

CHAPTER IV

REFORM—THE LAUDER RAID—THE CHOLERA

ABOUT this time "Reform" was in the air. The three days at Paris in July 1830 had wakened up Europe, and excited a general desire for change. In England and Scotland there was much distress, and in the south of Ireland, the people, as usual, were in trouble. There were rick-burnings in Kent and the southern counties, machine-breaking in the manufacturing districts, trials of radicals at Glasgow, and distress among the working-classes generally. It was thought that Reform of Parliament was paramount above all other reforms. The sailor king had ascended the throne, and was favourable to the new views. The Duke of Wellington retired from office, and Earl Grey came into power. Parliament met on the 3rd of February 1831, and on the 1st of March following Lord John Russell brought forward his measure for Parliamentary Reform. The whole country was roused by the proposal. Shoals of petitions were sent in from all quarters; political unions were formed; and a state very nearly approaching "the Revolutionary Epoch" seemed to be on foot. The second reading was carried by a majority of ONE.

There was a great illumination at Edinburgh on that occasion. The city lights up brilliantly, especially

when seen from the Calton Hill or the North Bridge. There is the long vista of Princes Street on the one hand, and the lofty lighted-up houses of the Old Town on the other. But the mob—always the biggest of despots—proved unruly. Everybody must agree with the mob, or take the consequences. On this occasion it proceeded to break the windows of those who did not light up. There was a large quantity of metal laid down for the repair of the macadamised road along Princes Street, which suited them handily. They took up the stones, and, notwithstanding the charges of the police, smashed many windows.

I think it was in George Street, where the mob went careering along, that they came to a large house not lit up. They began to smash, when suddenly three beautiful women came forward, on to the balcony, each with a lighted candle in her hand. They saved the house. The mob worships beauty and courage. They set up a loud cheer, and went on in their wild fury. "The glorious majority of one" was displayed in many places. Some thought it was a satire.

The ministers were eventually left in a minority. The king dissolved Parliament, and the members went back to their constituents. And now followed a desperate struggle. The country was in a whirlwind of excitement. The new writs were made returnable on the 14th of June, and the turmoil of the election of the new Parliament proceeded in town and country. The cry was, "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill." A monster meeting was held in the King's Park, Edinburgh, at which I was present as a spectator, when enthusiastic resolutions were unanimously carried. At the close of the

University Classes at the end of April, 1831, I returned to Haddington, where I found the same excitement prevailing about the Bill.

Haddington was one of a group of five burghs returning a member to Parliament. They took it in turn to be the returning burgh. This time it was the turn of Lauder, a little town on the other side of the Lammermuir Hills. Haddington and Jedburgh, the two largest burghs, had declared in favour of the Reform Candidate; Dunbar and North Berwick in favour of the Tory; but Lauder was considered doubtful. It depended upon its decision whether Robert Stewart, of Alderston, the Reformer, should be returned to Parliament, or Sir A. J. Dalrymple, the nominee of Lord Lauderdale, the Anti-Reformer. I do not know what arrangements were made, but I knew that a strong detachment of the Haddington Reformers intended to march to Lauder, and take steps to secure the return of their candidate in one way or another. I accordingly resolved to go across the Lammermuir Hills and witness the proceedings.

It was a fine day in May, and I greatly enjoyed the walk to Lammerlaw. I had been at the top of the cairn on the hill-top the year before, and enjoyed the glorious view. I went by Gifford, past the Woods of Yester, and through Long Yester farm, up the track through the heather; skirting the many remains of camps of ancient tribes who had occupied the country long before the inroads of the Scots and Picts, who, after all, were but interlopers. The air was sharp, crisp, and bracing, as I ascended the hill; near the summit I descended the rounded slopes of the Lammermuirs—a perfect sea of hills—lying silent and sublime, as far as the eye could

reach. Not a sound was heard, except the whirr of a moorfowl on its way to cover, or the occasional cry of a startled sheep.

Amidst the stillness of nature, which was impressive in its loneliness, I went onward to Tullis Hill. Here I met the first man I had encountered for many miles—a shepherd. He was standing signalling with his arms to a dog on the opposite hill, which was divided from us by a deep glen. I could scarcely see the dog at first. It looked like a moving spot of dark upon the green; and the sheep looked like white bits of wool upon the hillside. But the dog was at work. As the shepherd near me lifted his arms and signalled, the dog, watching him, ran up the hill in one direction or the other as he had pointed; and in course of time he brought the flock all together, home to the sheep-farm.

