

Part III

CHAPTER 42 The Election

As we came into the yard one afternoon Polly came out. “Jerry! I’ve had Mr. B---- here asking about your vote, and he wants to hire your cab for the election; he will call for an answer.”

“Well, Polly, you may say that my cab will be otherwise engaged. I should not like to have it pasted over with their great bills, and as to making Jack and Captain race about to the public-houses to bring up half-drunken voters, why, I think ‘twould be an insult to the horses. No, I shan’t do it.”

“I suppose you’ll vote for the gentleman? He said he was of your politics.”

“So he is in some things, but I shall not vote for him, Polly; you know what his trade is?”

“Yes.”

“Well, a man who gets rich by that trade may be all very well in some ways, but he is blind as to what workingmen want; I could not in my conscience send him up to make the laws. I dare say they’ll be angry, but every man must do what he thinks to be the best for his

country.”

On the morning before the election, Jerry was putting me into the shafts, when Dolly came into the yard sobbing and crying, with her little blue frock and white pinafore spattered all over with mud.

“Why, Dolly, what is the matter?”

“Those naughty boys,” she sobbed, “have thrown the dirt all over me, and called me a little raga--raga--”

“They called her a little ‘blue’ ragamuffin, father,” said Harry, who ran in looking very angry; “but I have given it to them; they won’t insult my sister again. I have given them a thrashing they will remember; a set of cowardly, rascally ‘orange’ blackguards.”

Jerry kissed the child and said, “Run in to mother, my pet, and tell her I think you had better stay at home to-day and help her.”

Then turning gravely to Harry:

“My boy, I hope you will always defend your sister, and give anybody who insults her a good thrashing--that is as it should be; but mind, I won’t have any election blackguarding on my premises. There are as many ‘blue’ blackguards as there are ‘orange’, and as many white as there are purple, or any other color, and I won’t have any of my family mixed up with it. Even women and children are ready to quarrel for the sake of a color, and not one in ten of them knows what it is about.”

“Why, father, I thought blue was for Liberty.”

“My boy, Liberty does not come from colors, they only show party, and all the liberty you can get out of

them is, liberty to get drunk at other people's expense, liberty to ride to the poll in a dirty old cab, liberty to abuse any one that does not wear your color, and to shout yourself hoarse at what you only half-understand--that's your liberty!"

"Oh, father, you are laughing."

"No, Harry, I am serious, and I am ashamed to see how men go on who ought to know better. An election is a very serious thing; at least it ought to be, and every man ought to vote according to his conscience, and let his neighbor do the same."