

FLYING SCUD

CHARLES CLARKE



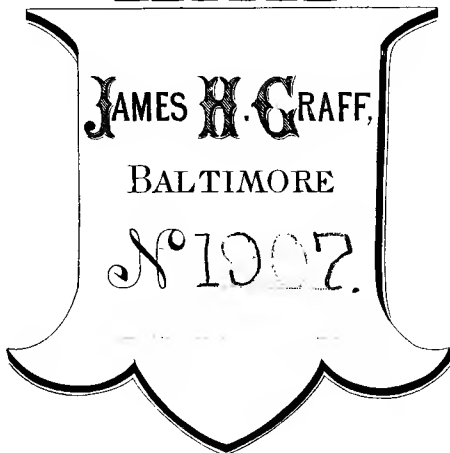
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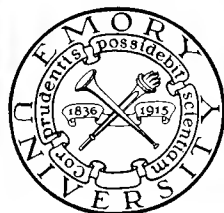
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THE FLYING SCUD.

A SPORTING NOVEL.

BY CHARLES CLARKE,

AUTHOR OF

"CHARLIE THORNHILL," "WHICH IS THE WINNER?"

"THE BEAUCLERCS," ETC.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

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1868.

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THE FLYING SCUD.

INTRODUCTION

FOR the last fifty years, by almost imperceptible degrees, a passion for the turf has been developing itself among us. Nothing in the world, especially among the passions, can be regarded as an unmixed good ; and, although there are many qualities and characteristics in an honest sportsman which form the basis of English nationality, they are often joined with others which fade into vices, the very reverse of that openness and honesty which was once the boast of our countrymen.

If the turf system of this country ever dies, it will only be by burying itself beneath that load of avarice which is well-nigh stifling its best aspiration. However, while the professional speculators who pull the strings are as

indifferent to the pastime, as a Poor Law Guardian to the sufferings of innocent pauperism, or a sheriff's officer to the entreaties of his prey, there are many thousands of spectators who still love a thoroughbred horse for himself, and the healthy pleasure he affords them; who fail to recognise in him at first sight the instrument of wrong, and the unconscious means of aristocratic swindling.

For this greatness of our countrymen of every class and denomination, Mr. Dion Boucicault has catered. He has provided one of those dramatic pictures which flatter our intelligence, by reproducing what we feel to be true; and which appeal to our sympathies at the same time. It was a bold experiment, but not more bold than successful; and it is so successful because every individual takes it, as it were, under his especial protection, and pronounces his own criticism without regard to any voice but that of his own intelligence or experience.

To Mr. Boucicault's kindness and ready permission I am indebted for the opportunity of presenting the same features of sporting life in the pages of a novel. I believe I see in his drama the foundation of a story, whose interest may be heightened by more close and careful analysis of the separate characters which he presents to you on the stage of a theatre, and though it be true that those inci-

dents pass less vividly into the mind by the ear than by the eye,

“*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus,*”

there can be no doubt that narration gives an opportunity of enjoyment, which, if less vivid or exciting, is more capable of exercising the faculties of comparison and analysis.

One advantage it certainly possesses, and it is this; your imagination will have fuller scope: you can invest each character with the attributes of your own fancy: you are no more tied to Mr. Neville's idea of Captain Grindley Goodge, than to Miss Joseph's personation of Lord Woodbie, and though it is difficult to believe in a Nat Gosling of any other type than that very excellent one afforded by Mr. G. Belmore, you may put yourself—if you please—into your own boots and breeches, and ride your own Derby horse in what tackle, and under what orders you please.

If any pleasure or advantage is to be expected from the perusal of the following pages, it will be increased a hundredfold by having first seen the very excellent drama from which it is taken.

CHAPTER I.

A NOTICE TO QUIT.

It was a mild, heavy night of early spring, in the year 185—, that old Mr. Sykes—the owner of Nobbley Hall and some hundreds of acres round it—lay dying. Whatever pangs the prospect of approaching death may have had for the old man they were all past now. He bided his time with all outward appearance of patience and resignation. Something mourns for us all. The old house-keeper, who crept stealthily across the room from time to time, to watch her master's breathing, had dropped many a tear for him during the past week; and the handsome black retriever, which lay on the hearth-rug, broke away at intervals to lick the hand which had so often caressed him.

The blinds were all down, and the curtains drawn, and the obscurity of the dark oak furniture of the handsome Elizabethan room was made doubly sombre by the light of the solitary oil lamp, which burnt on a round table at the foot of the bed.

The solemn stillness of the house was broken only by

an occasional footfall, and the gentle opening of the door, as an occasional visitor from the servants' apartments came to inquire whether anything was wanted by the occupants of the sick man's chamber.

On one of these occasions the old man turned, and beckoned feebly with his attenuated hand.

During the day he had scarcely spoken, and had only roused himself to take the cordials prescribed for him by his medical attendant, and given him by his house-keeper.

Mrs. Marks saw the movement, and went towards him.

"Mrs. Marks," said he, feebly, but raising himself with difficulty on his elbow, "Mrs. Marks, has any one been here for me?"

"It was only one of the maids, Sir, come to see if you wanted anything before she went to bed." Then she smoothed his pillow, but he continued:

"Has old Nat been in to-night?" and this time his voice seemed louder, more like himself, and a curious brightness might have been seen in his eyes.

"He came in once, Sir, but you were asleep, and we wouldn't wake you."

"And didn't he say something? Where's he gone to?"

“No ; he said he’d look in early. He’s been gone homo a long time. It’s nigh upon eleven o’clock.”

“And what time is it light in the morning ? ” inquired the dying man.

“Soon after six, maybe, Sir,” replied she, somewhat surprised at the returning dawn of intelligence, which she had not seen for some hours before. Indeed, she almost thught he was not so near his last hour as they had been led to expect by Doctor Kershaw.

“Have you wound up my watch, Mrs. Marks ? ”

“Yes, yes,” said the woman, a little put out by the unwonted signs of animation. “It’s all done, Sir, long ago. Try and sleep a bit, Sir.”

“No ; but you can. I shan’t want anything till Nat Gosling comes in the morning ; and you musn’t let him go away again without my seeing him. Mind, now, Mrs. Marks, I want to see Nat, and I shan’t be happy till I do.”

Mrs. Marks would have sent for Nat Gosling, but she thought there were no present signs of death about the old gentleman ; and Nat’s cottage was the best part of a mile from the house, and who was to go ? So, after a time, Mrs. Marks fell fast asleep on an extempore bed ; and the poor old man thought on and on, through the night, how long it was in ending.

It is desirable that the reader should know something about old John Sykes, of Nobbley Hall; and while he and his attendant were alternately dozing and watching, I may occupy the time in giving a brief sketch of the old man's career.

It will be noticed that he was plain John Sykes, of Nobbley Hall. He was not t'Squire, nor t'ould Squire, nor Colonel, nor Captain, nor, as a rule, even Mister Sykes. If men of his position have nothing else to hang their names to, there must be a militia regiment in the county, which willingly calls an independent county gentleman Captain, or Major. This was not the case with Mr. Sykes of Nobbley Hall; and though he fought hard all his life for some titular compensation by keeping a large and valuable stud (the straightest road to a Yorkshireman's heart), he made no progress with the poor. Wealthy neighbours accorded him some marks of respect, when they saw him leading the Holderness, or holding his own with the Bramham Moor; they welcomed him when a promising young one for next year's Derby won the Nursery Handicap at York, or the Hopeful at Doncaster; but a circuit of some miles of his own neighbourhood would have nothing but plain John Sykes, which is either the greatest compliment or the greatest impertinence that can befall a landed proprietor.

The reason of it was simple enough. How came John Sykes, at the age of thirty-five or forty, into the Nobbyly Hall estate? It was no secret, so we may as well tell you.

John Sykes was not a gentleman. Elastic or indefinite as that peculiar English word has become, John Sykes was a gentleman in no respect; he had neither the birth nor the feeling of one; and all that could be said for a grasping avarice was, that it was governed by legitimate honesty. He began life as a stable-boy, where he earned a shilling a week extra by doing some of his comrades' work, and saved another by denying himself the ordinary gratification of a stable-boy's appetite. As his wages increased with his age and knowledge, he saved more; and by the time he was of age, the columns of the savings bank at Doncaster were pretty familiar with the name and signature of John Sykes. He was a well-educated, prudent lad; and, as his father once observed, would make his way in the world if his "cursed avarice didn't lead him into dishonesty."

It was this John Sykes who lay tranquilly watching for the dawn of day and the coming of his old servant, his groom and head stableman, with as much life as he could muster, and as much anxiety as if he had a message for him from the world to come.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRIAL AT DAYBREAK.

THE Nobbley estate had had the good luck to belong to several generations of real gentlemen, and Colonel Meredith was the last of them. They all gambled, swore, kept open house, borrowed money of the Jews at the expense of their heirs, and paid their bills and debts when they could, always without looking at them, and frequently without taking a receipt; and Yorkshiro is "no that honest" that it could, or "is that canny" that it could not, withstand the temptation of plucking such pigeons. To this Colonel Meredith the said John Sykes was recommended as trainer. If he robbed his master for fifteen years, he took good care that nobody else should; but the truth is, he did not rob his master. He picked up honestly every waif and stray he could lay his hands upon; and whether it was an useless but good-looking foxhound puppy from the kennels, or a piece of old iron, John Sykes found a market of some kind or other

While John the trainer was going up in the world, the Colonel of Nobbley Hall, the master, was going as rapidly down in the world; and as trainers cannot command success, but only deserve it, Colonel Meredith's racing establishment got smaller and smaller, as his gambling became more reckless and his losses more frequent. At last an opportunity presented itself for retrieving his fortunes. A colt by Muley Moloch, trained away from home, was regarded as one of those certainties which are obliged to be backed. It was a certainty to the master, and to the whole establishment at Nobbley, from the old housekeeper, the major-domo, and the ladies' maid, down to the very lowest stable-boy or shoe-black. One only person had consistently declined to risk his savings on what he had always declared to be only a probability, and that was John Sykes.

One week before the race he told his master that he could not win the colt, for that he himself knew a better, an outsider, whose trial was unmistakable, and whom he desired the Colonel to back, adding, "You know Sir, I don't back a horse often, unless I've a fancy for one of our own. I've backed our colt for a trifle, because I shouldn't like to be out of the fun if you win, but as you've trained him away from home, and I've had nought to do wi' him, I make bold to tell you that I've backed

the other, and that I stand to win a heavy stake on Mr. Petre's horse, at thirty to one. Now, don't be agin' him, Colonel, for I know it's right."

But the Colonel was against him, and John Sykes, within one week, was worth above thirty thousand pounds.

Three years from this time brought Colonel Meredith to grief. Of course, his old trainer had left him, and had quitted that part of the country. But his money had accumulated. He lent it out at heavy interest to racing men at short dates. He had a share in a manufactory, and worked the abominable truck system, by which labour is paid in the cheapest market, and sent to find its food and clothing in the dearest. He made no bad debts, and everything prospered that he handled. The property of Nobbley was in the market. The Colonel was dying abroad without issue, his nearest of kin being one Tom Meredith, the son of a late brother, as impoverished as himself, and the purchaser was John Sykes, the self-taught, self-raised gentleman, scarcely yet approaching the confines of middle life.

One virtue we should record. He retained a grateful sense of his late master's favours, and, in process of time, he let one of the best farms on his estate to the very Tom Meredith who would have been the Colonel's heir

had he possessed anything worth leaving behind him besides his name.

To return, then, to the sick chamber of the ex-trainer.

"Mrs. Marks," said the invalid, opening his eyes, after a short sleep.

Mrs. Marks went to his bed-side.

"Open the shutters, it must be day."

As she complied with his request, the grey dawn of morning stole lazily into the room, producing a ghastly effect upon the still burning lamp. The air was mild and soft, and the old woman opened the window for a moment as her patient complained of the closeness of the room. He felt, he said, pretty well, but a little faint—"Free from pain, thank God." Then Mrs. Marks administered his morning draught, and replaced his pillows, and made him as comfortable as she could, for he would have nobody else to nurse him. And again he lay back, calmly and composedly; but all this time he was waiting for Nat Gosling, and that other summons, and he could not tell which would come first.

A different scene was at that moment enacting within a mile of the house. Nobbly Hall was a moderately-sized house, of the Elizabethan style of architecture—red brick, gable ends, oriel windows, and a fine entrance hall and staircase of the blackest oak. The park extended

beyond the lawn, which was laid out in handsome terraces for a long distance, till it mingled itself insensibly with the open and moorland country beyond. A part of it had been made, by previous owners, a private course, and it had been improved and enlarged by John Sykes, whose passion for horses and the sports of the field knew no bounds. He had, as he boasted, bred them, trained them, and run them; but since he had lived at Nobbly Hall he had never backed them.

At the further end of this course, on the morning in question, in the dim uncertain light, were four persons; two of them were on horseback, the others were on foot.

The two on foot were Nat Gosling, the old groom so anxiously expected by his dying master; the other was a fine looking young fellow, called Tom Meredith, to whom I have referred before as a tenant of old John Sykes. More of them anon. Here it is sufficient to say, that he united to his occupation of tenant farmer that of private trainer; and he was intrusted by a few gentlemen who kept a racehorse or steeplechaser in the neighbourhood with the care of them. His landlord gave him the use of the private course for his trials, or the training of anything particularly good. They were deep in conversation, while the boys sat apart on their horses, keeping them gently moving in a small circle.

“We shall know in a minute or two, Tom, whether the first trial was a mistake. I almost fancy it too good to be true.”

And Nat Gosling buried his hands deep in the pockets of his drab trousers, and turned over some loose money that was lying there. It was a sharp-featured, intelligent face, with some humour and Yorkshire cunning, but not more of the latter than might be considered provincial.

“I tell you, Nat,” said the other, the Flying Scud gave the old horse a seven pound beating at ever-weights. I’ve given the young one ten pounds more than the other to carry this morning, and that’s form enough to win the Derby, now. If my notion’s correct it’ll be a race, and the old one will win by a length.”

“You’re hard upon him, Muster Tom.”

“His legs are like iron; and it’s as well to know the truth. There’s a difference, Nat, between galloping your horse’s heart out trying him, and never finding out what he can do till it’s too late to profit by it. I’ll take care he isn’t scratched, because we’re forestalled.”

“There ain’t no one about, think ye, Sir? because there’s a precious lot of rascals in the country,” said old Nat, looking suspiciously round.

“They won’t learn much from this trial, at all events—it’ll be all the other way. Now, boys, come out of the

cold behind the trees there, and take off the clothes. Come along quick all the way, and begin racing when you get into the hollow. Come away with the old horse with all your might up the hill, Robert, and see how much you can win by."

The boys got off, slipped off the clothing, gave one look to the girths, and were lifted back into the saddles. They went down gently to the start, and in a minute or two were seen coming along at a slashing pace, but it was scarcely clear enough to distinguish, at that distance, between the two. As they neared the clump of trees by which they were to finish, they became more easily distinguishable. Both horses were being ridden, and, notwithstanding the weight, the young one still held his own.

"The young 'un wins," said old Nat, in a hoarse whisper, with his eyes half out of his head with excitement.

"Not quite," said Tom; "it's the last squeeze of the lemon that will do it. No three-year-old in England that ever was foaled could win at the weight. But the Derby is as good as in our pocket," added he, as the horses rushed by, Flying Scud struggling gallantly on up to the old one's girths, and only succumbing at the last few strides under the crusher he was carrying.

“He’s seven pounds better than one of the best horses that ever looked through a bridle, and twice as good as when he won the Criterion in the autumn”—saying which, Nat proceeded to assist the boys in their labours—“and if he could but have gone for the Two Thousand, he’d have been at pretty short odds for the Derby—but we must keep it dark.”

In half-an-hour more he was at the bed-side of his old master, and the two had got the room to themselves. They were not to be disturbed.

If the reader imagines that there was any great secret to be divulged, any terrible murder to be expiated, or felony to be paid for, he is much in error. Perhaps a more enthusiastic person may expect a conversation more in accordance with the peculiarities of the case. I am sorry to disappoint him.

John Sykes seemed to have settled everything of that kind to his satisfaction. He only took Nat’s hand, and drawing him gently down towards him, whispered—

“Now, Nat, man, how did it go? Is the Flying Scud as good as you thought he would be? Has he won his trial?”

And the old man was himself again for a minute or two after Nat Gosling’s appearance by his bedside. His eye assumed a bright intelligence, which it had lacked

the last four-and-twenty hours ; his cheek had at least a tinge of blood returning to it, if not the hues of health ; and his sharp features expanded with a warmth which no other subject had ever roused in them, even in earlier days.

“Aye, Sir, is he ? hist, master, not so loud,” replied Nat, bending down to whisper, and overburthened with the importance of the intelligence. “He gave the old ’un ten pounds for a mile and three-quarters, and ran up to his girths. It’s seven pounds in hand now, and you’ll see——” and here the old man stopped, for he knew his master never would see his favourite colt again. “But you’ll want to talk of something else,” said Nat, as he swallowed a rising tear, and placed his thin, hard hand upon the transparent fingers of his master. “You’ll want to talk of other things, but I thought you’d like to hear it.”

“And so I do, Nat ; so I do. It does me good ; it makes me feel stronger ; but I shan’t get up again from here, and I’m glad that it’s Tom’s nomination now though I didn’t think of this when I gave it. I say, Nat, it’s no use to keep those other matters that you’re thinking of, for such a time as this. They want all one’s mind, and all one’s strength ; do ’em before you come to this, and then you’ll like to hear

of a bit of sport when you can ; aye——” and the old man raised himself with more energy than his servant would have thought possible. “Look here, man, I’ve done all that long ago. I’ve thought of you all, when I was in health. When your old master—I was a servant once, you know, myself, Nat—is dead and gone, you’ll see I’ve forgotten no one. But you want to talk, Nat Gosling ;” and John Sykes laid his head once more on the pillow, and his white locks floated round him.

“Don’t ’ee be angry, master,” said Nat, whimpering ; “don’t ye take it amiss, but Muster Meredith—he’ll feel it most. Have ye done ought by him ? He’s no lease ; he’s spent his life and his money on the land, and I doubt your nephew ’ll be but a hard task-master. Poor Tom ! He’s to be married to Kate some day. If it’s not too late, and ye could help him a bit——ye’ll mind it would all a’ been his, if the old Squire Meredith had been a bit harder wi’ some of us. I’m an old man, and shall soon follow you, but Tom’s got all the world before him, and if anything wor to happen to Flying Scud, he’d be a beggar to-morrow. You owe him a turn, master, for the old plaec, and all that’s gone from him. Do it, before it’s too late, and——”

John Sykes closed his hand tighter and tighter on

that of his old servant, then closed them both upon his breast, his eyes opened once more with a cheerful smile, his head fell back upon his pillow, and he was at rest for ever.

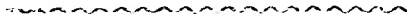
Nat Gosling was rather uncomfortable for some time after John Sykes' death. He did not quite know what to make of that last squeeze. Did it mean that all was right, or did it mean "Good-bye, Nat—mind your own business?" He couldn't make it out, and he brushed his hat with his coat sleeve half-a-dozen times a-day, and smoothed down his closely-cropped iron-grey hair, and said to himself—

"Poor Tom! now what will he be doing with this Captain Grindley Goodge? They're no great friends; Tom's a deal too honest for him." For Nat knew very well that a Derby nomination, even with Flying Scud, was but a small fortune for a man like Tom, if it did come off right, and a terribly heavy blow if it didn't. However, there was nothing to be done or known till after the funeral, so he went on with his work, and said nothing about the last moments of John Sykes to anybody.