Descending the mountain on the southern side I went on to Hazeldean, passing several more of the ancient camps already mentioned, and after skirting along the burn on its way to join the river Leader, I struck the high road from Edinburgh, and after about ten miles more walking from the summit of Lammerlaw, reached the town of Lauder—the scene of the intended election on the following day. I took up my quarters with a friend, and shortly after went into the streets to see the new arrivals from the adjoining towns. I met the two law agents—Messrs Stobie and Younger—and was invited by them to join their party in a room upstairs, in the second inn of the town—the principal inn, the Lauderdale Arms, being appropriated by the other party.

I found the little room hot and fuming with the steam of whisky toddy. The leading reformers were

all there; and Robert Stewart, the candidate, was present. It was a sort of free-and-easy, and in the midst of conversation, songs were given. Deacon Melville, the Haddington tailor, sang his song, beginning, "Away ye gay landskips, ye gardings of roses," and ending with "dark Loch na Garr." Other songs followed, but I did not wait until the close of the sitting.

On the following morning, crowds of strangers entered the town. The principal procession came from Haddington. It consisted of a lot of reformers, headed by "General" Badger, and accompanied by a public speaker, "Orator" Maclauchlan—a diminutive baker of the Newgate. As the time for the election approached, a crowd of men assembled opposite the Lauderdale Arms. Lord Maitland, Sir Anthony Maitland, and others, issued from the inn, and proceeded across the street to the Council Room, escorted by their gamekeepers and farm stewards. The Maitlands were allowed to pass; but a tussle took place with the gamekeepers. I saw a young Haddington carpenter bring down the thick end of his stick on the bald crown of the head gamekeeper. He went down like a shot. It was a most cruel assault. Sir Anthony Maitland went up the outside stairs of the Council Room, and shook his fist at the foaming crowd, vowing vengeance.

The most important event, however, occurred at some distance from the town. One of the councillors, Bailie Simpson, was in a delicate state of health, and did not intend to vote. A post-chaise was sent for him by the Lauderdale party; but another chaise was also in readiness, with a fleet pair of horses. At a corner of the road, the carriage containing the bailie was stopped, the bailie was hustled out and

put in the new chaise. The one which had contained him was upset in the ditch by a powerful fletcher of Haddington, and the voter was driven rapidly away towards Blainslie. The time for the election had now arrived. It could not be postponed. The voting took place, and Robert Stewart was declared elected by a majority of one—again “the glorious majority of one!”

The procession again re-formed and marched off to Haddington, elated with their victory. I did not return until the following day, when I again crossed the mountains; but I was informed that on the arrival of the procession at Haddington, they were headed by several men with blazing tar-barrels on their heads; and in the darkness of the night, the scene had been very startling. The people were perfectly frantic with joy and excitement.

A few days later, the new member made his entry into the town. He was enthusiastically received at Laurencehouse, about a mile out of the town, by men, women, and boys—for boys are always on the winning side. They are a perspiring phalanx in the van of all public movements. During the Reform era every boy was a reformer. To please the boys and the people generally, and perhaps to show the general enthusiasm, an extempore band was got up and headed the procession. It consisted principally of a splendid big drum, which used to belong to the Haddington Militia. It was lent by Peter Martine, who, though a Tory, showed his liberality by lending the drum, which was beaten by a lame Radical weaver, who in his early days had been a big drummer. There were, however, other instruments. There were two key buglers, one Hugh Shields, the parish precentor, who played very well; the other, a

carpenter, who played very badly. There was also Tom Muat, the shoemaker, who played the clarionet. The music was shockingly bad; but it didn't matter. The crowd made up for it by their enthusiasm. Then there were speeches, made by the orators, and received with immense applause by the multitude.

Of course the election could not stand. It was petitioned against, and Robert Stewart was unseated, when Sir A. J. Dalrymple became the sitting member for the burgh during the expiring days of the old parliamentary system. Attempts were made to detect the authors of the outrage at Lauder. The chaise driver, who drove away the voter, was apprehended and imprisoned for twelve months. But the powerful flesher of Haddington, who had been the main instrument, was never found out. The young carpenter who smote down the gamekeeper was, by some means, enabled to leave the town, and was never afterwards heard of. One of the leading councillors received his reward. He was made a magistrate in the West Indies. Such was the outcome of "The Lauder Raid." Robert Stewart was returned to Parliament without opposition at the first election under the Reform Act; and he continued to be member for the burghs until he was unseated by Balfour of Whittinghame some ten years later.

To return to my own personal history, I went back to Edinburgh in the following November. This was my third session. I attended the Anatomical Classes and Practical Surgery under the two Messrs Lizars; Practice of Physic under Dr Mackintosh; and walked the Infirmary at midday. Here Liston was the principal surgeon when any important operation was to be performed.

