

He was conducted along a passage, where several men were lounging, and noisily conversing in groups. By these, of course, he was unmercifully quizzed. They were mostly habited in motley costume, and the nondescript odds and ends of a once choice wardrobe. Faded bucks in threadbare garments, that were in the extreme of fashion three or four summers before. Exquisites, formerly known at Crockford's and the Opera. Boods that man, a tale could unfold of Tattersall's, the Derby, and the Oaks, with a score or so of rough, hulking, soddan-faced fellows, who had made ventures in tavern-keeping, or had set up hells and gambling dens, with other people's money, or more literally, without any of their own, and going to the dogs, had found a kennel in the Fleet. One youthful individual, whose face was scarred and horribly disfigured, left a group, less noisy than the rest, and advancing towards him, addressed him by name.

"I do not know you," said Harding, halting for an instant.

"I will prompt your memory," the other replied. "You were once a P. F. D."

"That is Mr. Boldero's voice, surely."

"And his face too, the worse luck for him. You didn't expect to find him here, he conjectures."

"Indeed, I did not."

Boldero's comrades gathered around them, to hear their discourse, and glean information respecting the new arrival. Harding moved forward.

"Are you going to have a room?" asked Boldero, placing a detaining hand upon his shoulder.

"Yes."

"Go halves in my crib. My chum will sell himself out for forty shillings."

To this proposal Harding readily acceded, and as the 'chum' was present, he ratified the bargain at once, and accompanied Boldero to inspect his quarters. The man who had sold himself out, went off to buy some liquor, chinking the gold in his hand, and was followed on the instant, by a human stream which flowed after him, along the passage, down sundry steps, and across a yard to the very spot where liquor was dispensed.

Boldero expressed an early desire to be made acquainted with the particular stroke of ill-fortune which threw him into the companionship of a sometime political confre. Harding briefly gratified his curiosity, and became inquisitive in his turn, especially with reference to the scarred face. He was preparing to listen to Boldero's recital, when a functionary of the prison brought him a note from his wife, to whom he had despatched by a special messenger, the tidings of his arrest. She bade him,—poor soul, and her own was fathoms deep in the abyss of black despair—preserve his heart from sinking, for she would work, O God, how she would work, to get the two hundred and fifty pounds that must be paid, beside expenses, to procure his liberation. He took the opportunity to kiss the note in private, before he thrust it into his bosom.

"How do you think I maintain myself here?" demanded Boldero, suddenly.

Harding could not guess.

"By writing political articles."

What,—in the *Starter*?"

"Tush, no. I am for High Church and King now. I've had enough of democracy. I am a Tory of the old stamp."

"Eh?" said Harding, with a stare, though he was not greatly surprised. Extremes frequently run into their opposites, and your flaming demagogue stands the best chance of repudiating his principles, of any man I know. Trust none such.

"I write for the *Loyal Thunderbolt*," proceeded Boldero. "I have undertaken to prove the divine right of kings, and the impiety of using private judgment in matters pertaining to religion, in a series of letters, signed 'The Ghost of Archbishop Laud.'"

"At least, you decry physical force?"

"I do not. I would have the soldiery use the point of the bayonet, to prick home to his dwelling every unwashed rascal who attends a Radical meeting."

"You are very brave, with your bayonets. But what is this you have here—a turning lathe?"

"Yes. I sometimes amuse myself with turning. I carve too. See, here is a bunch of grapes that I carved out of a stubborn piece of oak."

"You are clever. Will you lend me your tools?"

"With pleasure."

Harding thought of the rose and the little bud. He determined to essay his skill in carving on the morrow.

"The accident that disfigured me in this awful manner," said Boldero, commencing the recital he had promised, "happened when I was a fool of a P. F. D., and the most magnified fool in the Society. I believed the masses to be laboring under oppression, and I thought their rulers selfish and base. Their backs bent, as I persuaded myself, under the burden of taxation, and the money levied from their industry was lavished on a bloated, wicked Court. I asked myself—is it not the time of liberation? Am not I their liberator? As for your doctrine of moral force, I scouted it. Is not the intercourse of man with nature, I said, a perpetual striving by physical means, to get the mastery over it? See how he toils at the quarrying and hewing of granite, and is not content till he brings physical force to bear upon it, and transports it hither or thither where he pleases, and makes it serve him as a slave. Very well. These granite hearts of our legislators, we will get the mastery over them."

"I set to work, to manufacture cartridges, intending to distribute them by hundreds among the members of the P. F. D., in the first place, and subsequently among the populace generally. I dreamt of nothing else than repeated engagements with the military, in which the popular cause was triumphant, and England was in universal anarchy. You remember, I dare say, that on two occasions, when you called on me, a man guarded my door. I had the house at my own disposal, let me tell you, and paid rent for eight unoccupied rooms. At those seasons, I was busy at my demon-work, and could not receive a visitor."

"But you had especially invited my immediate attendance on the first occasion," said Harding—"I remember that I gave up a dinner party to come to you."

"Yes. But in the interval between the sending of my note and your arrival, a bright idea had struck me. I had conceived a design of seizing all the arms that were in the Tower, before the Government could receive the least intimation of my purpose, and when you reached my door, I was in deep study, and profoundly maturing my plan."

"Well, one day, I paid the just penalty of my proposed treason and crimes. A spark fell from a candle which I incautiously held to some exposed gunpowder, and ignited it. The whole exploded in my face. Fortunately I escaped with my eyesight, but the result is what you see."

Harding passed no comment on this strange recital. He went to bed and dreamed that he was Prometheus, and had infused the spark of life into one of Maberly's statues. The sculptor stood by and smiled approvingly. Suddenly his placid and benign features seemed distorted by pain. "I suffer, Harding," he said. "Help me." His cries rang piercingly out, and filled all space. Harding awoke in terror. The voice had not ceased, but still cried, and yet more imploringly, for help. When he had gathered all his consciousness, he hurried to Boldero's bed. The youth was stricken by the Cholera. He instantly gave the alarm to a warder who patrolled the prison, and whose duty it was, during the reign of pestilence, to apprise the authorities of a prisoner's illness. But the medical officer was engaged in another part of the prison, and it was long before he made his appearance. He shook his head. It was a virulent attack. He had clearly little hope.

"To die thus,—in a prison!" cried the poor youth, gnashing his teeth, when the doctor had withdrawn. "In a prison,—in a prison." That ignominy seemed to fasten on him. "Listen, Harding. I am a bishop's son,—you did not guess that,—a bishop's son; but the brand of illegitimacy is on me."

"Yes!" he said again, presently, "the Bishop of — is my father. I have never met him in private,—have never spoken to him. I have heard him preach, and have seen him as a stranger, on his way to and from the House of Lords. O what seraph words he can drop from silvery lips! When my mother fell, he was Archdeacon of —."

"Such education as I possess, I owe to him. I was sent, by his orders, to — Grammar School. His name was never mentioned there. I was not even aware that he was my father, neither were any of my playmates. But they had learned the shame of my birth, and taunted me with it every day.

(To be Continued.)