"It was a good trial, anyhow, and it ought to be a few thousand pounds in his pocket, to a certainty, if he only works the oracle right. There's nobody knows it

yet but our two selves, and we shan't split. 'The boys don't know nothing about the weights, and I think they're safe enough.'

But it so happened that one other person had seen the trial, and flattered himself that he knew all about it, too.



CHAPTER III.

HOW TO WIN AT ECARTE.

ON the morning following that on which the trial of Flying Scud, and the death of old John Sykes took place, we must ask the reader to accompany us to a very handsome suite of apartments in a quiet old-fashioned street at the back of Langham Place. The situation was one which might have been selected for purposes of literary seclusion, or for that retirement which severity seeks in the midst of sensual excitement. Its object in the present case was a less worthy one, as will be seen.

The rooms—which were on the first-floor—were, as

we have said, very handsome ; large, lofty, well-furnished, with an air of costly comfort about them, and opening into each other by large folding doors, which were now closed. The front room was light, and its three large windows looked upon the street. The back room was darker, and a large bow window opened upon some leads, which were surrounded by lattice-work, and ivy, with other evergreens. This in itself tended to darken the room, and give a mysterious solemnity to its appearance. It gave it also a pretty rural aspect, and this quasi-garden could be used in the summer as an additional smoking room. The houses behind receded, so that it left nothing to be desired on the score of air and privacy.

The back room alone was tenanted, and that by one man, who was employed, or about to employ himself, in a singular manner. He looked into the front room, in which were the empty breakfast cup and saucer, plates, teapot, and morning paper. He at once walked to the door which led into that room from the top of the stairs, and locked it. He then performed the same office by the folding doors, and the smaller door which communicated with the back room from the same staircase ; he was by this means safe from intrusion, or the possibility of supervision. He threw down the blind of the window which looked on to his modest flower garden,

and from the table-drawer of a card table took two packs of cards. He then divested himself of his morning dressing-gown, which had higher claims for its magnificence than its good taste, and commenced operations.

He shuffled the cards with that rapidity and neatness which is peculiar to conjurers and croupiers, then cut them several times, moving his hands with great delicacy and deliberation, and always looking at the cut card, which was, I confess, out of all proportion, an honour. He then made several "passes" with the cards, sometimes successfully, but not invariably so. Removing his rings, which seemed to occupy too much of his fingers for a man who did not want them to look at (vanity is the ruin of us all!), he repeated these until he became more and more perfect.

Then he dealt the cards as for *écarté*, and turning up what seemed to be the eleventh card, at first with much deliberation, and afterwards with greater quickness, produced invariably the bottom card of the pack in its place. It's as well to know that this is sometimes done, as well as yourself; but the lesson is given not for imitation. He varied his performances with corks and balls, and especially with dice, which formed a very prominent part of his manipulations, the object of which was to

conceal as many of these things as possible about his fingers, showing an open and apparently empty palm. He was at length satisfied with his performance.

“Devilish good,” said he to himself; “I think that will do.”

But he had not quite finished. He drew the curtains closer, and lighted two wax candles, which he placed at opposite corners of the table. He then dealt the cards, as for whist. Having spread the cards to each hand, as widely as he well could do, he began scrutinising them closely, at certain distances from the table, so as to catch the light upon them at certain angles. Then he turned certain of them over as he looked, which proved to be aces, kings, queens, or knaves. He seemed scarcely satisfied with this, for he took some of them close to the taper, and began examining the corners with extreme care. It was a curious occupation for an Irish gentleman, at eleven o'clock in the morning.

He was thoroughly engrossed in his occupation, when a gentle knock at the door startled him. He hastily put on his dressing-gown, dropping the cards and dice into his pocket, and blowing out the candles. The knock was repeated, and then he went to the door.

“Ah! uncle, late again last night,” said the visitant, looking at the table and the candles. “Here’s Mr.

Chouser coming up the street, and, as you told me to let you know——”

The speaker was a marvel of Irish beauty. Every feature was perfect; and she was tall, and beautifully made, with a manner as graceful and dignified as if she had been a duchess. Her eyes were large and lustrous, and she was admirably dressed, as only Englishwomen dress in the early morning.

“Thanks, Julia; Chouser, did you say? Bedad, it’s all right; ye’ll tell the page to show him into the front drawing-room, where I’m at breakfast, me child;” and Major Mulligan retired at once, while Julia Latimer, for that was the name of the Milesian beauty, beat a retreat as hastily to her own room on the floor above.

Julia Latimer was Major Mulligan’s niece.

“Mr. Chouser, Sir,” said the page; and most people know what an Irishman’s page is. This was no exception to the usual lodging-house shoe-black and knife-cleaner. Mr. Chouser, however, walked in with an easy assurance worthy a groom of the chambers and a couple of footmen in attendance; and he and Major Mulligan scarcely thought it necessary to inquire after each other, having parted about half-past three in the morning at the club. His fingers were at that moment jingling

some of the sovereigns he had won of young Lightly of the —nd.

“Chouser, my boy, you’re the very man I wanted to see. I’ve a letter from Yorkshire. The Criterion colt, Flying Scud, is not up to the mark. He’s been well beat in his trial, and the party won’t have him at any price for the Derby. I always said he was an overrated horse from the beginning. I shouldn’t wonder if he went a roarer.”

“Is the information good, Mulligan? Those Yorkshire Tykes are rum ones to deal with,” said the wary Chouser.

“Good? Is Woodbie’s acceptance good for a thousand?” replied the Major, by another interrogation.

“Well, I hope so : so does Mo. Davis, for he’s discounted it for us. However, the Derby colt business is yours, and I suppose you know it. If what you say is true, the sooner the commission is out to lay against him the better. If once he goes for the Two Thou. (and it’s pretty close), and his pretensions are blown, we shall have to lay thousands to a pony about it. He is at nine to one now, and firm enough at that; at least he was so last night.”

“Then be off as fast as you can, Chouser; and tell Mo. Davis to lay all he can, on the quiet, against the

horse, and let us know what he's done by to-night. There's the note ; read it yourself."

Chouser took the paper—read it hastily—concluding, half aloud, in the language of the Yorkshire missive, "'Hold 'orse won heasy, 'ard 'eld.' Yes, all right—I see. But I say, Mulligan, Mo. is such a frightful snob."

"So he is, Chouser ; but there's more of them where he came from. He is not so bad as he's painted. He's an honest man in the way of per centage by the side of Lawyer Shavecote. Besides, we can't do without him, so we must be civil ;" convinced by which argument Chouser went to Tattersall's in search of Mo. Davis, who was trading there on his own account with some paper that wanted a better name upon it before he could enable the gentleman to settle his Northampton account at less than one hundred and sixty per cent. He called it forty, but that means forty per cent. for three months.

About four hours, or more, after the visit of Chouser, by which time Major Mulligan had dressed himself somewhat more elaborately, there came a second knock at the door, and this time it was a certain Captain Grindley Goodge, who followed the page into the front room. Captain Goodge was precisely the sort of person one might have expected to meet anywhere in company with the Irish major. There was a dashing, easy assurance

about him which was as national as the full-blown swagger and assumed tone of honest independence of Major Mulligan, the roll of whose brogue, hat, and address were certainly the most insolent on record. He was proud of them all, but more so of his connection with Castle Mulligan; and it would have been difficult to say whether the Castle derived its importance from the Major, or Major Mulligan his from the Castle. It belonged to a distant relation, who did duty for an uncle or a brother, as might be most useful at the time. On one occasion only had he stood for a father, and then the necessity of the case must plead for the adoption. It's a wise son that knows its own father; and the Major may be excused from labouring under so universal an ignorance.

“I've some news for you, Goodge, me boy. I've sent out a commission to lay the last shilling that—that—we ever will have against the Flying Scud for the Derby.”

Captain Goodge smiled, and said :

“What! then you've heard the news already.”

“News, faith! it's no news to me: I said the horse 'ud go a roarer; they most of 'em do now. I suppose it's the atmosphere; but there's the letter.”

The Captain took the letter, looking, at the same time, a little astonished. He returned it with a compliment on

the orthography, and with a remark that spelling and honesty did not always go together.

“By no means,” said the Major, with a broader broguo than usual; “there’s more of us gets into mischief by readin’ and writin’, and why not by spellin’, than by the want of ’em. But you don’t seem to see the pull we’ll get out of it. There’s Woodbie, and the Duke, and all the Newmarket party are very sweet on the Scud; and if Mo. goes to work judiciously, we’ll get all we want out of ’em at nine or ten to one; only we mustn’t wait till the Two Thousand, or there’ll be all the loose fish nibbling at the same worm.”

“It don’t much signify, Major, what you’ve done about the horse. Perhaps you’re right, perhaps you’re wrong. The horse is mine.”

Major Mulligan’s face lengthened with a stare of sublime astonishment.

“Yours! what! Flying Scud? What! the old gentleman given him to you?”

“The old blackguard, who’s hardly given me a shilling since I came home from India, is dead, Mulligan; and the property’s mine, and the Scud with it. He promised me once, and he hasn’t another near relation in the world.”

“Then so much the worse,” said the Major, “for the nomination’s void, and he won’t start.”

“Never mind, we must put that right some other way. What do you think of Nobbly Hall, and about five thousand a year? We’ll see if we can’t make the Scud useful for some other purposes yet. The Derby’s not the only race to be lost. Doesn’t your mouth water at the handicaps in prospect? I think we shall be able to do the Admiral yet. I owe him a turn or two, and so do you.”

Most dishonest men are in his debt.

“Goodge, I congratulate you.” Here he shook hands with the *empressement* of an Irishman. “I suppose the old man’s death will be known before long, and the sooner we can stop old Mo. from talking the better. I’ll be off now. The death was sudden.”

“Vcry. He was taken with paralysis about a week ago, and died yesterday morning at daybreak. The letter desires me to go down directly, and, as the next of kin, I shall take possession, as far as may be. I shall go down and see the place to-morrow, and if you and Chouser like to go down too, why, so much the better.”

Mo. Davis had fully succeeded in effecting his commission, and as plenty of friends came to the rescue of the Criterion winner, there was no great alteration in his price for the present. Then it oozed out that some-

thing was wrong. The *Glowworm* sounded the note of alarm. Pholus said the owner was dead. Hotspur, of the *Telegraph*, declared it was the trainer only, and that the animal's position was unaffected by it. *Bell* said both were dead, and Argus, of the *Post*, had it, "From the most reliable authority," that nothing was dead but the Scud himself, "who was as good as boiled." The *Sporting Gazette* said it was impossible that the Scud could have broken down; he was as firm on his pins as an oak table surrounded by legs. The Admiral was besieged with letters and queries. "Where did the bets go? what became of the nomination? could a man give a nomination away without his horse, or his horse without the nomination? what became of the double event if he could run for the Two Thousand and not for the Derby, or the reverse?" with many other knotty points, all hypothetically based upon nothing: to which the Admiral (there is but one) replied with his usual talent and courtesy; and from which we began to doubt whether the derivation of the latter word might be "court" instead of "cour." The public, as usual, *sapiens et rex*, if not *potus et ertex*, said that the whole British Turf, King, Lords, and Commons, were a d--d set of swindlers together, which showed that they knew nothing about the business. In fact the world was

utterly in the dark for the present about Flying Scud, excepting that dead or alive he still stood at about ten to one.

CHAPTER IV.

A SPORTING LAWYER AND HIS CLIENTS.

IN a small country town, a short distance from Noble Hall, and half a mile from the railway station, which we call Middlethorpe, there was a large and imposing-looking white house. It had several windows in front, and looked altogether honest and open to inspection, such as a lawyer's house ought to look. On one side of the hall were the apartments in which Mrs. Quail received the wives of the doctor, the curate, the principal farmers, and the head linen-draper, who was also the banker. On the other were the business-like looking offices of Quail himself; a man well to do and of good report, better even than lawyers in general; and, more extraordinary still, in some things not undeserving of the confidence reposed in him. The only impudent

thing about the house was its very green door, with its very bright brass knocker, which separated Quail the Social from Quail the *Affairé*, or Official.

In that little office, three days after the death of old John Sykes, sat Mr. Quail the lawyer, his confidential man of business, who had invested his money, engaged his tenants, eaten his dinners, admired his horses, and made his will. It was a dusty-looking place, for no servant was allowed to enter it excepting under the guidance of Quail himself, who knew the value of his documents and the intelligence and discretion of his housemaid too well to trust them together. He was a sharp-featured person, with clear grey eyes, and his hair was beginning to match them.

"Come in," said he, hastily recovering himself from a reverie into which he was relapsing on John Syke's affairs, which at that moment were uppermost in his mind. "Come in," and the office-boy announced Mr. Davis. "Tell him to sit down in the outer office, as I am very much engaged for a minute or two."

Mr. Quail only wanted time for a conjecture, and the consideration of how to act in certain conditions; so he soon rang his bell, and the gentleman of whom we have heard as Mo. Davis, which, by the way, was an affectionate abbreviation for Moses, stood before him.

Mr. Quail saluted him cordially, and motioned him to a seat.

“And what brings you here, Mr. Davis?” Mr. Quail never wasted time, excepting when he felt that he was better paid for wasting than using it. He spent plenty with John Sykes, who dearly loved a gossip, but had no idea how much it cost him. “You’re here on business, I suppose?”

The retired tobacconist of the Quadrant, who found money-lending and racing more profitable than even his trade in regalias of brandy and soda, looked up at the lawyer almost coaxingly, and said—

“Vell, yes. When will the vill be read?”

“On Saturday, my good friend; but you didn’t come here to learn that.”

“How do you know that?” said the other.

“Because you could have found it out with much less trouble; as soon as the old man’s buried, of course.”

“Ah! you lawyers, you know everything. Vell, I didn’t come here for that.” Here Moses assumed a serious face, and put his question somewhat mysteriously. “Is it all right with the Captain? ’cos I don’t want to be put in the ’ole.”

“Put in the hole! What should you be put in the hole for? You’re not dead.”

Not a muscle of Lawyer Quail's face moved.

"You know what I mean, lawyer; about that thousand pound that Goodge owes me—is it all right?"

"Listen to me, Mr. Davis. We took your instructions; you instructed us to sue Goodge." Here Mo. Davis drew a very long face, feeling that he had been guilty of a great imprudence.

"But you never let my name out. There vos a third party, you know—a party as had a hinterest in the bill."

"Well," continued Quail, without noticing the interruption, we obtained judgment, and were about to issue execution, when this sudden and unfortunate death of the old man happened. At the moment it wouldn't be decent to proceed."

"Proceed! no, I should think not. Stop it by all means. He's my very good friend, is Goodge. Poor boy! I wouldn't hurt a hair of his head. Oh, he'll pay; he's honest—when he's got the money. Issue execution! Vy, Lawyer Quail, vot a vampire you are to turn round on him in that vay, just ven he's got such a lot o' tin."

"As you please—as you please; only if you don't turn round on 'em when they've got the tin, it's not much use turning round at all"

“It’s a fine estate, Quail, and all in a ring fence,” said the Jew, brushing off a little snuff from his shirt-frill, which, with his thickly-folded white neckcloth, gave him a most respectable appearance.

“What estate do you mean?” inquired the lawyer, looking as if he had lost the thread of the conversation.

“Why what estate should I mean? The Nobbley Hall estate, to be sure.”

“’Deed it is. Four thousand a-year, and good tenants; paying tenants, you know. There isn’t a bad man among ’em.”

“Vot a unproductive neighbourhood to live in,” said Mo. Davis, giving his broad-rimmed hat a turn with his broad-skirted blue coat. “Never gets in debt, I suppose.”

“Only to lay it out on the land, or do a bit o’ draining.”

“Oh, that’s not much in my line; but they might want a thousand or two, and if the per centage is——, you know——.” Here he winked.

“Yes; they’re pretty liberal—high farming pays—five or six per cent. we can get out of them.”

Here Mo. Davis sighed deeply, once more polished his hat, and shaking hands with Lawyer Quail, turned to

wards the door, muttering to himself, "That's lucky : sue a gent vat has just come into his four thousand a-year. No, no ; that would never do. I'll lend him some more."

Having quitted the lawyer's house, the old money lender took his way along some meadows towards the Hall, which, by the short road, was about two miles distant from Middlethorpe. As he wandered along, he pondered many things, and among others, the fortunate event of his visit to Mr. Quail.

He had no doubt that he would now be paid by Captain Goodge, any money that was due to him, and as that gentleman's erratic course of life was sure to lead him into fresh disasters, he calculated—not vaguely—on having him again as a debtor, with a handsome security to back him. He, therefore, proceeded on his walk with a sort of personal interest in the property, and commenced, in his own mind, taking stock of it.

As he approached Nobbley Hall, the water meadows had been carefully drained, and divided by high timber fences, over which Mo. Davis could with difficulty see more than the occasional head of a young thoroughbred one, or a dam grazing in her paddock, with a foal of six weeks or two months old, at her feet. He saw that these were, however, beautifully arranged ; that each

separate paddock had a large, comfortable box, with straw-yard attached to it, for the benefit of the young stock ; and as the old Jew's love of horseflesh and knowledge of it extended no further than its capacity as an instrument of plunder, he knew as much of the value of the contents of those fields, as if he had closely examined them all.

The party which had arrived the day before at the old Hall require a short description. They had—with the exception of Mo. Davis—been accommodated at the Hall, not without much surprise on the part of the old house-keeper, the servants, and Nat Gosling, whose respect for their late master emboldened them to remonstrate. It was unavailing, however, for they were there as guests of the new squire, who only wanted the formal recognition of his claims after the funeral of the late John Sykes, to commence a new reign. He had found a room at Nat Gosling's for one of his confederates ; the major and Mr. Chouser he had taken into the house with him.

There is always on the turf a class of persons who are unique in one respect—a community of interests brings them together. However heterogencous the elements, one powerful leaven leavens the whole lump. But beyond that, there are quantities of men on the English

turf who have simply escaped kicking, because they have not been detected in gross fraud by those who are capable of performing the operation, or who dislike the notoriety of horse-whipping even a swindler. These men practice their operations with impunity. They are not the intimate associates of noblemen, of honest men, or good sportsmen; but they are obliged to be tolerated, because it is difficult in a mass of circumstantial evidence against them, to establish a positive delinquency. They have always sailed very near the wind without coming to grief, and the consequence is toleration.

As a boy, Captain Grindley Goodge was handsome, idle, and dissipated; but he had certain qualities which rendered him acceptable to men of better position than himself. His uncle educated him, and his undoubted object was to make him his heir. As he grew up, he displayed especially the vices most distasteful to John Sykes: extravagance and dishonesty. He was placed in a regiment ordered for foreign service, to wean him from his haunts and companions. He returned with a slur upon his name, on some gambling transaction, and sold out. It was a slur which could not be acted upon openly; and he still enjoyed the protection of a Club and the questionable countenance of fast men upon town. His uncle still made him an allowance, but declined to

receive more than a formal visit from him. Half his talents in the concealment of vice and rascality would have gained the man an honest livelihood. He preferred tortuous paths to straight ones; and was in half the robberies of the day; but it would scarcely have been safe to say so to his face.