Asiatic cholera was now travelling north-west-

wards through Europe, in the direction of England. It had reached Hamburg, and was about to visit this country. The first cases, I think, occurred at Gateshead: and the next at Haddington. Early one morning in January 1832, I was roused by a loud knocking at the door of my lodging at Edinburgh. I had been suffering from a frightful dream. I knew at once that something must be wrong at home, and feared the worst. I opened the window myself, and asked what was wanted. I was told that I must go out to Haddington immediately, as my father was ill of cholera. A gig was at the door to carry me out. I got ready at once, and was on my way within a quarter of an hour. It was a fine winter morning, and the sun came up over the Forth, as we drove over Birslae Brae. Though Forsyth, the livery stable master, drove fast, we arrived too late. My father was dead when I entered the room where he lay in his last placid sleep. I recognised the strong likeness to my grandfather when I had last seen him. I had never witnessed the likeness before; but family resemblance often comes out in the moment of death.

Cholera was very deadly in the town at that time. Many died in the front street, near where my father lived. The cause of the fatality was afterwards discovered—want of wholesome water, and utter want of drainage. The defect was at length remedied, after many years' delay. My father was buried in the choir of the old Cathedral at Haddington, close by the burial place of Dr John Welsh, whose daughter, Mrs Carlyle, was afterwards interred there.

There was great sorrow and lamentation at home. A family of eleven children had to be provided for—the youngest an infant, only three months old.

I remained at home for some time, as a consolation to my mother. I did not know at first whether I was to go on with my medical education or not. It might possibly be too costly—looking to the circumstances in which we were placed. Then, another serious circumstance occurred. My father had been surety, with two others, for his elder brother John, who was a paper manufacturer at Colinton, near Edinburgh. He had got into some dilemma with the Excise; the mill was stopped; and a security for some £800 had to be paid. One of the first things to be done, after the death of my father, was to raise the third of this money, and pay it to the lawyer at Edinburgh. Part of the sum was borrowed, and I went in to pay the money. It proved a total loss, and it was felt to be very distressing at such a time.

After remaining at home for some time, I professed my willingness to abandon my profession. But my mother would not hear of it. "No, no," she said, "you must go back to Edinburgh, and do as your father desired: God will provide." She had the most perfect faith in Providence, and believed that if she did her duty she would be supported to the end. She had wonderful pluck, and abundant common-sense. Her character seemed to develop with the calls made upon her. Difficulties only brought out the essence of her nature. I could not fail to be influenced by so good a mother. I was inspired by her, and obeyed her.

I went back to Edinburgh accordingly, finished my third winter session at the University; and after remaining during the summer session, studying Clinical Surgery under Mr Syme, Midwifery under Dr Mackintosh, and Practical Anatomy under Mr

Alexander Lizars, I submitted myself for examination. It was common, in those days, to have a "grinder," or coach. But I dispensed with that expensive preliminary, and met daily a student of about my own age, Henry Smith—afterwards a thriving chemical manufacturer; and with him I went carefully through all the necessary coaching.

We went together to be examined. After waiting in the ante-rooms of the New College of Surgeons, first one and then another candidate came out—rejected! One was much older than myself. I thought that if he had not been able to pass, there was little chance for me. Then Henry Smith was called in. After what I thought a very long time of "heckling"—so long that I feared he would never come out—he made his appearance with a beaming face. "I have passed," he said. "Is it difficult?" "No, not at all. I know what you can do. You will find it easy!" Accordingly, when I was next called in, I went with good heart.

Although the examinations were in those days conducted *viva voce*, and without any written papers, the examiners soon got at the gist of the students' knowledge. First one, and then another, took me in hand, and after examining me in special topics, came to a rapid conclusion. There was Dr Huie, a difficult examiner, Dr Simson, Dr Begbie, Dr Maclagan, and others. First, there was a paragraph of Gregory's *Conspectus* in Latin to be construed, or a passage of *Celsus*. Then *Materia Medica*, when the method of preparing Antimonial Powder and Calomel had to be explained. Then anatomy, when the arteries, nerves, and muscles at the base of the skull, had to be described. I knew this well, for I was well grounded in anatomy. Then

surgery, with a description of reducing a hernia and performing amputation of a leg. And so on with the details of the practice of surgery and medicine. By taking the candidate on such subjects unawares, and ascertaining exactly what he knew about them, the examiners were enabled to come to a conclusion as to the other subjects on which he had not been examined. After about an hour of such inquiries, a large mass of facts had been ascertained as to the competency and the knowledge of the student. I got through without difficulty; and had the pleasure of receiving my diploma, dated the 6th of November, 1832—six years exactly, after the date of the indenture of my apprenticeship.