad. Send out instantly in every direction. Scour the town till you find Clarence Harvey."

"Very well, sir."

"Stay. This ugly fact necessitates, I think, the immediate arrest of our magnificent-looking Turk. Clarence Harvey must have come here in order to try if he could discover whether we did or did not know of Lord Langton's disguise and whereabouts. He has discovered we do know all about him, and now the bird's flown I suspect, or about to fly. So, quick—off with you!"

"I am to make the arrest?"

"Yes—no. Yes! That is— I confess I do not know what to do. Valuable as this capture would be, I have learned of late that the elements of danger are rife all about us—and I want the clue. Yes, I want the clue, which only a man like this rebel lord can give me."

"Shall I—or not?"

"No. Only double your watch. Stay! Let me know within a few minutes as possible that he is still where he was. Let somebody get to him, look upon him—if possible, touch him—to make sure he is no visionary spectre—and then let me know. That will be sufficient for to-day. Mind, too, I expect to see Clarence Harvey—alive or dead—before to-day shall have passed over me!"

"And here is Clarence Harvey," said the official an instant after, when, having heard a tap, he had gone to the door, opened it, and saw who waited outside.

"Come, that makes things look better. Leave all matters as they were. Never change your plans when you are not obliged. Send the youngster in."

The official went out and Clarence Harvey came in.

Excitement apparently had brought out into stronger prominence the spots upon his face, so as to give it a decidedly unpleasant aspect, which it had not had while with Lord Langton.

The chief shaded his eyes from the lam, by the side of his elbow, and looked long and narrowly at the youth before him; who, on his side, gazed back with a sort of fearless audacity that the chief rather liked.

"So," said he, "you are the person who acts as go-between to deliver messages you never received to people to whom nobody sent you, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Exactly? What on earth do you mean by that? Do you dare to own you have come here twice under such circumstances—once to play