His friend Chouser was a fool as well as a knave, which the other was not. He, too, had failed in gaining an honest livelihood as a lawyer's clerk; and finding the Turf a short and easy road to what he called Society, he adopted it in its fullest extent. To have booked a bet with a marquis was only exceeded in enjoyment by the pleasure of cheating him out of his money. He had supplied the necessities of Goodge from the pockets of an unfortunate mother and sister, and was now living in a piebald sort of a manner as his henchman, half pigeon and half crow.

Major Mulligan was essentially different from either. He was a man of good family and position in a country where, to have worked for his bread, would have brought disgrace upon Castle Mulligan and all that belonged to it. He started in life upon five hundred pounds and an easy assurance, which had increased with his knowledge of billiards and the way to conceal his game. At all games of cards he was an

adept—more than an adept. He was far the cleverest of the confederates, and was possessed of a certain ease and polish in general society which not even his *roué* life had been able to abolish, or even much to deteriorate. He was the most accomplished scoundrel of the three, and brought to the general fund, besides his talents and *hardiesses*, a most powerful auxiliary.

It seems that he had some heart, which could be acted upon by certain impulses, a thing to be said for neither Goodge, Chouser, nor the Jew. Major Mulligan, who had floated on the tide of society, by-the-bye, since the day that he started life on his own account, had once had a sister. She married a poor, but honourable man, who had been simply ruined by Mulligan, by backing his bills, and who died within a very ace of beggary. He took some credit to himself for having clothed and fed her for three years, with her only child, a daughter, and for having then followed her to the grave. Strict analysis of the Major's character, makes us think that there was some alloy in this virtue. A sister in a workhouse was not at all suited to his notions of the dignity of one of the Mulligans of Castle Mulligan; and, as his successes had been beyond his expectations, I might almost say his deserts, he extended his benevolence to the orphan girl. When, at the age of eighteen, she returned to the

Major's handsome apartments in the neighbourhood of Langham-place, he had cause to congratulate himself upon the acquisition of a companion, the handsomest, and one of the most accomplished girls in London. From that day, his dinners, his card parties, his little suppers, were more *recherché* than ever; and the line that was held out to them in so agreeable an addition, brought troops of men of every class to his table. A very beautiful face, which smiles over the transaction, robs the pain of distributing a hundred or two at *écarté* or billiards of half of its sting, especially when it insures the pleasure of revenge.

The *sobriquet* of these four men was not legion, but quadruped, and the etymology of the word, if we substitute "legs" for "feet," makes its application more witty than complimentary.

CHAPTER V

MASTER AND MAN.

CAPTAIN GRINDLEY GOODGE walked up and down the morning room, which he perfumed with one of the very best Colerados that Mr. Goode, of the Poultry, could supply. He was one of those persons who might have boasted, like old Lord Spatchcock, Woodbie's uncle, on his death-bed, that he had never denied himself anything, excepting, he might have added, the luxury of an honourable action. He was exceedingly cheerful; and as he surveyed the ample hall, the substantial dining and breakfast rooms, with their old-fashioned but massive wainscoting and furniture, and looked through the mullioned windows on the fair prospect beyond, he thought of the remains of his uncle, old John Sykes, which were lying in a distant part of the house, only as an incumbrance which would be removed to-morrow. In the park he caught sight of something which would have chased away any feeling of respectable regret for the old man. Three or four yearlings were being led about by as many boys, while in the centre of them

stood the man with whom the reader has been already made acquainted as Tom Meredith, the tenant farmer and trainer, and the late owner's right-hand man. He walked towards the party.

"Well, Mr. Meredith, I hope the young ones are going on to your satisfaction."

"Perfectly so, Captain Goodge," said the trainer, not touching but raising his hat, with perfect politeness and self-possession. "We have a nice lot. That third colt is in the Derby of '6—, and as the Newminster and Arrow blood seems to nick——"

"If it's not an impertinent question, might I ask how long you have been a tenant of my late uncle's? As you've had the best farm on the estate you ought to have driven a prosperous business."

"Tolerable. The fact is, Captain Goodge, that your uncle treated me with great kindness. The farm was let to me upon an average of two pounds an acre, though it's worth more in the market; for part of it is accommodation land, and as to the buildings, why I was never pressed about them, for they were built at my expense."

"Then you're a fortunate man, Mr. Meredith. I'm sorry to say that the rents must be raised after the next half-year, as I'm not so able to afford reductions as my

uncle might have been ; and as to the paddocks, I intended to take those into my own hands."

And although the Captain had said a hard thing, he looked evilly, as if it had been done designedly.

"The paddocks," replied the other. "I shall be prepared to pay a full rental for the land, Sir, though your uncle has promised me a lease over and over again, of the whole. But the paddocks. I hardly see how I'm to get bread without them ; for the little I ever had has been laid out on them."

"Well, Mr. Meredith, I'm a poor man, or shall be for some time ; and I must have the paddocks for my own use."

"You'll want a trainer."

"I should like a private one. I know the rascality of the world."

Indeed, he did ; report said so, and Tom Meredith was of report's opinion.

"I should be happy to give up all other masters, if you desired it ; and as I know the horses——"

"Unfortunately, I have engaged a trainer."

"You have been quick about it, Sir."

It was impossible to conceal from himself, or from the Captain, that he detected the falsehood.

“But now we’ve settled that business, just let me see the horses.”

And they proceeded to inspect the stock which was on the premises.

“And now for the Criterion colt, Flying Scud ; we’ll look at him.”

Tom Meredith looked up sharply, and hesitated ; but, apparently making up his mind, said, “Then we must go to the other stable. It’s a little way from the house—near my own cottage.”

The Captain prepared to accompany him.

“And what do you think of him ? ”

“I think very well of him.” For Tom would have declined answering altogether (which a trainer or owner ought to do) rather than have told a lie. “I think very highly of him indeed.”

“It’s a pity he won’t go for the Derby,” said the Captain, maliciously.

Tom stared at him and repeated the words slowly, “But he will go for the Derby.”

“I should like to lay a thousand to ten about it.”

“I shouldn’t like to rob you, or I should say ‘done,’” replied Tom.

“The nomination’s void. Besides, you know he was

beat in his trial ; though I suppose you'd have persuaded me to back him."

Tom Meredith turned suddenly round, and confronted Captain Grindley Goodge.

The two men were worth looking at as they stood facing one another—the gentleman and the trainer. On the one side, the pretender to fashion, the amateur sportsman, gloved, paletotcd, chausse from Paris, and clothed with sedulous care ; on the other, the true lover of a horse, the healthy, hardworking farmer, clothed in fustian, and apparently indifferent to all ornament save personal cleanliness. Both were good-looking. The one neatly formed, with a lithe, active-looking body, and dark, handsome features, with a cold, cautious look, and closely compressed lips, which opened only to sneer or to show his teeth, of a sharp fox-like shape and dazzling whiteness ; the other, a fine, handsome, powerful young man, of great frame, set off by no advantages, with fair hair, and a clear, wholesome complexion, clean shorn, and of a most honest and open countenance. Captain Grindley Goodge, in spite of his good looks and good clothes, might have been "nobody ;" Tom Meredith, in spite of his bad ones, could not help looking like "somebody."

"First let me set you right," said Tom. deliberately.

“The nomination is not void, for the colt is mine until after the Derby. I’d a fancy for the strain, for the granddam belonged to my uncle, whose ancestors lived here for something like four centuries; and your uncle gave me the nomination while the mare was in foal, and paid for it in my name. He was generous enough too, to promise the keep for him, and in the event of his winning the Derby, he was to have half the stakes. I shall think it my duty to pay that to his residuary legatee.”

Here the captain condescended to laugh, and added, carelessly enough—

“I presume you have all this in black and white.”

“Your uncle’s word, Sir, was as good as his bond and so is mine. If not, the nomination speaks for itself.”

“As his trainer——” recommenced Captain Hodge.

“Flying Scud will be trained and run by me until after the Derby. You will then do as you please by the horse. I see, Captain Goodge, you’ve been following your betters in attempting to get information by a means which would have subjected you to a notice of dismissal from Newmarket. Take my advice: back the horse if you think him good enough. He’ll have an honest man on him and about him; and don’t you go so far north on a touting

errand again, or you may chance to get bitten. Now, if you'd like to see the horse, I'll show him to you."

Captain Grindley Goodge, having ascertained beyond all doubt that the trial as detailed to him, had taken place, had sent out an extra commission to lay ten thousand to one thousand against him. Had he believed one word of Tom Meredith's caution he might have felt less comfortable than he did.

When they reached the stables which adjoined the trainer's cottage, it was found that the Major, Mr. Mo. Davis, and Mr. Chouser had sauntered up to find the Captain, and that they were now in vain endeavouring to get something out of old Nat Gosling. Nat knew nothing, and would know nothing; he believed everything to be fair in love and horse-racing; and though he regarded a direct falsehood as rather belonging to the southern stables, he prided himself greatly on the superior cunning of Yorkshire and the north.

"The Scud," as he was familiarly called in Middlethorpe and in the ring, whenever his name was mentioned there, was a beautiful dark chesnut, with one white hind leg. He was the Bird-on-the-Wing out of Cloud; and his granddam by Phantom, the property of Colonel Meredith, of Nobbley Hall, had never been beat but once. Having won the Criterion, at the Houghton

Meeting, in October, he had been kept for the Two Thousand and Derby. He was long and low, with a handsome head and neck, and full eye, which showed great temper; his shoulders were beautiful and his girth deep, calculated for coming down or going up the hills of the Surrey Downs; his quarters were a little coarse, as he was ragged-hipped, but he had plenty of width and powerful thighs and hocks. Such was Flying Scud, when he greeted the eyes of the confederates on the morning in question.

“Oh, he’s a beauty, s’elp me!” said Mo. Davis, who thought this was a perfectly safe remark.

“Aren’t his hocks rather large?” inquired Mr. Chouser, who knew as much about horses as most betting men.

Major Mulligan said nothing; but believing his chance for the Derby to be void, and the bets off, secretly congratulated himself on having so formidable a looking candidate for the Blue Riband out of the way.

“He’s eighteen pounds better than when he won the Criterion,” said the Major to himself, as he turned to leave the box with his companions.

At that moment a girl of considerable beauty of the blue-eyed and golden-haired type, so amenable to the vicious propensities of a Lucrezia Borgia or a Madame

Brinvilliers, and who appear to flourish wherever any poisoning or crime on a grand scale is to be committed, rode into the yard. She had a round, compact little figure, and looked, with perfect self-possession and some surprise at the assembled guests of John Sykes' next of kin. She seemed, however, quite equal to the occasion, and handled her good-looking horse as he pawed, impatiently, to get to his stable-door. The Major took off his hat, Chouser stood with the impudence which is always at the command of an ex-professional lawyer's clerk, and the Jew was wondering, in his own mind, how long such a thing was likely to last in a farmer's family, without an application for an advance and a handsome percentage.

"That's a good-looking hack," said Captain Grindley Goodge; "is that one of my late uncle's, Mr. Meredith?"

"I've always ridden him, but as he belongs to me only by the kindness of my late landlord, I presume I must give him up. However, I'm too heavy for him, and as he's rather fresh, I got Miss Rideout to exercise him for me. She has ridden him chiefly for the last three months. She'll be sorry to part with her favourite."

"Miss Rideout — what, Kate?" replied Captain

Goodge, hastening at once towards her, and almost anticipating Tom in assisting Kate to dismount. Is it possible! but it's seven years since we've seen each other, Kate, and in you it has made a difference. You will scarcely remember your old playmate, either. I've been to India and half over the world since then. It never occurred to me to ask old Nat Gosling or Mr. Meredith after you; I should have thought you were married long ago—as you ought to have been.”

And Kate Rideout blushed and laughed, not altogether ungratified with the praise of a good-looking soldier, who was likely to be the landlord and master of her grandfather and lover. For Tom Meredith and Kate Rideout, though not absolutely engaged to one another, were likely to be so when certain conditions were fulfilled. Captain Grindley Goodge seemed mightily taken with the pleasant reminiscences of his childhood; and while Tom Meredith and Nat Gosling showed his friends over the rest of the stabling, holding forth first on the merits of a filly foal, or a brood mare, then of a Burleigh or Fawsley short-horn, or even of a Fisher Hobbs, or Felix Hall boar, he disappeared with Kate from the scene altogether. They were found in the old man's cottage some half-hour afterwards, still reviving old recollections and earlier years, when the Captain had nothing above a white lie,

as old Nat observed, to answer for, and Kate was always begging him off from John Sykes, who even then used to express his suspicions of Grindley's futurity.

A word about Kate Rideout. Nobody, except old Nat Gosling, knew much of her history. She had been an inmate of his cottage ever since she had been a baby, having appeared there somewhat mysteriously some twenty years ago. From that day Nat's cottage assumed a better appearance. A respectable woman was engaged to look after the child; in process of time she was much at the hall, and was taken away to a boarding-school of tolerable repute, and considerably above the ordinary mark of a mere village education. And Kate not only became a scholar, so as to keep certain mysterious books connected with Nat Gosling's dealings with the squire, but played and sang in her way prettily enough, understood something of French, and grew up a village belle. She was the life and soul of the place, and everybody loved her. When Grindley Goodge was at his uncle's for the holidays Kate was his playmate, and people did say that the old man would willingly have seen them grow up together, and become joint proprietors of his property; but when the debts and dishonesty of the young man came home to John Sykes, and his black reputation preceded him wherever he went,

he took care that they should not see too much of one another by his good will. She was a good girl, an honest, affectionate girl, and fit to be any man's wife; and when Tom Meredith hinted to his landlord his own hopes and wishes, John Sykes gave him his hand and his promise that he should not want a lease of his farm, or a friend at his baek to accomplish the main purpose of his life. Death, not sudden but unlooked for, prevented the fulfilment of these promises, and the heir presumptive of Nobbley Hall had shown no great inclination to carry them out.



CHAPTER VI.

A SLIGHT MISTAKE.

“WHY, master, what's the matter?” said old Nat, an hour or two afterwards, walking into Tom Meredith's neat little parlour; “you seem down i' th' mouth.”

“So will you be, old man, when I tell you all. The rent of the farm is to be doubled.”

“And you’ll pay it, I go bail, Master Meredith. It’s worth it.”

“And the paddocks and training business are to be taken away.”

“Whew,” whistled the old man. “That’s bad. Who told you that?”

“Captain Goodge himself. You know I was to have had a lease of the property this year : and I looked for it, Nat Gosling, not for myself—for I can’t starve while there’s honest work to be done—but for Kate. You know how she’s been brought up, and though I believe in her love for me, I can’t ask her to share a labourer’s cottage, when she’s been taught to expect the comforts of an independent home. It’s beginning life again, Nat, and though we’re still young, we’re too old for that.” And Tom Meredith looked doleful enough.

“I can’t believe it,” replied the old stableman, taking three or four sententious whiffs at his pipe, by way of consolation. “He was always a bad boy—a lying young rascal as ever lived, but he was no that malicious to rob a man of his bread. He don’t like none o’ your name, mayhap, for it partly puts his pipe out ; but he was fond of Kate, and when he knows the truth, he won’t be hard on you. I dare say we’ve put him in the hole, too, about t’ Scud, for he thought he was his own, and these d—d

scoundrels can make more by losing, than by winnin', you see. Howsomdever, cheer up, Master Mercedith. Who knows what the old gentleman has done for us?"

"We shall hear the day after to-morrow, I suppose," rejoined Tom. "In the meantime, keep up Kate's spirits, and don't say a word to her about the business. I'll be down when the horses are done up, and I've got rid of the boys for the night."

Lawyer Quail had had liberal orders given to invite all the tenants to attend, after placing their old landlord in the grave. The luncheon was to be laid in the old hall at three o'clock, when the will was to be read, and not only were the people to hear the last of their old master, but to be prepared for the reception of the new. Captain Grindley Goodge had not condescended to communicate personally with Mr. Quail on the subject, but his friends had been requested to transmit some directions to him on the subject of the property, and had most officiously sounded this flourish of trumpets in the saturnine lawyer's ears.

"Raise all the rents," said the iron-grey badger to himself. "Raise the devil! If Grindley Goodge wants to hear something to his advantage, he'd better not apply to Lawyer Quail."

But he listened attentively, notwithstanding. The

arrangements for the funeral were in the lawyer's hands. There are men who have a good, strong, wholesome belief, through good report and evil report, that everything that is, is for the best. All hail to such men! Theirs is a courage to be proud of. Men whom no doubts nor certainties of ill ever turn aside from the right path; who have patience to bear and forbear; and who are rewarded in the end.

Now Tom Meredith was a good man; no man better, as far as his light went. He was honest, affectionate, industrious, charitable; but he was not patient, and didn't think that stunning blows and heavy disappointments were decided benefits. So it came to pass, that when his affliction found him out (and it did so after a time), his valour resembled rather that of the wrathful Achilles, than of the patient Job.

Now let us go back to Kate. Kate was by nature and education a thorough woman. She was a sort of pet of the village, and I never saw a girl in my life, with Kate Rideout's particular nose, who was not flattered—rather unduly—by a little admiration. She had been accustomed to hunt, and as she was always well mounted, and rode with as little judgment as women usually do; and as everybody knew her for neither more nor less than a granddaughter of Nat Gosling, everybody was civil and

kind to the girl. Even as she got older, the young squires, and the fast men who came from the barracks, thought no ill of Kate, and if she couldn't have a companion or two to ride with her, or see her on her way towards home, she was quite able to take care of herself.

But beyond Kate's natural love of power and admiration, she had a great anxiety to make Tom Meredith feel that she had some strength of her own to bring to the common stock, if it ever should be their luck to come together. And certainly the one I am about to divulge was a great opportunity; she was going to make Tom's fortune, whatever might come of it, and she should reserve to herself the pleasure and the time of telling him so.

To understand the dramatic situation of our tale, it will be necessary to understand the situation of the three houses in question. If straight lines had been drawn from the Hall to Nat Gosling's cottage, and from the cottage to Meredith's farm-house, and again from the farm-house to the Hall, they would have formed the three sides of a triangle, of which Gosling's cottage would have been the obtuse angle. Near Nat's house, and on one side of it, was a thick plantation, with a not very much frequented path and stile, running through it; the path leading directly to the back door of Nat's house, and used only by the servants or stable boys in passing from one

house to the other. In coming from Meredith's house to Nat's, the footpath ran close outside of this spinney, coming into the same entrance, and usually followed by travellers between the two.

Day was waning, but it had been prolonged by a lovely and bright sunset, and the moon was just rising in the opposite quarter, when Tom Meredith started for the old stableman's cottage. He was endeavouring to look his blighted prospects honestly in the face, through the medium of a consolatory pipe, as he walked quickly on. In every phase of the vision he saw one figure, which, while it added poignancy to his regrets, gave fresh courage to his determination. He had just made up his mind to a bold fight with fortune, when he reached the corner of the plantation, within a few yards of the stile. His steps were arrested by the sound of voices which he knew. Yes, there could be no doubt about it, they were those of Captain Grindley Goodge and Kate Rideout.

Now Tom was not an eavesdropper, and his first impulse was to have interrupted the conversation by breaking in abruptly upon it. Second thoughts—which are not always best—determined him upon halting a moment to make sure.

“Then you promise, Captain Goodge?” said Kate, in her most coaxing tone, and one which Tom knew well.

“Why should you doubt me, Kate? You know I’d do anything to please you.”

“Ah, you gentlemen, you often say one thing, and mean another.”

“Gentlemen, indeed. Where did you form your notion of gentlemen, I should like to know? Haven’t I always been kind to you, Kate?”

And it is not to be wondered at that these softly-spoken queries should have caused a strong convulsion in Tom Meredith’s feelings; so with trembling limbs and bated breath, he waited for his darling’s answer.

“Yes, you have; and when others thought ill of you, and spoke against you, I always took your part,” replied Kate.

“And I deserved it of *you*, at all events. So we shall meet again soon. Come, Kate, you must promise something on your part too, you know.”

“Oh, Captain Goodge, you know we shall meet again. Isn’t my grandfather one of your servants, and aren’t you going to live at the Hall? of course we shall meet again. There now, you have promised.”

The tone in which these words were spoken was not such as to reassure a doubting lover, and Tom Meredith got still less of consolation out of what remained behind.

“And now I must go. I wouldn’t have my grand-

father know I was here for worlds," and she appeared to the jealous ears of Tom to be making an ill-sustained effort to get away. He moved a step forward, wrought to a pitch of desperation, when the flutter of her light dress appeared at the opening by the stile ; and as she turned for one moment before coming out into the open path, she said, "And above all, promise me too that Mr. Meredith shall never hear of this." Saying which, she ran—without looking round—straight through the wicket that led to Nat Gosling's cottage, and disappeared.

And that was the abrupt termination to the trainer's happiness for many a day. He leant for a second or two against the stile, while the perspiration stood in drops upon his brow. He removed his hat to catch the cool freshness of the coming night, and then hastened down the narrow path with an unsettled purpose, but bent upon confronting Goodge, who, he believed, had just commenced those overtures which would be the ruin of Kate Rideout, as they were of his own happiness.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN THRASHES THE MASTER.

THE Captain, in the meantime, sauntered slowly back, puffing a cigar, and pluming himself upon the success of a villainy, which was as sudden as it was ruthless.

“Yes,” thought he, “he may keep his farm and his paddocks, but Kate Rideout must pay for the diminished rental and my inconvenience. Who’d have thought the little minx would have grown up such a beauty? Julia Latimer, indeed! I suppose I shan’t be such a bad catch now, though as long as Woodie holds on, old Castle Mulligan wouldn’t look at a commoner at any price. Why, Kate’s worth a dozen of her, and there’s no necessity to be tied for life to some piece of buckram of country propriety in petticoats, which must be the alternative of the proprietor of Nobbly Hall.”

I don’t say his thoughts took this form of words, though they might have done for want of better; and they certainly would have gone on in the same strain but that a heavy hand on his shoulder put an unexpected stop to them.

“Hold, Captain Goodge,” and at the weight and the sound, that gentleman turned suddenly round. They were just outside of the spinney, on the side nearest to the Hall. The Captain’s reply was at least natural.

“What the d—l, Sir, do you mean by this impertinence?”

“Captain Grindley Goodge,” said the other—his face livid with passion, and his words coming rapidly, but not very distinctly, while his voice trembled, and every vein in his body was swelling with the suppression of his emotions—“I know the difference between our positions here, Sir, that of landlord and tenant; master and servant, if you will, but I insist upon knowing by what right you—you——” he would have said “come here poaching upon my manor,” at least, that’s what he meant, but the phrase did not at all convey the strength or seriousness of his meaning. “You come here to insult a defenceless woman, whose position ought to be her greatest claim to your protection. I insist upon knowing your intentions towards the young lady with whom you have just parted.”

It must be admitted that Tom had taken up a rather untenable position, and the Captain’s temper, which was of quite a different kind, was not likely to forego any advantage he might derive from that fact.

“My intentions towards my servant’s granddaughter? I don’t know what you mean, Mr. Meredith.”

And here Captain Goodge laughed, as if it were a joke, and showed his sharp, cruel-looking white teeth.

“You know well enough what I mean, Sir, and you cannot well avoid giving me an answer to my question.” Tom Meredith felt that his own interference was an absurdity, after all, and it did something towards abating his violence, though not his perseverance.

“If you’re a gentleman, Captain Goodge, and a man of honour, you will tell me what was your subject of conversation with Kate Rideout.”

“You seem to forget that I might be betraying the lady’s secrets, as well as my own.”

And here he laughed in the same irritating manner.

“I believe that young lady has no secrets from me,” said Tom.

“Then she’s very little like the rest of her sex, of which I’ve had considerable experience. You forget yourself strangely, Sir. I’ve known the young woman you are pleased to call a lady, since she was almost a child, and I see no reason why she should not retain some pleasing recollections of former days. I do, I can tell you. Perhaps they are reciprocal.”

And again he laughed that mocking laugh, which said

so much more than even his language, equivocal as that may be regarded.

The fact is, that Tom had no right to interfere, excepting that right which the impulse of an honest man gave him; at all events, he had never announced any other right, and it tied his hands, if not his tongue, for the present.

“Captain Goodge,” said he, “if you mean aught but good by that girl, you are a villain. God knows whether my suspicions are just: if they are not, I beg your pardon; if they are, I’d make no more of tearing your craven heart out, than I would of cutting down a poisonous herb, or scotching a viper before it could do harm.”

“Mr. Meredith,” said the other, and nothing moved from his placid tone of speech, so closely did he cling to the conventional superiority by which he was surrounded, “if you are about to become the avenger of all the injured innocence of the neighbourhood, and the defender of rustic virtue in danger of temptation, you will have plenty to employ your time and your talents. As to Miss Rideout, she will neither thank you for your interference, nor need your protection. Stand out of my way, Sir! I wish to pass.”

But the last insinuations were scarcely to be withstood

by a man of Tom Meredith's temper, nor in his relationship to the girl in question.

Instead of standing out of the way, he placed himself in the middle of the path; already his hand was on the throat of his adversary, and a struggle—which seemed to have no definite object but the gratification of passion—was about to take place, when lights appeared at the windows of the Hall, and footsteps of servants or labourers belonging to the estate, reminded both how near they were to help or interference, whichever it might be.

It was pretty certain which way such a struggle must have terminated, for Grindley Goodge, active and well-built a man as he was, would have had no sort of chance in the gripe of such a fine, powerful fellow as Tom Meredith, whose pursuits alone gave him a physical superiority over half-a-dozen such victims to enervating indulgences as the Captain and his associates. It is only difficult to know, when Tom had knocked him down, what he was to do with the body afterwards. As to the pleasure of merely preventing his rival from going to the Hall, it was a very questionable one, and in another moment would possibly have presented itself to Tom's mind in that light. The Captain's malice, however, saved him all trouble of self-restraint, and showed

him far superior to the trainer in mental resources for injury.

“Unhand me, Sir, immediately. D—n ! don’t you see that the scandal will become the talk of the whole village ? You can’t make the girl’s character any better by such an assault as this. If you’ve no regard for yourself, have some for her.” Saying which, Captain Goodge passed rapidly on, leaving all his venom behind him, and Tom Meredith planted, not knowing which most to wonder at—the girl’s falseness, the Captain’s coolness, or his own honest stupidity.

And so Grindley Goodge walked off; and, as when some pertinacious cur, not, indeed, utterly deficient in pluck, but rather of the snarling and passively offensive kind than of the open and boldly hostile, having been collared and shaken by a braver and truer type of the English dog, takes a farewell snap at the honest victor, and escapes, so did the Captain, as he departed, leave the most accursed sting in the honest mind of Tom Meredith, caused him much to doubt the policy of his conduct, and shook his faith not only in the woman he loved, but in the virtue of his own honesty.

If Tom Meredith had gone straight to the cottage and sought an interview with Kate or her grandfather, he might have saved himself and her much trouble. In-

stead of doing so, he walked back slowly and despondingly to his own house, and his thoughts were less cheerful than he had ever known them in his life before. Tom was a brave man, but he was an affectionate and impulsive one—better at doing than bearing. It suited his physique and his manner of life; and when he summed up there was a nasty array of misery before him. His farm and occupation were to go, that was certain. It was hard to lose his money, his time, his livelihood, but that might all be reclaimed; and, if all went well with Flying Scud, he might be a comparatively rich man before the summer was over yet.

But Kate's treachery there was no getting over. They were as good as engaged, though he never had spoken the words that would have bound two honest people together for life. She was an idol Tom had worshipped in his way, and now she was fallen down and broken, and for whom?—Captain Grindley Goodge! and Tom laughed savagely as he thought of him. A mean-spirited gambler, of whom all men, even his associates, spoke ill, and his confederates said no good; a white-livered cur, who had not the moral courage to shield by a lie even the woman he wished to wrong, or had wronged. By a lie. For it seemed plain enough to the lover that his insinuations were but too true. How-

ever, come what might, there's an end of Tom's dream ; and as he entered his cheerless home, he vowed he'd follow his old master to the grave, and then pack up his traps, live-stock and all, and turn his back on the old place for ever.

And all this happened because an old fool like Nat Gosling could not hold his tongue.

The facts of the case are these. When Tom Meredith desired Nat Gosling to say nothing to Kate about his misfortunes, and Grindley Goodge's intention to turn him out of his farm, he did so with a design which the old man was scarcely able to appreciate. Tom thought that so sudden a disappointment would make a painful impression if communicated by any one but himself, and he, therefore, made up his mind to break gradually to Kate the disagreeable intelligence himself, as he should find opportunity. Of a participation in pleasure, or sorrow, perhaps that of sorrow is the most suggestive of strong affection ; and mutual consolation and patience more binding upon hearts than all the joys of life.

To say that Nat Gosling was by no means impressed with the same necessity for caution or consideration is nothing remarkable ; but the old man might at least have obeyed orders. He had, however, his own view of the case ; and as he walked off to his cottage, he only

thought of the possible loss of a good master to himself, for Tom stood in some such relation to him, and of a good trainer to his pet colt. Not only had Nat made up his mind that the Scud was to win the Derby, but that Tom Meredith and he were sure to share the glory and some of the money. It must not, therefore, surprise the reader that cursing had taken the place of caution by the time he had reached home.

“So, Kate,” said the old man, as soon as he saw her, “your friend, Captain Grindley Goodge, has given Master Meredith notice to quit the farm and give up the paddocks.”

“And who told you that?” said Kate, rather taken aback.

“Why, Master Meredith himself, to be sure.”

“Did he?”

It wanted an hour to sunset yet; and as the girl looked out of the window towards the Hall, a sudden resolution took possession of her. She hastily tied on her bonnet and left the house.

The reader knows her errand.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALWAYS A BAD ONE

THERE seems plenty of room for reflection on other things besides the uncertainty of life in such a meeting as that which took place at Nobbly Hall during the week of John Sykes' funeral. John, though he went by the name of old John Sykes, was not really an old man; somewhere between sixty and seventy, of an active habit of mind and body up to within a few days of his death. He was only ill a week, I think, altogether. His health had not been so good of late years; but as he, occasionally, took a ride to town and trotted home when he had had enough of it; as he still went round the paddocks every day, and sometimes saw a trial or a gallop under Tom Meredith's auspices, nobody thought much of his change of health. The fact was that he suffered somewhat in mind. He was a man of peculiar feelings, something akin to what a gentleman ought to be, and something beyond what some of them are. He was only John Sykes, and John Sykes was nobody; but he was proud of the name in his way; rather, I should say, of his own support of it.

From the earliest period of Grindley Goodge's life John Sykes had one fixed intention, and to it he not only adhered steadily, as was naturally supposed, but he made his sister, during her life, and the boy himself when older, a participator of it. He had determined upon leaving his property to his nephew, with the condition attached to it, that he should change his name to Sykes. Young Goodge had begun life at the Hall as a handsome, reckless boy, with no particular faults beyond those which seem to belong to remarkable health and spirits. He was noisy, idle, and somewhat overbearing, but none had detected symptoms of greater vice. Prosperity, or the expectation of it, acts differently upon different constitutions ; and certainly young Mr. Grindley Goodge, when he returned from Eton for the vacations at Nobbley Hall, had been spoilt either by these expectations, or by the peculiarity of the education he was receiving.

Whenever John Sykes had any social difficulty on hand, he was in the habit of seeking one of two counsellors ; sometimes both. Now, the proposed education of his intended heir was a domestic question of some importance ; and he, therefore, had summoned to his assistance at divers times Thomas Meredith and Lawyer Quail. John Sykes may be forgiven for having adopted the popular fallacy that a public school met all requirements, and curd all

evils. His friends, whatever prejudices existed elsewhere, were not quite of the same opinion.

"Tom," said the old man, "you were at Eton once, for a short time. What's your opinion of it for my nephew; I suppose it's the only thing to do for a fellow of that sort. Everybody goes there."

"Well, Sir, there are half-a-dozen different ways of training horses according to the tempers, constitutions, legs, and feet; and I should think boys are very like them."

That was Tom Meredith's opinion of the universal panacea; his own career having been cut short at that famous seminary by his uncle's misfortunes. Lawyer Quail entered more fully into the question, as became a subtile mind.

"Everybody says I must send Grindley to Eton, Quail."

"Why so?" says the lawyer, who knew that his Etonian clients were always borrowing his money.

"Because it will make a gentleman of him," said the uncle.

"I hope it may," said the acute lawyer. "My own opinion is that it will confirm whatever his previous propensities may be. If the boy wishes to be a gentleman and a scholar, he'll have every opportunity of becoming

either or both ; and, with your property you can afford luxuries. But if he has the propensities of a blackguard, there is no place in the world where they will be so easily confirmed. There is as good an opening for their display as for the abilities of a rogue in my own profession.”

But he went to Eton and India, notwithstanding.

To say that Grindley Goodge at sixteen or seventeen knew nothing, is scarcely true. He was an accomplished gambler in a small way ! understood cutty pipes, which he smoked at the village public, surrounded by an admiring crowd of village toadies ; knew the odds at hazard ; the winners of Oaks, Derby, and St. Leger for several years past, by which knowledge he increased his pocket-money by sundry half-crown bets with the unwary, but self-sufficient young Yorkshiremen, and made use of a vocabulary which would have been considered gross in the mouth of a Newmarket stable-boy, and for which he had been more than once kicked out of his uncle’s stables by Nat Gosling, whose sense of respectability, if not of religion, was shocked by his puerile blackguardisms and importations of blasphemy.

John Sykes knew only enough of this to make him very angry : the more heinous offences were supposed to be kept from his knowledge, and the neighbourhood was taught to regard the good-looking scapegrace—for his

worst enemies thought him nothing more—as the heir of Nobbley Hall.

His uncle, indeed—a man of great energy, and believing that success in life belonged especially to industry and honesty—was annoyed at his idleness, which he could not fail to perceive. He was far from dull, though ignorant of many subjects; and he astonished some rather acute gentlemen at his uncle's table, when about sixteen years of age, by reducing to paper for their information the odds on three certain horses against the field, and one of them especially, by offering to lay them. His debts had several times been paid, by those sort of instalments which satisfy the creditor only temporarily; so that when the boy left Eton, what with the lies he had already told to diminish their amount, and the rascalities of which he had been guilty to evade their payment, even when the money had been supplied, he was an accomplished swindler, and in the hands of the Jews.

This boy had been a bad investment for the old gentleman, who desired to hand down a name untarnished to his posterity.

Then he went into the army, and in due time he returned from India, having been allowed to sell out, only because some disgraceful scenes of unfair gambling could not be brought home so as to convict; though courts-martial

are not remarkable for scruples on that score. Since Grindley Goodge's return his visits had been at first frequent enough at Nobbley. As he became more and more involved in transactions and society reflecting no great credit on him, he was a less frequent visitor. During the last twelve months he had scarcely seen his uncle at all, and his death was a remarkable surprise to him, and, in his position, no unpleasant termination to their intercourse.

Who's to remember such a trifle as a debt of gratitude for education, food, money—gratifications of sense, and an allowance, which, if not very large, was at least regularly paid ?

There could be no doubt that with Grindley Goodge's tastes the last article in this budget was an absurdity. The allowance was sufficient for existenee, as he remarked, but not for life ; and as once a broken-down captain, a ruined gentleman, a spendthrift exquisite, before committing suicide, went on the road, so now the bankrupt of every degree, to recruit exhausted finances, or to supply deficiencies, before the consummation of all follies, goes upon the turf. Grindley Goodge had early taken to this way of life, for it presented features of great interest and advantage to him, independently of the mere means of living. Was he not to be the Squire of Nobbley some

day?—and was not his name a little tarnished and his antecedents somewhat queer?—and would he not want, under a new name, a new career, new friends, and higher aspirations?—and where was he so easily to get them as on Newmarket Heath or the Doncaster Moor?

He knew hundreds, not, perhaps, as bad as himself, but something like it, who were daily suborning touts, pulling horses, milking favourites, running false trials and swearing they were true ones, on the best terms with the Duke of A——, the Marquis of B——, and Lord C——, because the peer who wants to gamble must be content to do it in the company that suits *his* book. Who turns the cold shoulder on a man who can accommodate him with something above the current odds when they're done in thousands, if he is happy in the possession of a clean face and irreproachable boots?

So I do not mean to say that Grindley Goodge killed John Sykes, but he made an old man of him before his time.

When Kate ran home she met her grandfather waiting to receive her in his usual sitting-room. It was half parlour, half kitchen, and was used by old Nat to take his meals in; keeping a better room apart for Kate herself, when tea was over, where she could be alone, if she pleased, or where the old man and Tom Meredith, or any

other friend, could smoke a pipe and settle the mysterious pretensions of a Derby colt without interruption.

“Well, Kate,” said he, taking off his thick and dirty boots and drab gaiters, and putting on a pair of clean highlows, above which he exhibited legs that looked as if they belonged to a quondam light-weight, “and what did he say to you?”

“What do you think he was likely to say to me?” said the girl in reply, drawing herself up, and showing her bright, fresh colour and cheerful eyes by the light of the fire. “What could he say to a pretty girl like me, when I went all the way to the Hall to ask him?” and her tone of voice had an irresistible charm in it, which would have made it difficult to say “no” to any request.

“He wouldn’t a’ said much good, lass, I doubt—if he’s anything like what he used to be.”

“Wrong, again, grandpapa. To be sure, I had a little difficulty to get him to say ‘Yes’—but he did promise; and now Tom will be happy again, and he won’t know who made him so till I chose to tell him.” And Kate clapped her hands with a sort of childish delight. “It wouldn’t do to tell him to-night, I suppose.”

“He don’t always keep his promises; you’d better wait a bit. If he was so ready to promise, he may bolt before he gets round the course;—and then——”

“I don’t think the Captain’s half so bad as you think him.”

“I don’t think he’s half so good as you want to think him. He was always a bad ’un to train, Kate, and he’s not likely to take to straight running when anything’s to be got by cutting it.”

From which remark it is evident that Nat had no great opinion of his new master.

Then they sat down to tea ; and after tea Kato took to her work and old Nat to his pipe ; and they both of them listened for the knock at the door, or the opening of the latch, which they expected, but which did not come.



CHAPTER IX.

THE TRAINER AT HOME.

NEITHER of them said much about the absence of Master Meredith, as the old groom was accustomed to call him ; but in the midst of their conversation on indifferent subjects, their minds were certainly occupied with the trainer’s non-appearance. At first old Nat

thought he might have been detained later than usual, looking over his accounts—a business which Nat Gosling regarded as requiring much time and exercise of patience. Still he was not usually so late; and nothing but innate delicacy for Kate's feelings prevented an explosion on the part of the old man.

Kate held her peace and wondered. The disappointment was sore to her, however; for prudence was the very last of the virtues she possessed, and in spite of her grandfather's caution she certainly meant to have given Tom Meredith a hint of the good things in store for him.

“Why should he be made uncomfortable an hour longer than it was necessary. Captain Goodge had faithfully promised that he should have the lease of the farm and the paddocks; and though he had never said so, she knew very well that she would be asked to share them. It would be very hard to keep the secret from him, after all.”

But ten o'clock came, and old Nat went off to bed after his supper; and then she saw that her resolution would not be taxed that night. She almost cried, as she lay down at last, and accused him of cruelty—a fine moonlight night like this, too. What was the reason of it?

In the meantime, the object of her speculations was at home, filling his own mind with gloomy forebodings as to his future, and miserable at the supposed destruction of his hopes.

At one time he longed to start off and accuse her of her fickleness, to warn her of her folly, to learn how far she was guilty of deceiving him from herself, if she had honesty enough to tell him, and then to take leave of her for ever. He should be off in a day or two, and they'd soon forget him.

He had half made up his mind to this course, and was about taking his hat down, when a knock at the door came sharply and unexpectedly upon him, and he heard a man's voice asking for him in the passage. Tom opened the door, and Mr. Quail appeared, unburdening himself of his great coat.

"Come in, Mr. Quail," said he, for he had a very good opinion of the lawyer for one of his class; "I can guess your business. He hasn't let the grass grow."

"Yes, yes: well, it's not difficult to guess, for of course you know the funeral takes place to-morrow; and as I shall be pretty busy in the morning, I thought I'd run in this evening and smoke a cigar," which he had been doing ever since his ar-

rival. "And how do the young 'uns go on, Mr. Meredith? That's a very nice Derby colt of yours. He's a good deal improved since he won the Criterion."

Lawyer Quail was a bit of a judge.

"I think he is, considering the time of year. My opinion is that he'll improve more. I don't tell everybody so."

"A nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse, Mr. Meredith. I remember the granddam—he comes of a staying family."

"I'm glad to hear it. There are very few of them left."

"Yes, poor old man. John Sykes would have been glad to have seen the Two Thousand in his pocket, and then he'd have looked after your interest in the Derby. You've lost a good friend!"

"I have; and they're searee articles, as well as the stayers."

"Don't say that, Meredith; you're out of sorts, and I'm surprised at it to-night. You're to see the last of your old friend to-morrow. I came to tell you we start punctually at 11.30. The luncheon is at one, and we must read the will as soon after as may be. It's not a long one; but he's remembered them all."

Here Lawyer Quail gave a more prolonged puff than usual.

"I don't doubt it," said Tom, gloomily. "I shall be at the funeral, of course, but you'll excuse me if I don't come down to lunch."

"But you must come; you can't absent yourself without very curious remarks. There, I can't say anything, but it's your duty, Mr. Meredith. All the tenants are invited. It was the old gentleman's special request. You know he told you you'd be a legatee, and—and—I say," here Quail buttoned up his pocket, and slapped his thigh, as much as to say, it's time to hold my tongue; "but you must come."

"And I tell you that Captain Grindley Goodge——"

"D—— Captain Grindley Goodge! He's next of kin, that's true; and he's chief mourner, and so forth; and let him sit the top of the table, and be d——d to him. I suppose he's been at you about the farm, eh? He sent some of his infernal toadies and confederates over to me about it, but he didn't get much out of me. When he's taken possession under his uncle's will, he can do as he likes at Nobbly; but I know what's what, and they can't get on without me, nor I without you to-morrow, so you'll come down to lunch. And now give me a glass of your good ale, for I'm thirsty."

Then Tom essayed in vain to tell Mr. Quail about his meeting with Grindley Goodge, but seeing he could not do that without compromising Kate, he fell back upon the refusal of the lease. Upon which the lawyer held forth for another hour, swearing away at selfish landlords, careless tenants, bad laws, and sudden deaths, till eleven o'clock at night; by which time he had convinced Tom Meredith that it was a great duty to society to appear at the head of the tenants to-morrow, and he might "hear of something to his advantage." So Mr. Quail, lighting one more cigar, set out for a moonlight walk home, much relieved in his mind that he had gained his point.

If I were writing a three-volume novel (and I never could understand why that mystical number should have been so generally applied to light literature), there is here a fine opportunity for digression on various subjects connected with our interest in this world after we have gone to another.

On that certain morning appointed for his funeral, old John Sykes must have looked with some surprise, not to say disgust, upon the proceedings of the gentleman who was about thus hastily to leap into his seat. Instead of a house of mourning, except in the case of a faithful retainer or two, Nobbly Hall was becoming

more and more cheerful, as the screwing-down and carrying-out process, which had been going on for the last two or three hours, progressed.

“Let me congratulate you, Grindley,” said his friend Mr. Chouser, nearly severing his head from his body with affectionate warmth, as he took his seat at the breakfast table, whose cold baked meats alone would have made the late master’s scalp creep with trepidation. “At length the auspicious day has arrived when the Chinese proverb would tell you your spoke on the wheel of fortune was uppermost. Egad! the last of the late tenant is just gone down stairs, and Nobbley Hall is tangible.”

“Are you thinking about your seven hundred?” said the master. “You may congratulate yourself, Chouser, quite as much as me.”

“Nonsense,” laughed the other, with his mouth full of *paté de foie gras*, which had been supplied for the chief mourner by Fortnum and Mason. “I never doubted about that. There’ll be a clearance of timber, I suppose?”

“At the earliest opportunity. What’s been done about the Scud?”

“Nothing at all,” said the Major. “He’s scratched, of course, so I never looked. Rasper is first favourite

for the Guineas, I see; the Scud not mentioned,—so it's all right. Only one bet about the Derby—a thousand to ten against Mosquito. Anyhow, we'd have made a good thing of it if the old gentleman had outraged Providence by living till it was over. Mo.'s information among the touts is first-rate." And then commenced again the knocking and hammering so terrible to some ears, so innocuous to others.

"Hollo!" said the Captain, "what's the noise?"

"More screws wanted. Bedad," replied Major Mulligan, "it reminds me of that stable of Woodbie's. It must be more like a coffin than anything else."

"And your own like a charnel house, Major Mulligan, from the number of dead 'uns to be found on the premises," said the Jew moneylender, opening the door at the moment, soon after which they began to leave the room for their divers occupations.

CHAPTER X.

THE OPENING OF THE WILL.

“SORROW is dry.” It is rather characteristic of its emblems, whatever it may be of itself.

There is a persevering sort of drought which seems to attack your professional mourner, and renders a great consumption of strong ale and gin-and-water necessary to his existence—at least to his continuance in his normal state of being.

So it happened on the day that the late John Sykes was laid in his grave, that the mutes and undertakers were entertained in the servants' hall, while a jocund tenantry entertained each other below the salt, in the old-fashioned dining-room of Nobbly Hall. Above the salt sat the heir-at-law and his friends, who managed to find their way to the luncheon, with the clergyman of the parish, the doctor, Mr. Quail, the lawyer, and a distant relative or two of the late proprietor. The lower end of the table was occupied by the rest of the company, and though Nat Gosling was there, and the

humblest of the tenantry, in accordance with the last wishes and arrangements of the deceased and his lawyer ; one, at all events, was conspicuous by his absence, Tom Meredith had walked straight away from the dust that had been consigned to its dust—no one knew whither.

There was no lack of creature comforts, and if Grindley Goodge was anxious to make a favourable impression, he had certainly gone the right way to do so. The rubicund noses and purple cheeks of John Sykes's followers and bearers might have been—as we have seen—the signs of hardly suppressed sorrow, but they were not entirely unlike those which strong ale and potations of sherry and port are calculated to produce on the *dura ilia messorum*. Indigestion and grief are not altogether unlike.

Their conversation had undoubted reference to the departed.

“So, of course, Master Maynard, t' colt don't go for t' Guineas,” said one.

“Nomination be dead and void,” replied John Maynard sighing, and swallowing another bumper of port.

“Nor for t' Darby,” remarked another.

“I didn't say that,” says stout John Maynard, in reply.

“Why, nomination be dead too,” says the other.

“I see’d un at funeral. Where be Muster Meredith, Nat?”

“’Deed, mon, I dinna ken,” said old Nat; “but nomination for t’ Derby stands good, and Flying Scud’s a starter, if he’s all right.”

“And shall ye win, Nat?”

The old fellow looked round, and replied—

“Course we shall, if we comes in fust; na doubt about it.”

And as there was a move at the top of the table, the jolly mourners at the bottom took up their hats, and bands and scarves, and bowed a handsome obeisance to the rising sun.

Those whom it concerned adjourned to the library—a handsome room, with carved bookcases, and a large table. The room was surrounded with books, for although John Sykes did not read, he was obliged to have something in it; and he thought the assumption of this taste was far honester than a taste for ancestors. So there were no Monmouth Street Knellers or Lelys, only a handsome old setter or two, and some bob-tailed racehorses and hunters, which had been sold with the bookshelves and the billiard table.

Major Mulligan must have been very fond of the game

to have tried to make a silk purse out of such a sow's ear as that.

"You'll have a new table here, Goodge, me boy," said he, after making only one stroke, with an unpointed cue. That was on his first arrival.

"Certainly," said the Captain; and he nearly added, and someone new to play on it; for he was one of those miserables that have not even honesty enough to be true to their brother thieves.

By the way, that proverb about thieves and their honesty, seems to me of doubtful truth.

Tom Meredith, while half-repenting of his design, or rather promise, made to Lawyer Quail, to be present at the reading of the will, was guilty of no disrespect to old John Sykes, or what remained of him; nor did he believe Grindley Goodge to be much worse than half the young gentlemen of England.

He had had no experience of good society, beyond such as was always representing it as very bad society, and all the conclusion he came to was, that the confederates were a bad lot—roysterers, gamblers, unfeeling and needy spend-thrifts. That was all, and as to the winding-up of his malpractices by making love to a defenceless girl, much beneath him—as he thought—in station—well! really, it was nothing extraordinary in Grindley Goodge, ex-cap-

tain of some Indian regiment, and presumed heir to a very handsome rent-roll. It was only in accordance with his feelings, not his principles, that he determined to be beholden to him for nothing—not even a seat at his dead uncle's funeral feast. So Tom walked straight off, after the funeral, to his bachelor's apartment, which he had once peopled with cheerful thoughts about Kate and himself, to think how miserable one might be made by a vicious man and an inconstant woman; and wholly oblivious that there are means by which we may heap up much sorrow for ourselves, without the assistance of our fellow-creatures.

After a very melancholy midday meal, he sallied forth once more, to pay a farewell visit to Nobbley Hall, at the reading of the will.

At the end of a long and handsome table sat Mr. Quail, the family lawyer; and as he sat he looked suspiciously about the room, and then at the door, as if he sought something that could not be found. In front of him were his parchments, a modest-looking packet, secured with red tape, and by his side a tin box, with the name of "John Sykes, the Nobbley estate," painted in white letters upon the lid. He was looking for something he could not find, and an attentive audience awaited the commencement of business. Captain Goodge occupied an

arm-chair at the other end of the table, not entirely facing the lawyer, but with his side-face to him, where he sat with his arm on the table, supporting his check. He showed less signs of impatience at the delay than might have been expected.

The rest of the chairs were taken up by the poor relations, and some friends and servants of John Sykes. The confederates had been invited to be present at the coming triumph of Grindley Goodge. The poor relations were especially melancholy — probably with the recollection of their very distant connection with the testator (some second or third cousins, or thereabouts), and highly distasteful to Grindley Goodge, who had sedulously cultivated his natural disgust for respectable poverty. They were sure, too, to rob the estate of some trifling legacy, in which spoliation they would probably be helped by the old-fashioned servants, with Nat Gosling at their head. Considering the number of annoyances, Captain Grindley Goodge did not look more uncomfortable than might have been expected.

“Now, then, Mr. Quail, I presume we may begin, and get this part of the ceremony over—an eccentric notion of the old man.”

“Ah!—yes, certainly,” said Quail, still looking about him—now into the box, now into the paper before him,

but always with one eye on the door ; “ yes, of course, Captain Goodge, as you say,” speaking very slowly ; “ it was an eccentric notion, this publicity. However, Mr. Sykes quite made it a condition that these good people should be present ; and—ahem——”

“ That will do, Sir ; the time is getting on — you had better proceed.”

And Mr. Quail, taking so suggestive a hint, cleared his throat and began.

“ This is the last will and testament of me, John Sykes, of Nobbley, in the county of York, gentleman ; ” upon which followed that peculiar legal phraseology which is calculated to reassure any of the survivors who may doubt the correctness or validity of form, but which would only delay me and my readers were I to attempt to copy it. It is sufficient for our purpose to know that John Sykes (the aforesaid John Sykes takes up more room, and is, therefore, always inserted at so much per letter) gave to the County Infirmity a sufficient sum to compromise any little peculiarities of early thriftiness, to the repairs of the Minster and to the Additional Curates’ Fund sufficient to hedge on the rather illegitimate method by which he acquired his first great start in life, and hundreds enough to draw real tears of distress into the eyes of his surviving relatives, who, a week ago,

expecting nothing, were now disgusted at receiving only five hundred pounds a-piece. There was an annuity of twenty pounds each to a housekeeper, butler, gardener, and second horseman ; and “ to my old and valued servant,” continued the testator, “ Nathaniel Gosling, I will and bequeath the cottage and garden in which he lives, and the sum of one thousand pounds, free from legacy duty ; and from and after the decease of the said Nathaniel Gosling, the same to revert unconditionally to Kate Rideout——” At this moment the door of the library opened noiselessly, and Tom Meredith entered the room.

At first he was unperceived. Notice had centred on the fortunate groom, who manifestly was overcome by this surprising piece of intelligence, whatever his expectations might have been. Nat was a general favourite, too, with his fellow-servants, and received their whispered congratulations ; and there was not a soul in the house who would not rejoice in the good fortune of Kat Rideout. As to Captain Goodge, he was a little impatient at these heavy demands on what he considered his property, but sat, biding his time, in the cheerful prospect of immediate possession, and only wondering how long the list of old John Sykes’s legatees was likely to prove.

The first person to catch sight of Tom Meredith, who had heard the last words, and now stood in the entrance

doorway, was Quail himself. The lawyer looked round and was manifestly disconcerted to see that Tom could find no seat near him.

“Give Mr. Meredith a chair,” said he, addressing one of the servants present; “don’t you see that he is standing?”

There were in an instant half-a-dozen at command; the lawyer himself rising with a deferential bow to Tom, and motioning to one near himself.

“Let him stand, Sir,” said Captain Goodge, rising too, whose attention was only just drawn to the new arrival, and whose sudden passion sent every drop of blood to his heart, leaving his face cold and pale, while his lips trembled with suppressed emotion. “Let him stand, Sir, and allow me to do the honours of my own house,” and he threw himself into his chair, turning his back on both lawyer and trainer. Quail said nothing. An acute observer might have seen a rather satirical smile on his closely compressed lips, which augured a long bill as the most effective weapon to the next of kin whenever the opportunity offered. He had, however, a weapon nearer at hand and sharper; so he continued to read since the interruption with a slower and more striking emphasis, which the dead silence consequent on Grindley Goodge’s incivility made more evident.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WILL CONCLUDED.

THE words dropped out slowly and deliberately from the lawyer's mouth : " And, lastly, I will, devise, and bequeath"—and at the word *lastly* the Captain turned in his chair, towards the lawyer, and the colour returned to his pale face—" to my friend and tenant,"—here he dwelt a moment—" Thomas Meredith, of the Home Farm, all the real and personal estate"—Grindley Goodge was on his legs, with his black eyes gleaming like a demon, and the perspiration on his cold and clammy face—" of which I shall be possessed, or to which I shall be entitled, at the time of my decease, absolutely ; and I appoint the said Thomas Meredith, to whose family I am indebted for all I possess, sole executor of this my will——"

But Quail was not allowed to proceed. Captain Grindley Goodge, with three strides, was at his side. The veins were swollen in his hands and forehead ; his lips, blanched with something more than fear—with the utter ruin of all his hopes or expectations, and con-

tending with an aimless and impotent violence—with difficulty formed words as he demanded—

“And is that all, Sir? Is there nothing else?”

“Nothing,” said the lawyer, smiling blandly. It was his turn now.

“Nothing? You’re sure? Not a codicil?”

He ought to have seen the devil in Grindley Goodge’s eyes; but he saw nothing but his own revenge.

“What! nothing left even to yourself, Sir? You’ve surely not forgotten yourself?”

“Stay, Captain Goodge; there is something more.”

“I thought so,” replied the Captain with a sneer, which almost seemed to cast a shadow over his death-like features. “Read it, Sir; read it.”

The lawyer proceeded to do so with the same placid smile as before: “And I revoke all previous wills by me at any time heretofore made; in witness whereof——”

But Grindley Goodge’s hopes and patience were alike gone, and, with one violent blow in the face, he felled Quail to the ground, saying with horrible oaths—

“D—— you, you scoundrel! this is your doing, with your friend Tom Meredith! What does he pay you for your share in the transaction?”

And so far had he got, and in that strain was he pro-

ceeding, when the real master of the house found it necessary to interfere.

“Silence, Sir!” said Tom Meredith, coming forward, even in the midst of his astonishment. “You’ve committed an assault for which you will doubtless have to answer. Whatever sympathy I might have felt for your disappointment—and you deserved some—is cancelled by your own conduct, and I regret that the first use I can make of my title to your late uncle’s property is to order you to quit it. Go, Sir.”

“You’ll be prepared, I suppose, to defend the robbery that, by some means or other, has been committed—the advantage that has been taken of age and infirmities, to the prejudice of the real owner of the property?” said the Captain.

“That’s right, Goodge—it’s a robbery. Is it the old man’s writing? Shouldn’t wonder if it was a forgery,” says Chouser, exceedingly down in the mouth, but pulling up his collars, and affecting to forget his seven hundred in the losses of his friend.

“Oh, Moses!” exclaimed Mo. Davis; “what villains these lawyers is, to be sure.”

He, too, was more concerned for his thousand than for Grindley Goodge.

“Faith, me boy, you’re right. The description’s
7

wrong. Your uncle, was he? Bedad, he describes himself as 'gentleman' at the head of the document. He's no pretensions to the name, I'm told—a mere money-scraping, shilling squeezing old vagabond."

And Major Mulligan's left-handed compliment to the nephew was continued with much the same judgment; while the lawyer was placed in his chair, and promised Captain Goodge that he would hear more of him at some future time.

"As it seems to me that Captain Goodge and his friends have nothing more to do here," said Tom, "at the risk of seeming inhospitable, I am obliged to defer the pleasure of their company till another time. All particulars and opportunity will be given them for proving their claim, if any exists, by an application through their lawyer, to Mr. Quail."

Which speech only goes to show how much too honest was Tom Meredith to fight a battle in a court of law, and how little he knew of Mr. Quail, if he imagined that he would have given them, of either one or the other, more than he was obliged.

In this simple but decisive manner, Captain Goodge, Major Mulligan, Mr. Chouser, and their Jew associate were dismissed from the home of the late John Sykes.

When the first of these gentlemen was turned loose on

society by his uncle's will, that philanthropic old gentleman had no idea of the mischief he had done. He had been subscribing to hospitals and curates' aid societies, for the benefit of his fellow creatures, with his left hand, while, with his right he had dealt them such a blow as would be received by the liberation, among patients and pastors, of a man-eating tiger.

It was quite certain that any good resolutions which might have been formed by Grindley Goodge, with four thousand a year, were only conditional on that great incentive to cleanly living; and when all expectation of wealth was gone—nay, when the very jaws of penury were opening to receive him—he was not likely to forego, or to modify, any of those means by which skilful experimentalists open the British oyster.

From that day affairs were changed at the Hall. Tom Meredith entered upon a *rôle* which he was well fitted to

fill—not so much, perhaps, by his education as by certain inherent qualities, which reverses and a manhood of industry had rather served to strengthen than to confine or disguise.

One thing was remarkable—that his spirits, before so good and full of animation, were gone with his accession to fortune. He had become reserved, silent, less appreciative of a country life, and careless of the duties it

involves. This was, indeed, the reverse of what men expected at his hands. The only thing that seemed to interest him particularly was his stud. He put his horses into the hands of an experienced servant, on whose honesty as well as knowledge he thought he could rely, and continued to superintend their preparation himself as jealously as when it was a duty. As he said, he thought that Nat Gosling, with himself, would be quite a match for the machinations of the enemies of Flying Scud, and would, perhaps, bring some of those to grief who had been relying on undeniable information.

As to the horse himself, the facts of the case were soon known. The death of John Sykes compelled his retirement from the list of candidates for the Guineas; but as the nomination for the Derby was that of one Thomas Meredith, the horse stuck persistently in the list of starter for the Blue Riband of the Turf. As the peppering which ensued upon the presumption of the trial was judiciously administered, and as the confederates managed their business remarkably well, they were enabled to lay about fifty thousand to win about five—a matter of no importance to such professional talent, which regarded the five thousand as a certain bonus, and the horse, as far as winning was concerned, as good as dead.

Since the evening on which Tom Meredith had overheard the equivocal expression of regard and mutual understanding between Kate Rideout and Grindley Goodge, he had neither been to Nat's cottage, nor seen, even by accident, the girl whom he at one time certainly intended to make his wife.

Men are moved very differently in such matters ; so diversely, indeed, as to set at defiance all rules of analysis of character. An impulsive man, it seems to us, would have gone at once to clear up the mystery ; yet, impulsive men have sometimes great delicacy, and a certain shyness, or reticence, which acts as a counterpoise to their impulses. That Tom was impulsive we have seen plainly enough, and he jumped to a conclusion which was, as far as Kate was concerned, unjust ; but he proved now to be shy and reserved, and held his tongue from that day. He might, under other circumstances, have made a confidant of Nat Gosling, who would have lightened his mind in no time ; but his accession to wealth, and his old position, was a bar to that confidence, and in his resumption of it, he found himself surrounded by acquaintances, but without a friend. Nat Gosling had his own opinions on the subject, of course, and they were not unnatural ones, according to his light.

Kate sat one evening, completely broken down, behind

the stronghold of reserve, which was intended to hold out for ever ; and, dropping her work into her lap, she said, " Mr. Meredith hasn't quarrelled with you ? "

" Old Nat gave a start, looked at his granddaughter, and said, " No : why ? "

" He's not been here since the funeral ? " replied the girl, interrogatively.

" He's a great man now, Kate ; times is altered," and he puffed forth a volume of smoke, which relieved him of some of his indignation.

" I think he might have looked in ; you used to be so much together."

" Aye, so we are now, girl. The young squire's as kind as ever his old uncle used to be ; and the colonel was a grand favourite about here surelie."

" He might have come to inquire after me." And then Kate blushed at her own temerity. It was but a poor blind to her real anxiety.

" Aye, girl, but you see"—and the old man stopped, for fear of hurting the girl's feelings—" he's had much to do, and to think on."

" If you mean too much to remember old friends, I think you're wrong."

" Well, maybe he's a bit proud. You might be, lass. Folks never knows till they be tried."

“It’s not like him,” said Kate, half thinking aloud.

“No, it’s not like him, but ye canna tell till ye try. He was the honestest, the best, the kindest callant that ever lived ; but when ye put ’em out o’ work, after hard food and hard galloping, and gie ’em the run of their teeth in a straw-yard, they always fly somewhere, and sometimes altogether.”

For the impression rankled in the old man’s mind that Tom Meredith felt the difference in their positions, and that, although well inclined to continue his kindness to Nat himself, he was unwilling to run the risk of daily intercourse with his granddaughter.

Kate brooded silently over his desertion. She was willing enough to make every excuse for her lover, but she could scarcely help feeling how different would have been her own conduct had fortune placed it in her power to befriend him. She little suspected that she was suffering now from her heedless, but well-intentioned step to do so.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MAJOR'S LITTLE GAME.

"BEDAD, it was a fine stroke, boys, anyhow, and it'll be that that will win the game, if I've any luck. But Lord Woodbie must give points; no man out can play the cannon game like him."

The speaker was Major Mulligan, and the language was addressed to Chouser, Grindley Goodge, and young Fitzwalter, Lord de Warrenne's eldest son.

"It's hard upon me, too, that ye'll be advising his lordship what to play for. To be sure he knows better than you can tell him, but anyhow, we're playing for a stake, and you're not backing either of us."

Here the Major made two losing hazards, and won the game.

"That's a hundred off. I'll play you one game more, Woodbie, and you shall give me fifteen; come, double or quits, it's only fifty—but you're too good, ye know you are: and I can't afford more."

And the Major gave a balk.

"Come, Major," said Lord Woodbie, "I can't give fifteen, but if you'll make it two hundred up, and play for three hundred, I'll give you twenty."

"Three hundred, is it? I'll lose, and where's the money to come from? No, I'll play for a hundred, and you must get Chouser or Goodge to put on the other two."

And after a long altercation they agree to take Woodbie's five to four, in hundreds, upon which the Major begged to be let off his stake.

"I'll play you for a pony, just to have an interest in the game, but I know you can beat me easily at twenty points, me lord, and I can't afford it. If I lose, I'll go up stairs, I know, and spoil the supper party, after being spoiled myself."

At the same time Major Mulligan gave a sufficiently intelligent glance in the direction of his associates, who were with reluctance accommodating Fitzwalter, who wanted to back his friend for a hundred, at three to two. It was done, of course, and it was not the only thing being done at the same time in the room.

The game began (it was in a large room at the back of the Major's apartments, well lighted, well ventilated, and free from intrusion) much in Lord Woodbie's favour.

And as that remarkably fast young noble smoked a fine, full-flavoured regalia—without which, he averred, he could not make a stroke—and drank iced brandy and seltzer, without which, he also averred, he could not smoke, the game went a little in his adversary's favour at first, that is—for a break or two.

“Put out your cigar, Woodbie,” said the good-natured Major. “I'm sure ye can't make a stroke in such an atmosphere as this, or ye'll have Chouser and Grindley, there, winning your money. I'll begin to be sorry I didn't double the stake myself.”

There was a kindly, patronising air in the Major's address which was, doubtless, intended to allay irritation, but unfortunately provoked it. Lord Woodbie was very young, very green, very fast, and wished to be thought faster; but that was not Major Mulligan's fault. Honest Hubert Mulligan couldn't help that; besides which he thought he played billiards just five points better than most gentlemen in England; and Mulligan couldn't help that either. Perhaps it might be true, he observed to himself, but then he'd forgotten Ireland.

Lord Woodbie was a little irritated.

“Double it, then!” said he, gulping down a little more

cold brandy and seltzer, which, however, did not allay his lordship's irritation.

"No, no ; I'm only joking," and here Major Mulligan made a shocking bad stroke, and let the young Christ Church man in, who proceeded to score in a bold and tolerably skilful fashion, with an occasional fluke, and very much after the bold University pattern. The fact is, for a young man he was very fair.

Having caught the Major and given a balk, he desired to back himself for a little more, and on more favourable terms for the takers. After some weak remonstrances and expostulations, he was allowed to do so.

"Call the game, Chouser," said his lordship after a time, during which he seemed to have had tolerable success, and one rather long break. "Call the game, that's a good fellow."

Chouser could hardly have recognised himself under the appellation, but he replied to it, "A hundred and thirty—a hundred and three."

"Who's a hundred and thirty?" inquired Lord Woodbie.

"You are, my lord."

Chouser had not arrived at sufficient familiarity to dispense with titular distinctions, but by the easy process

of book-making, and laying what he had not got, was reaching it.

“Then I’ll lay another hundred even, Goodge,” said his little lordship.

“Not I. You’re in luck, and Mulligan’s a regular duffer. I’ll take a hundred to seventy-five,” said the Captain.

“Done—put it down ; and having swallowed a mouthful of smoke which half blinded, and wholly choked him, the little noble missed his cue, and Major Mulligan proceeded to score.

It was a great point with the Major, as of course it is with all judicious swindlers,—whether on the turf or at the billiard table—not to frighten their prey. Judicious losing is quite as essential as any other of the tricks of the game. Flatter your adversary while you beat him in the long run. The greatest rascals are the greatest adepts at this graceful manœuvre, and the Major was *nulli secundus* in the delicacies of cheating.

Having got within ten points of his adversary, he thought it desirable to play the wrong game, for which stupidity he was saluted with a shout of abuse from his backers, Messrs. Chouser and Goodge, and some favourable notice of Fitzwalter, as not quite up to the mark, and an offer to go on backing his friend Woodbie. There

is nothing so charming in the way of moral felony, nothing so exquisitely satisfactory to both parties, as clever legging at billiards.

It was becoming absolutely necessary to play a very flattering game. At one moment the Major had almost determined upon allowing the amiable youth to win. It would be such a grand stroke, and really, his colleagues were not half considerate to him, occasionally, as they should be. It was a great temptation. He might have a private picking, which would well repay him for his self-restraint, and he would so like to sell those rascals, Chouser and Goodge, who had got much more out of the Cambridgeshire than they ever admitted to him.

However, second thoughts about "a bird in the hand," and "striking while the iron was hot," proved more acceptable; so he drew gradually on, appearing to make a very hard fight of it, and now and then—after a better stroke than common—admitting the soft impeachment of a "flake."

To do Woodbie justice, though not select enough in his company, he was a perfect gentleman, and when the game stood ninety all, he blew forth a fresh puff of tobacco, and prepared to play with as much *sang froid*, as if he had one sovereign on it instead of rather better than

five hundred. And he did play, and having made nothing—but left the balls with a not very difficult cannon for Mulligan—he looked with calm composure at his handiwork, remarking—

“There’s plenty of room to go round it, Major, and then I shall go in and win.”

As the Major felt that he had played his fish quite long enough, and that everything had been done that a proper amount of flattery could suggest, and with very excellent results, he took care not “to go round it;” and leaving an easy hazard over the middle pocket off the red ball, which he repeated three times consecutively, laid down his cue, with the best perpetrated sigh of relief that had ever been heard.

“’Gad, it was a near go,” said his lordship. “I don’t think I can give quite twenty; at least, it requires good form.”

At the same time he took out his pocket-book, and having made a careful memorandum of his losses, proceeded to hand them over in notes, across the table, to the impudent sharpers who had pigeoned him. It was all very well to speak of the confederation as the “quadruped;” it was quite clear that it wasn’t “an ass.”

Major Mulligan was a great rascal, but he could be—

as he was very early in life—a polished gentleman. Notwithstanding the roll of his hat, and the roll of his tongue, there were times when his manner was as finished as that of the best class of his countrymen—which is saying a great deal. It was peculiarly flattering to young men, which is usually the case when the sympathies and occupations are alike. It was so now, when he asked Lord Woodbie to finish the evening in his rooms up stairs, which Lord Woodbie — looking at his watch — was about to decline on the score of time.

“Miss Latimer will regret the loss of such an opportunity of extending her small hospitalities to your lordship.”

“Miss Latimer !” repeated his lordship, with rather less of good breeding than his host. But he was evidently surprised into the expression.

“My niece, Lord Woodbie, who does me the honour of keeping house for me, as far as a bachelor's establishment admits of it.”

And as he opened the door of the billiard room, Lord Woodbie passed out before him.

The wave of the hand, and the comprehensive bow with which—five minutes later—he presented his noble pigeon to the young lady, was worthy the best days of

Pumpnickel, or of Bath under the influence of Bean Nash.

“ Lord Woodbie—me niece, Miss Latimer.”

Julia Latimer and Lord Woodbie stared with some surprise, and then shook hands.

We are not old but I hope I may say intimate acquaintances, Major Mulligan,” said the young man, blushing slightly, which was scarcely perceptible, however, by the light of the lamp or chandelier.

Mulligan knew it well enough, but the needless display of knowledge is not characteristic of good breeding or high society; so he had, as we see, kept that knowledge to himself.

“ It will be a great honour that you should give us the opportunity of improving that acquaintance.”

Julia Latimer herself walked towards the table without a word, looking steadily down upon a tea equipage which was standing on it, and offered Lord Woodbie a late cup of tea, which he took. Julia was blushing for her uncle, who she felt instinctively was acting a lie. Somehow or other, I think, if there had been a crooked and straight path to the same place, the Major would have preferred the former. Practically he believed two sides of a triangle to be shorter than the third.

There's an English nobleman or two who could tell you a tale about billiards in early life, which would make you think twice before you took to "knocking the balls about" at a public table in a private room, especially if you chance to be what is called "sweet upon yourself."



CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT FASHION EXPECTS OF US.

WE have not seen much of Julia Latimer yet except through the panel of a door. Let us look at her face to face: it is worth the trouble. No two women could be more different than she and Kate Rideout. The latter fair, light of heart and limb, not fired for great hopes, nor to lead where doubt or danger were before her; nor to strengthen weakness of purpose nor guide and govern indecision: she was a tender and loving plant, whose strength lay in her gentleness and love. Julia was more than this. She was dark and rich in colour, with large hazel eyes that owed part of their power to the lids that fringed them. There was no deficiency of tenderness or trust, but an honest self-reliance in them which might

stand the owner in good stead at need. Her features were straight and handsome as those of a Grecian statue, but not cold ; such, indeed, as she might have been had Prometheus breathed into her the fire of heaven. Her mouth, which closed calmly enough on ordinary occasions over feelings which her words might have betrayed when scorn (and she was made to feel it sometimes) curled her lip, was expressive enough of warmth for the most genial critic.

If Julia Latimer was not so likely, or so lightly, to be loved, she was a woman to be worshipped. She would have stood by her lover when all else had deserted him ; she would have carried him with her through every danger ; she would have shielded him from his own weakness, have nerved him with fresh strength for every encounter : and if they could not have fallen or risen together, would have sacrificed herself willingly, and all her happiness, for him.

And this was the woman who was compelled to witness the subterfuges of a gambler's life, at an age when other women are not much more than out of the school-room. Her days seemed to pass between ill-disguised reticence, and openly expressed shame. Few women in England looked more like a lady ; none in her position could have felt more like one. But it is nothing extraordinary that

she was as unlike the conventional woman of Lord Woodbie's imagination as Joan of Arc was unlike a doll in a dog-cart. I don't mean to say that there are not Lady Marys and Lady Harriets as good, as strong, and as lovable, as any beggar's maid in the kingdom. Many much more so. But a Julia Latimer was not the picture which the Lord Woodbies are taught to contemplate as their future ladies. Excellence is like a personal beauty. Very high cultivation is apt to disguise it, just as a course of calisthenics or crinoline may divert or conceal the loveliest formation. As I love a highly-bred horse, and expect more from him, so I regard a highly-bred woman as capable of more than those less highly favoured. But the *manège* may do too much for both, and disappoint the rider, when he sails out of the conventionalities of the school.

Lord Woodbie was astonished. Here was a woman, not his equal, as he would be taught to believe, who was neither a pupil of D'Egville, nor Maras, nor Hallé; who didn't talk about the opera or the queen's ball, or even the drawing-room; who lived with a gentlemanly old gambler in a quiet street, and whose person owed little to the aid of Emanuel or Maradan Carson for its loveliness; whose grace, if it were natural, ought to have belonged to a duchess, and whose intellect was—

well¹ to tell the truth, rather beyond his lordship's depth.

So he fell in love with her at once. Not like a boy—and he was not much more—but with the ardour of a strong will; not like a languid swell—nor was he very much more than that—whose inane life had been passed at Eton and Oxford in gambling and dissipation, in aping vices which he detested, and in committing follies which he despised.

How could he help himself, and how could he have passed his time otherwise? Where had he ever seen samples of the old philosophers of the academies, who said all happiness consisted in pleasure—but that pleasure was virtue! Old Spatecock, his uncle! who knew the name of every dish that Apicius might have coveted, and who could congratulate himself on his death-bed on having denied himself nothing in this world. The Duke of Cadwallo, his other uncle, to whom he was heir, a good man, forsooth! as proud as Lucifer, and as violent as a chained lunatic. A good husband, father, landlord, and sportsman, over head and ears in debt, hunting six days a week, and visiting the kennels after church on the seventh; keeping a string of race-horses at Newmarket, betting and gambling all through the summer, and taking the odds on Sunday afternoon at Chantilly or Paris,

while the governess at home was being scolded by the Duchess for reading "Lady Audley's Secret" instead of taking the Ladies Mary and Cecilia to church in the evening. Or was he to learn wisdom from his cousin Saunterre, who, with sixty thousand a-year, never had a horse, never played a card, or threw a main, but was half ruined by the opéra-house he had supported, and the ladies connected with them ; who, and whose orgies at Saunterre Castle were the talk, not to say glory, of all the wickedest of the aristocracy. Or from that intolerable ass Lord Pinchbeck, who was clever enough to have invented a new brougham ; and whose outside from head to foot had engrossed so much of his attention as to have left neither brains nor heart within.

When Lord Woodbie left Eton these were a few of the notable examples that surrounded his paternal, or, rather, maternal hearth (for his father had been killed in a steeple-chase a few years before). Was he likely to seize upon the abstruse virtues of these people which lie beneath the surface, or to adopt for imitation and reference those glaring characteristics of fashion which come to the top ? Who talked of Cadwallo's domesticity, who did not talk of his extravagance and gambling ? Who talked of Spatchcock's refinement, who did not talk of his gluttony ? Who ever heard of Pinch-

beck's patriotism, who had not heard of his under waistcoats and hats? What was it in the world's eye that Saunterre was a man of exquisite taste and learning, to the far famed reputation he had acquired in the French *coulisses*? So Woodbie, who had great natural parts, great courage, great spirit, great liberality, and unbounded belief in the honour of his species, who, in fact, was a perfect English gentleman at heart, had adopted all the characteristics of all those whom an inconsiderate world have endorsed with the name. Unfortunately, he had an affectation, too. He was, as Grindly Goodge had often told him, "the fastest young 'un out."

A real talent for pace is rather an uncommon thing, and no man likes to be denied his title to genius. Now Woodbie really had a turn that way, and was proud of hearing it acknowledged. He was just one of those men who might get over it if he fell into good hands, which at present was doubtful. He did so much of it without liking it. His very cigars made him feel uncomfortable; but then Hudson and Carlin supplied him with whole hundredweights, and he plunged as far as the Poultry itself to ransack Goode's stores for the very largest and best Havannahs. He sat up all night, but he yawned most unprofessionally over the business. He scarcely

knew one card from another, but played like a fine young English gentleman, to the detriment of his purse, and the disgust of his partner. He had horses he never rode, a yacht he never sailed, moors he never shot, and a half-a-dozen boxes he never set foot in; and he backed bills, and raised money, and gladdened the hearts of the Jews to an extent that had never been heard of. He never said "no" to himself, and as yet he had found nobody to say "no" to him.

We have said that it was remarkable that this young gentleman should have fallen honestly in love with anything but himself; but more so with a girl like Julia Latimer, who had certainly but little sympathy with his apparent tastes and real occupations. But it is still more remarkable that such a passion should have been reciprocal. It is difficult to conceive that the lady should have been attracted by anything like Lord Woodbie as he has been at present represented to the reader.

However, there was the fact. Either that penetration, for which women are so justly noted, perceived something beneath the surface more worthy of respect and affection; or that blind and undistinguishing impulse known as love, and which lavishes itself as often upon the colour of the hair or eyes, upon the shape of a hand or foot, as

upon heart or brain, had deprived Julia Latimer of those high qualities of discernment which she really possessed, and drove her, as the furies in the Orestean trilogy, upon her fate. Let us hope the former of these two. To hint that a coronet and twenty-seven thousand a-year had anything to do with it would be a gross libel upon women in general, and on Julia Latimer in particular.

Having admitted my inability to account for the first principles of this singular attachment, there is still no difficulty in explaining its rise. Everyone goes salmon fishing somewhere. It's the fashion to rave about it. Norway used to be the right thing to do till the country was overrun with appetites and half the English were starved. Jones always thinks that because Smith had killed three hundred pounds' weight of salmon on the Glommon or the Tana, he is sure to do the same; so he forthwith arms himself with all sorts of implements of chase and war, among them with a Runic dictionary and a Scandinavian vocabulary. At the end of a month he comes back, half-starved and very hairy, cured of Norway but not of fishing. Robinson had been there before him, and whipped every mile of stream in the country.

I need hardly say that Lord Woodbie pretended to be

bitten with the salmon mania; and having some property in that well-favoured land, Ireland, out at nurse, as usual, he gave up the Scotch moors, ordered his keeper to supply the family from one hill, sent down some friends to the others, and took his seat in a carriage to Holyhead, determined upon doing the patriotic landlord and the salmon together.

“What’s become of Mulligan, Treadyear?” said young Lord Tippetoddy, to him of the Blues, one afternoon, sailing up Bond Street, about the time that Woodbie was thinking of salmon instead of grouse. “Have you seen him lately?”

“Yes—very. He won a hundred of me this morning at the club; never allowed me or Prendergast to have anything over a nine in our hands.”

“And where’s his niece, Miss Latimer?”

“She’s gone to Ireland. I tell you what, Tippetoddy, my boy, it’s a d—d lucky thing for you that she had no chaperone but that fat old woman in a turban to go about with, or you’d have been nailed. I never saw a fellow so spoony in my life.”

“Well! but a fellow couldn’t marry a woman without antecedents and that sort of thing, you know. She’s nobody.”

“I wouldn’t advise you to let the Major hear you say that. He’s descended from M’Murrrough, King of Leinster, who ran away with O’Ruark’s wife in Henry II.’s reign. Nobody! by gad! you’d be riddled by the clan.”



CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW SQUIRE OF NOBBLEY

“JULIA, my dear,” said old Lady MacStickler, a relation of Julia’s deceased father, “I’ve some news for you.” Julia was staying with the old lady in the Tantudlem Hills, not far from the Woodbie property. “There’s my Lord Woodbie arrived at Tantudlem, and as there’s not a soul to speak to within thirty miles of the place but ourselves, we have asked him to make this his head quarters.”

“I’m delighted to hear it,” said Julia, who found an Irish mountain even more stupid than the back of Langham-placc, in the month of August, but who was obliged to go somewhere while her uncle went to Spa, Homburg, Wiesbaden, and Baden Baden.

So, within a few days of the time mentioned, he was installed at Tantudlem, and appeared so well pleased with his quarters, that he sent for his groom and the horses he had with him, and turned his salmon rod into a riding whip, and took to sketching the scenery with the ladies. That's how and where Lord Woodbie and Julia Latimer had met before, and where he and she seem to have discovered some hidden virtues in each other, which it will take our readers yet a few chapters more to appreciate.

While we have been describing these two persons, more or less, and getting up an interest in comparative virtue, which more easily centres in vice and its exponents; and while Lord Woodbie is renewing an acquaintance, begun under such favourable auspices for love-making—Grindley Goodge and Chouser have been in the billiard room, knocking about the balls and their friends alternately.

“Chouser, we must have that fellow Woodbie with us.”

This being a supreme flight of audacious villany, beyond Chouser, he answered despondingly enough. “Must we? And why?”

“He parts so well—so freely, that it's quite a pleasure to bleed him. I'm sure he feels it an accommodation to

get rid of some of his money. Only he won't go on for ever. The supplies will come to an end."

"Well, but there can't be much advantage in letting him in——"

"We have let him in," said the other, cutting short Mr. Chouser's unfinished remonstrance. "I'll tell you what; we must tell him about the Scud. He won't be frightened about that. There's many a fellow thinks nothing of robbing his friends about a horse, that would rather cut his hands off than cheat at cards, even if he wasn't to be found out. We're nearly blown on the turf, Chouser, that's the fact. The fellows are all so d—d suspicious, if you or I open our mouths, that we can't half rig the market."

"Well, what then?" said Mr. Chouser, withholding his cue.

"Why, we'll get Woodbie to do it for us. He won't stand in with us, but he'll do it for himself and let us stand in with him. He's devilish proud, but he's proud of being fast, and he'll be very much flattered at having the first information."

"But the Scud will be knocked out, and we don't want that."

"Not if he does it. The ring think him such a fool, that they don't know he's any taste for being

a blackguard. They'll only say it's a cock-and-a-bull story of his friend Cadwallo, who wants to back the horse."

So Grindley Goodge determined upon having a common interest with Lord Woodbie, which was a bold stroke on his part.

"I'll tell you something more, Chouser, if you'll listen to me. Funds are low, and want replenishing; and if I had any doubt of the trial, I'd poison the horse rather than he should win."

Chouser turned cold at the vehemence of his friend.

"Win!" said he. "No; he can't win, can he? Why, we've laid Heaven knows what against him, and the right party haven't backed him yet. We shall know when they do."

"Don't be alarmed; we shall know everything. I've a friend in the stable, Chouser; and as you're pretty deep against the Scud, you may as well know all. It won't take long telling. What do you think of Nat Gosling himself. He hates Tom Meredith almost as much as I do. He's thrown over Kate Rideout, and the old man won't forget it. Don't you think Kate would look well at the top of a table? We want a decoy, Chouser, and we must have one. Wouldn't you marry the girl yourself?'

“Marry!” said Chouser, aghast at the proposition “I don’t think I could, Grindley; not even to oblige you.”

“Don’t be alarmed; you won’t have the chance. If there’s no other help for it, I’ll marry her myself. I think that would buy Nat Gosling, and then Mr. Meredith may look out for himself on the twenty-ninth of May.

While Grindley Goodge matures his plans for making Kate Rideout the mistress of his establishment, under one form or another, and the Flying Scud safe for the Derby, by his influence with Nat Gosling, or by one of the various means of robbery so prolific in his time of life, we must return to the new master of Nobbly Hall. That venerable pile, and sporting neighbourhood, was once more happy in possession of t’ squire, a thing they had not had since the break up of the Colonel’s establishment. To tell truth, Tom Meredith had acquired some advantage by his servitude; for, had his uncle been able to carry out his intentions with regard to the Hall in Tom’s favour, he could but have transferred to him an empty name and an empty house, saddled with every possible incumbrance in the shape of mortgages and debts.

The fortune left him by John Sykes was ample for all

his wants, though not very large, and few men could have looked forward to a more prosperous or useful position, as a country gentleman, than he. But Tom was not satisfied.

Since the evening before the funeral, he had never ceased to think of the unworthiness, as he believed, which separated him from Kate; and, in proportion as he felt his isolation, did he become more unhappy. At the very time when he could have offered her a home, of which any woman might have been reasonably proud, he was debarred from doing so by an unconquerable obstacle.

Tom was truly unhappy. He went about his business mechanically; and while his eyes were with Lawyer Quail or his steward, his heart was down at old Nat's cottage, whither his body felt a strong inclination to follow it. However, it did not do so, being under subjection to a still stronger will; and it is not to be wondered at that a man of Meredith's age and temperament began to seek solace in absence from home.

Meredith fought against his wish to leave Nobbey for many reasons. He was very anxious to do something for the tenants on his estate, who had had a hard time of it under John Sykes. There were barns to be built, and repairs to be done to the fences; new gates to be made;

and timber to be valued ; acquaintances to be made with the neighbouring squirearchy and clergy, who held out the hand of fellowship to a man who bore a name well known to all of them.

But still he wasn't up to the mark. He was sorely disabled. The blow came at such a time. He tried shooting, at home and with his friends. He hunted pretty regularly ; but he was a big man, and not able to get together a stud towards the end of the season, and at a moment's notice ; besides which, he remembered Kate so often when he had charge of her—how he gave her a lead here, and sent her round by a gate there, and how often he had taken her safely home to her cottage through the raw atmosphere of a November afternoon. Of course she wasn't there ; for she'd nothing to ride.

He tried a visit or two ; but he was awkwardly situated. He was not yet established as a county-man ; he had to pay his footing by good manners, or liberality, or good looks, or public utility, which was slow work ; and his position and tastes had never allowed him to associate with his former fellows, and now less than ever. He thought of London, but had not yet screwed his courage to the sticking place.

Meanwhile, under the care of the new trainer, or stud

groom, Joshua Masterman, and Nat Gosling, the Flying Seud continued to improve. The horse, like most of his colour, was a good doer, and required plenty of preparation; but as his legs and feet were like iron, and his constitution as sound and hard as his legs and feet, the galloping did not hurt him.

The season, too, was inclined to be wet—at least, it had been through March, and we are now in the middle of April. The Derby has another six weeks before it, and as Flying Seud's nomination for the Guineas is void, he has nothing in the way of impediment to a sound and careful preparation for the Surrey event.

The library table at Nobbley Hall had the remains of a bachelor's breakfast on it.

The *Glowworm* of the night before had just reached the Hall, and gave the Squire the latest intelligence upon racing matters. He was astonished to hear that the Seud "was somewhat shaky in the market, and that there was a strong disposition to lay against him on the part of some gentlemen, who were generally well informed about North-country horses. He had finished, however, only a point lower than his recent price, owing to the support accorded to him by a stranger."

The paragraph closed with a hope that "the stable, which had hitherto enjoyed a high reputation for straight-

forward conduct, was not about to follow the example of certain parties, who were too well known to require special description."

Having got thus far, Tom Meredith rose from his arm chair, and with a mighty oath—for unfortunately he was not above swearing, under great provocation—rang the bell; and as repairs had not gone on so swimmingly in John Sykes's time as they might have done, the handle came off in his hand: at the same time he kicked the *Glowworm* indignantly, forgetting that it only acted honestly in giving the information, and commenting on it.

"Is Nat Gosling down stairs?" said the new master.

"I think not, Sir; but we can send the boy over to his cottage."

"Do so, at once; and tell Tape (that was the new man) to pack my portmanteau at once. I'm going to town by the midday train."

In the course of half an hour Nat Gosling arrived. Tom Meredith could scarcely regard the old man in the light of a servant, and it required some tact to know how to treat him. Nat, however, had brains enough never to take a liberty, for he loved the old name, and knew his master to possess the best characteristics of his pro-

genitors ; so that before others he was essentially the confidential stableman ; in private he was treated with more indulgence. When the old man reached the door he touched his grey hair with his forefinger, and then awaited his master's summons to enter.



CHAPTER XV.

AN HONEST MAN.

“You'd better take a chair, Nat ; I want to talk to you.”

In the days of John Sykes, Nat made use of the whole of the seat, leaning comfortably, though perpendicularly, against the back ; he now occupied a narrow corner of it only, and placing his hat upon the ground, prepared to listen.

“I'm going to town, Nat, and wanted five minutes' talk with you before I go.”

Tom then asked after a lot of yearlings by name, and some decent two-year-olds, and the trial horse ; but with these the reader has nothing to do at present.

He watched old Nat's face very closely, who gave him a satisfactory account of health and promise.

"And what do you think of Mr. Masterman, Nat? The young things look well."

"Oh, he ar' gotten his head screwed on the right way, surelie. I hope he won't be too fond o' gallopin'. They new fangled notions don't accord wi' me at all." And Nat shook his head, not much like Lord Burleigh.

"At present, it don't seem like it. He's a steady man, and knows his business. I know it, too, you know; so I can answer for that. And now, Nat, how about the Scud?"

"Never was better; never see a horse thicken so at this time o' year. He grows the right way, Squire, down'ards. But what will t' Scud do if you goes to London just now? It's a ticklish time."

"I'll tell you what he'll do, Nat—he'll go up in the betting to a short price, and if Rasper wins the Guineas, you know how safe the Derby is for us, by the line we have. Look at that"—and he handed the innocent *Glowworm* to Nat Gosling, who read the paragraph with some difficulty, and then returned the paper to his master.

"I'd let 'em alone, Squire, if I was you. Only give

'em rope enough, and they'll hang themselves. I think I know who's doing this is."

"Yes, and in the meantime have it said that I got as much out of the horse as I could. The reporters don't believe in an honest man, Tom."

"Everybody does so; it's no use telling the world how good he is before the time. We shall let in the scoundrels who want to lay against him."

"And the honest men, who will fear to stand by him."

"If you go into the market, Squire, you'll get, maybe, 7 to 1 at four o'clock p.m., and he'll close, two hours later, at 4 to 1. To-morrow morning it'll all come out that the trial was a false one, and there's an end o' the fortune you may make if you'll only 'bide quiet. If they go knoekin' t' Scud about, and nobody comes to the reseue—as they calls it—you'll be able to take 20 to 1, as often as you like, before anyone's a bit the wiser. To baek the horse now is to play Mr. Grindley Goodge's game. He'll like to lay 4 to 1 better nor 8, a good deal, I take it."

"Grindley Goodge! what's he got to do with it?" says Tom, rather tartly.

"You know Mark Heron, the biggest poacher in Yorkshire?"

"I do. What of him?"

“He’s Grindley’s tout. They two thieves wor always too thick to please me. He was seen slinking off on the morning of the trial, when poor John Sykes died. He saw the trial, and thinks the horses ran at even weights. Now you know why Flying Scud has been unsteady in the market ; the metal has been at work. They southerners think nothin’ o’ that.”

“Then I’ll put the metal right to-day, Nat ; and I won’t forget you when I do so. Mind, a man’s a right to do what he likes with his own. He may run what trials he will, and protect himself from robbery and touting as well as he can—and he may hold his tongue. It’s a small sacrifice, Nat, to the rascalities of the business. But if he ever tells a lie, or allows it to be told on his behalf (I’m not sure that he ought to profit by another man’s falsehood), he’s not worthy the name of a gentleman, and couldn’t be handicapped with my notion of the thing, at any weights. I’m going to back my horse for five thousand between this and the First Spring Meeting, and a good deal more afterwards, if that comes off as it should ; and I don’t care who knows my opinion of his chance. I believe he’ll win the Derby, and I shall most likely say so before I’ve been five minutes at Tattersall’s.”

Nat sighed profoundly as he took his hat from the

ground, and rose from the corner of the chair he had partly and painfully occupied. His own thoughts were not profound, and may be simply expressed thus :

“If those robbers are disposed to knock down the Scud to 25 to 1, so much the better: and if the honest backers of horses are such fools as to listen to the rogues, and to follow them, let 'em do so, and find out their mistake. There are plenty of wolves in sheep's clothing who would not be the worse for the loss of their fleece.”

So Nat Gosling reflected, but he had too much respect for his master to say so.

As the old man got up from his seat, there appeared in his manner some sort of disinclination to leave the room at once. He hung back, turning his hat round in his hand, and looking first at his master, and then at the pattern of the carpet, which Nat must have, at least, known by heart. It was evident that he got up intending to go; but he didn't go as if he had quite finished his business—nor had he.

Nat had been for the last few weeks mustering up courage to ask Tom Meredith the reason of his altered conduct towards Kate. Not that Nat was really highly displeased at the change—as regarded the girl, though

it went some way with him—but he wished to clear up his own notion of Tom's character ; he neither believed in his pride nor his inconstancy. So he twirled his hat, and stopped short ; then he opened the door, as if he might want to make a bolt of it, and turned towards Tom.

“ Beg pardon, Squire, but have ye ever a message for little Kate ? ”

Tom Meredith stared for a minute at the old man, and then said, with tears in his eyes, “ No, Nat, no ; not to-day ; I've no message.”

“ No,” said Tom Meredith to himself, “ I wish I could send Kate a message. I wish I could tell her what a scoundrel she's taking up with, and though I dare say I'm no better than thousands of my fellow creatures, I'm an honest man at all events, and was a sober and happy one till she made me otherwise.”

This he said to himself, while Nat stood in the doorway, hat in hand, looking somewhat reproachfully at his old friend and new master.

Tom was right ; he was an honest, good fellow, steady and persevering, and his estimate of himself was a modest one. But he was a little bit reckless, and the old blood of the Merediths was stirring in him. If Kate loved a gambler and a roysterer, he was very

likely to exhibit himself in very amiable colours before long.

Old Nat Gosling left the Squire also muttering to himself, for though he could not give vent to his pent-up wrath in the presence of Tom Meredith, he found it absolutely necessary to let some of it off before he was well out of the room. What he really did say just reached the ears of the Squire, and gave him something to think about as he went up to town by the midday mail.

“She’s not just what she seems to be.”

“No ; she’s not just what she seems to be, nor what she was two or three months ago,” said Tom to himself; “more’s the pity for us both.” With which he mounted his phaeton, and hit the off horse so sharply as to upset his temper for the rest of the day. There are states of being in which one must hit something, and one of the surest signs of the old Adam in us is the sense of relief we feel when others suffer as well as we.

So Tom started for London.

“Good-morning, Nat,” said Mr. Joshua Masterman, just coming out of the stable yard as Nat Gosling came up. “I’ve been looking for you. There’s Robert tells me that there’s been somebody lurking about here all the morning, and he thinks he’s after no good.”

This was a few days later than the scene just recorded.

“Aye, aye, Mister Masterman; very like. Master Robert hisself isn’t much good; what with beer and that precious appetite of his, he’s putting on flesh every day, and he’ll have to retire into private life now afore he’s won a Derby. He’s out o’ all the two-year-old stakes already, and has nought but t’ Coop to fall back upon.”

Just then Robert appeared, and his personal appearance did not belie Nat Gosling’s description. At this moment, too, Bob was bigger than usual with the news which he was carrying about with him.

“I say, Nat, I wanted you a while ago. Do you remember a friend o’ Captain Goodge’s—him as come round the paddocks one mornin’, a fat old buffer, looked like a Jew, and called hisself Moses?”

“Yes, Bob. Money-lending old blackguard, I should think, by the look on him. What about him?” said Nat, confronting the too-stout boy, and looking mysterious.

“Why, nothin’ perticular; but I see him here this mornin’.”

“What time?”

Nothing Nat loved like a little cross-examination.

“Why, soon as it wor light; just before the young ’uns went out.”

“That shows as you worn’t in bed as usual, Bob. And what was he doin’?”

“He wasn’t doing anything perticler, but I thought you’d like to know. You see, Nat, Mr. Masterman didn’t know the lot, so it worn’t much use telling him.”

Nat felt the compliment paid to his experience, though it seems Bob hadn’t been able to keep it entirely to himself.

“No, no; in course not. I’ll take care o’ that gentleman. I thought I know’d where them shifty tricks come from. They’ve been giving pepper to our horse at the Corner. If I catch one of ’em about here, I’ll give him pepper as he won’t forget in a hurry. Mr. Masterman, which o’ them boys belongs to Flying Scud?”

“Young Tom Piggott looks after him. He’s in No. 14 now.”

“Ah! I know him. He ain’t a bad sort o’ boy, but his father’s a Methody—regular psalm-singer, and if you get one o’ them Dissenters and a Jew together, dang’d if they wouldn’t cheat the devil himself.”

By which announcement you may conclude that old Nat was too liberal in his religious opinions.

“And who is it, Nat? ’cos somebody’s pulling the strings,” said the boy.

“Well; I can’t rightly say. In course, there’s a gentleman at the bottom of it all. It ain’t everybody as is like our Squire. Ah, if all the world was to go to work like him, there’d soon be no racing at all.”

“Why, so, Nat? I don’t see why racing and honesty shouldn’t go together.”

“Because you’re a booby. It ain’t the racing, it’s the robbery as they likes.”



CHAPTER XVI.

NAT GOSLING AT HOME.

AFTER this, Nat Gosling went his rounds. The old man’s was an easy life of it; but, when occasion demanded his services, he could be brisk enough. For some reason or other, just now, he began to be remarkably active about the stables. Whether he thought that the Squire was likely to be ruined, or whether he doubted the new trainer’s honesty or capacity, is not easy to say. Nat had become an undoubted authority among the boys;

he even led a gallop to their delight—which he did to perfection, notwithstanding his age ; and he made his literary acquirements available, by giving the lads a Sunday evening lecture, theological as well as moral.

His honesty of purpose and industry fitted him for the latter ; the former post might have been better filled by the curate of Middlethorpe, only they wouldn't have paid attention to him. The Bishop of Oxford, too, might have reasonably demurred to his definition of scriptural terms, of which the reader may be glad of an example.

“Now, Nat,” said a persevering young proselyte, anxious for information ; “you said you'd tell us what a Pharisee was.”

Nat hummed and hawed for a long time, but he was sorely pressed by his juvenile auditors.

“Now, Nat, you know it is of no use if you don't explain,” said Robert.

“Well, boys, you know—a Pharisee ? why, you all know what a Pharisee is.”

“No we don't, Nat ; never heard tell on him afore.”

“Quite sure ?” said Nat.

“Quite sure,” said the boys.

“Well, then,” replied he, full of courage from their

ignorance, not from his own, "he's a little white thing like a rabbit."

Such was Nat Gosling, in his office of jack-of-all-trades: and having looked well over the yearlings after exercise, and taken a last look at Flying Scud—having previously done the pigs, the few Southdowns that the Squire kept for his own eating, and the short-horns which had been transplanted from Burleigh and Fawsley—and having finally given a general lecture on temperance and industry in the saddle-room, over a pipe, he betook himself to his home.

His home was not untenanted, though Kate Rideout was absent. The chair of honour, if it might so be called, was occupied by one Mrs. Kettle. A warm-hearted good sort of woman she was, with sharp black eyes, a great circumference of visage, and figure too for that matter, and a pagoda on the top of her head, which she called a cap, covered with bows — rainbows they might have been denominated from the variety of their colours.

The late Kettle had died early in life of a consumption of spirits and water, and the disconsolate widow had sought refuge in the housekeeper's room of the late John Sykes. She was said to have had designs on the master which failed; and she then transferred her attentions to

Nat Gosling, whom she thought of making the second Mr. Kettle. Nat Gosling, however, in his widowhood was impervious to the tender passion. He was glad, notwithstanding, to see Mrs. Kettle, in the absence of Kate, and welcomed her graciously.

They conversed on divers subjects, of which the Squire and his prospects was one. Kate was gone to Mrs. Kirby, of Long-gate, to spend the evening, and there was no necessity for reticence. Mrs. Kettle made tea, and added, as she said, for colic, something that never came out of the pump.

“Ah! he’s terribly changed, is Master Tom,” said Nat. “This fortune of his has upset the coach; he’s no ways in form, Mrs. Kettle.”

“I don’t mainly think it’s the fortune, Master Gosling. You may depend on it there’s a woman at the bottom of it. He goes to York, and he loses his money, and dines at the club, and stays away at this house and that. I don’t think he’s slept at home three nights out of the seven since the old man’s death.”

“That’s a bad sign,” said Nat, thoughtfully. “Ah! it’s the women, I expect.”

“Oh! and the men too—drat the men!” for Mrs. Kettle didn’t allow everybody the privilege of abusing her sex. “It ain’t the women as wins his money; and

I'm sure he can't get a better dinner at the York Club itself, though they do say great things of it, than I can put before him any day."

Mrs. Kettle then spread her rather coarse but very clean pocket handkerchief over her knees, and proceeded to mingle buttered toast with her intelligence.

Nat Gosling was anxious to learn what he could of the Squire's movements; and as he knew quite enough of domestic life to be certain that the housekeeper's room or the servant's hall got the first information, he asked, with a great appearance of simplicity, whether there was any "particular party as the master seemed to take to. None o' the Miss Quails, think ye, Miss Kettle?"

"Lor' bless you, Mr. Gosling. What! for the likes o' them to——"

"Nor Colonel Maynard's, nor Miss Silvertop, the great heiress? And yet you think that there's a woman at the bottom of it all."

Here Nat turned the whole contents of his cup into his saucer, and drank it at a draught.

"Mr. Gosling, do you ever guess what's the matter wi' master? When he was plain Tom Meredith, did he ever come down here of a evening?"

"O' course he did, to ask about tho horses, as in duty

bound; now he ain't no call to come here you know, Mrs. Kettle."

"Folks did say something about our Kate, Mr. Gosling, and I do say as whatever happens, an honest man don't go about with the wind. Money's money, and love's love; and they didn't ought to be mixed up together."

"They very seldom are, Mrs. Kettle," said Nat again, sententiously.

"I say, it would be a fine thing for Kate, there's no denying it. It 'ud be a fine thing for your granddaughter to be mistress o' the Hall, Nat Gosling. It's a different thing from a trainer's cottage. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a round of beef and hatred therewith."

Mrs. Kettle knew what she meant, but her tea had been stronger than usual that evening. However, the round of beef was quite near enough.

"Do you know, Mrs. Kettle," said Nat, looking through a cloud of tobacco-smoke at the energetic widow, "do you know who Kate is?"

"Kate's a great favourite of mine, Mr. Gosling; but she's your granddaughter, and it 'ud be a fine thing to be mistress of Nobbly Hall."

"Kate Rideout isn't my granddaughter; and if she was mistress of Nobbly Hall it wouldn't be more than she deserves. When old John Sykes was a dying he made me promise to keep the secret till Kate was of age.

To-day is her twenty-first birthday, and I'll tell you all about it." Here Nat Gosling lit a pipe, and continued his story at solemn intervals between the puffs of smoke.

"Asking your pardon, Mrs. Kettle, now we're on the subject, Kate Rideout's mother was a distant relation of your late master, John Sykes. She ran away with a young officer from the farm-house in which she was at service as a dairymaid.

"Shameful hussy!" exclaimed Mrs. Kettle.

"Wait a bit, Marm," said Nat. "When they went after her they found she was married all right and regular, like an honest woman. And as the young man had acted like an honest man by her, his family refused to see her or him, and cut off the supplies. That's the reg'lar course, I'm told, when a gentleman behaves to a poor girl as he ought. I think I should be inclined to leave him a shilling or two, but they didn't. So they goes to India; and he gets killed, and dies; and she follows him; and all the property they sends back was this one poor little Kate. John Sykes educates her, and pervides for her, and they calls her my niece—or granddaughter, or something—'cos he knowed how charitable the world was, and what they'd ha' said of him for pervidin' for a poor relation. So, as I told t' Squire, she's not just what she seems."

Nat had got as far as this in his explanation of Kate's previous history, and Mrs. Kettle was enjoying it open-

mouthed, when the door of the cottage was burst open, and Kate herself, as pale as a ghost, rushed into the room.

Her fright amounted to very little, after all. She had seen the notorious poacher, Mark Heron, in company with a most formidable-looking old Jew. It was moonlight, and she thought she recognised the stranger who had slept at old Nat's cottage for a night or two previous to the funeral. She had not been accosted by them; nor did they appear to have been guilty of any very suspicious conduct. But she had heard them mention the name of Tom Meredith, coupled with some vague threats of vengeance; and Kate, usually courageous enough, conjured up terrors that at another time would scarcely have occurred to her as worth notice.

And when Kate had finished, she had to listen to Nat Gosling's confession, to which he added some reminders, that Kate was now a lady of some fortune, and might aspire to the hand of something or somebody exceptional—even to a winner of the Derby; decidedly, in Nat's opinion, the man of the year.

It might reasonably have been expected that this revelation should have elated Kate Rideout; and in one respect it did. Her respectability of parentage, on her father's side, seemed to bridge over a sort of gulf between her and the Squire of Nobbly Hall. On any other score she was the Kate of old. Parents are valuable,

and she regarded them in this light, as genitorial, pecuniary, protective, and educational aids.

These last three positions had been eminently forfeited by Captain and Mrs. Rideout, who had brought her into the world, and had allowed her to shift for herself when in it.

“I don’t know anything, Nat, about your being my grandfather or not,” said the girl, when told of her genealogical claims on the late owner of Nobbley; “but I know that I have to thank you and John Sykes for everything in the world that I have, and I don’t want to forget it. I should have been very happy to have remained your granddaughter, and I only hope you’ll do your duty by that Mark Heron and the old Jew I’ve just met as you’ve done it by me.”

“They’re only after t’ Scud, my girl; but I think we shall be too many for ’em yet;” with which he relapsed into a contemplation of Mrs. Kettle’s head-dress.

Before that lady’s retirement, however, Nat Gosling produced some of old Mr. Sykes’s very best port and sherry, and he and Mrs. Kettle proceeded to drink Kate’s twenty-first birthday, and to wish her many years to enjoy the little bit of property that John Sykes had given her, at odd times, to say nothing of the legacy.

CHAPTER XVII.

DESIGNS BY A PROFESSIONAL ARTIST.

WHILE matters were thus progressing at Nobbley and Middlethorpe, the *dramatis personæ* were not idle in London. Tom Meredith had reached his destination, and found himself in the buoyant waters of successful London life. The Squire's reputation had long preceded him. Old friends of his uncle, the Colonel, were willing to welcome him ; and had sons—ill-natured people would have added daughters—who were not likely to remember anything to the disadvantage of so eligible a companion.

To tell the truth, there was very little to recollect ; for it is a remarkable trait of good society that a man may be as poor as he pleases, without any interference on its part, and may "come again," as we say of a beaten horse, without any intrusive inquiries, so long as he comes with plenty to satisfy all demands, which, under those circumstances, are apt to be exigent. Who in the world had troubled themselves about the Merediths when out of it ? Who wanted to know whether what Grindley Goodge said of the antecedents of Tom Meredith was true

or false? He was no great authority, and disappointed heirs were known to be spiteful. In fact the report which he spread, or endeavoured to spread, among the men at Tattersall's and at the clubs, was received with about the same favour as "I don't know whether you know it or not, but your horse has lost a foreshoe," is received in the middle of a good run. "Which is it?" "The near foot," replies the obsequious stranger. "Ah! thanks: I dare say it won't hurt." *Sotto voce*: "Confound his stupidity! why couldn't he mind his own business? I dare say I should never have found it out till the run was over, and now I shall be fancying he goes lame at every stride."

What could it signify to old Lord Cruiskeen if Tom Meredith had been a bailiff, or a tenant farmer, or a trainer? he looked like a gentleman; the Merediths were very good people, heraldically considered; Tom rode and drove capital cattle, and gave good dinners, and played high, and lost his money like "one of us." Glenlivet was quite right to put him up at the turf, and I shall go down and canvass for him. With the youngsters his family misfortunes created a strong sympathy, now that they had come right again; and it was quite a feather in his cap that the Colonel had ruined himself with gambling and extravagance, and left Tom to bear the brunt of it, and go into slavery for his uncle's debts. I don't know that one thrives so well on family ruin, unless one

has a good Phoenix-like chance of coming out of the ashes all right again after a time.

One thing was quite clear : Tom was living as if he were determined to make up for lost time. His first appearance at the Corner (for it was the Corner, you know, in those days) put the Flying Scud in his right place, and Captain Goodge and Major Mulligan in the wrong one. As, however, those gentlemen and their friends had their own reasons for believing that the owner was either ignorant or dishonest, and that the Criterion winner was only intended for milking purposes, they felt no compunction in laying the odds pretty freely, as the price day after day became shorter, and takers more numerous. Tom Meredith made no mystery of his own opinion, and being one of those ill-mannered fools who speak the truth whenever they do open their mouths, he persuaded his friends that he had a colt as likely to win the Derby as any public horse in the betting, so they backed him accordingly.

Honesty is the best policy on the turf ; for as few speak the truth or believe it, it is well calculated to deceive universally. Diplomacy is said to share its reputation and its defence.

If all that was said of Tom Meredith had been true, he need have won a fortune on the Derby, if his health lasted as long. I am not going to defend the system by which he was endeavouring to cheat himself into happi-

ness or forgetfulness. It would be preferable, and more in accordance with some parts of his character, that he should have endeavoured to bear what his disordered imagination taught him to believe, or that he should have gone straightway, analytically or personally, into an investigation, which would have been attended with very little inconvenience, and certain relief to himself and Kate Rideout.

However, Tom's present position is one of an entirely exceptional kind. The conviction that we have been deceived where we had the greatest reason to trust, is, of all things, the hardest to bear—the most agonising, the most distracting; and to talk of inconsistency in such a crisis is only to describe the natural result of the trial upon a strong and nervous mind; so Tom wallowed in all the extravagance of sensual pleasure, and made his body a slave to fifty passions, while his mind was the slave but of one.

And while the Squire—much abused name in the days we live in!—was wasting his substance in riotous living, another of our acquaintances by no means confined his attention to his betting-book and its accompaniments. Grindley Goodge had other irons in the fire. To say that Grindley Goodge, or any rascal of the same kind, was in love in its best sense, is to give them credit for more than they are capable of. From the moment he had set eyes on Kate Rideout he had

conceived a violent and misdirected passion for the girl; and the circumstance of her unprotected situation, as one of his own tenants (as far as he could understand), gave him hopes which his knowledge of her character would not have excited.

Unfortunately her own request to him, made in behalf of Tom Meredith, and a coquettish manner, natural to her, and increased by her position as a suppliant to him, encouraged those hopes. It was not a time for Kate to have resented, severely, any impertinent allusions, or presumptive gallantries, as long as they were confined to words, nor did she do so. She was quite willing to trust to her own resources at any future time to relieve herself from the results of that interview, in which she begged and received a favour. Grindley Goodge, too, whose very passion was tinged with avarice and revenge, attached double importance to the pursuit of his object, by reflecting that Nat Gosling and Flying Scud might be assailable through Kate; and that Tom Meredith's punishment would be doubly severe if it deprived him of a Derby and a mistress at the same time. Any idea of the honourable love that Tom felt for the girl herself, after his restoration to his true position, was inconceivable to Goodge.

The cloth was still on the breakfast-table at Captain Goodge's lodgings in Piccadilly. The confederates were together, and discussing the chances of Rasper for the

Two Thousand, which was to be run in a fortnight's time.

"After that the Derby will be unpleasantly close for some of us. However, I presume the trial was quite right," said Goodge, helping himself to a cigar.

"Quite right, as far as we can possibly ascertain. I own the manner in which the horse has been backed since Meredith's arrival in town would have staggered me but for Mark Heron's assurance," said Major Mulligan.

"And what does that amount to?" inquired Chouser.

"That he was close by at the time; that the boys both say it was right. He examined them separately, and one is a relation of his own; and that he knows Nat Gosling would like to do Meredith a turn for the way he treated some girl at the farm; and that's the reason he's let him back the horse as he has done."

"Two strings to one's bow, Mulligan, is an Englishman's motto, and we've got too much money on it to run any risk. What with Woodbie, and Fitzwalter, and the money we've got out of Meredith, who's as green as grass, we can go on for a bit; but if the Derby comes off wrong, I must go."

So spake Grindley Goodge, in a manner which had nothing but earnestness about it.

"And I shall retire upon me friend Davis. Faith, I'll be mortgaging me interest in Castle Mulligan, and

I'll look to Mo. there to help me out of the scrape," said Major Mulligan.

"S'help me, I shall be in the 'ole myself," said the Jew. "There's Captain Goodge's thousand, and Mr. Chouser's seven hundred, and Lord Woodbie's bill for two thousand——"

"Why, hang it, Mo., what an old Jew you are! you know he only got thirteen hundred for it."

"And a fine Rembrandt, you remember—a very fine Rembrandt—worth six hundred, at least."

"A copy; for which Christy offered him forty-two pounds. Besides, he's as safe as the church," said Chouser.

"Vich, Mr. Chouser, yours or mine? Ah! it ain't just vot it vas. There's guardians and fathers, and all sorts of natural obstacles to gentlemen spending of their money. And they plead their minority—and Lord Woodbie isn't of age. Oh, we must win, or I'll be in the 'ole." So sighed Mo. Davis.

"We must win," said Goodge, who, at all events, was a man of action. "We must win. Now, Davis, we shall make it all safe, if you'll do as I tell you. The first thing you'll do will be to go down to the north. I'd go myself, but they know me too well. You'll get hold of my friend, Mark Heron—you know whereabouts to find him; and as you're a client of old Quail, there won't be much difficulty about that. You must go to work with Mark;

he's safe enough. He owes Meredith a grudge, which he'll pay with interest. He had him in once for three months, and he has'nt forgotten it. The first thing is the boys. One's enough—the boy that takes care of the Scud. It's young Tom Piggott. He's come of a bad lot—they're all Dissenters. It's no use to heat too many irons, if you want but one. See what's to be done with the boy first."

"They're such liars, are them boys, Captain ; they'd take your spondoolics, and then sell ye to the other party. I don't like boys."

"No fear with an old file like you, Mo. I should like to see the boy that would get anything out of you for nothing. However, the thing must be done, and as we must stay here, I wish you would go down to Nobbley. It's too delicate a business to trust to everybody. If you report well, I'll run down myself; and I would now that Meredith's away, but I'd rather not be seen till a little later. Have you done anything for Meredith yet? He must have spent a year's income in the last month."

"Not yet. His paper's valuable at present, and there's some of it out in the City. They'll come to me by-and-by."

"And if you'll come to me in the evening, I'll tell you how to proceed at Nobbley."

Which he did, and the result of which we shall see hereafter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“WHAT ARE THE ODDS AS LONG AS YOU’RE HAPPY?”

WE must return now for a while to Lord Woodbie. He was a delightful type of the utterly reckless young English gentleman. He was, up to the code of honour established for general guidance in fashionable society, a perfect gentleman. There was a coolness, a perfect *sang froid*, in all his proceedings, in contemplating which it seemed marvellous that he should be ruining himself so rapidly. He had always had a taste for fast life of the high school, in which, in an inverse ratio to the apparent absence of all effort, was the effect wrought.

And we live, happily, in days when a man is so far independent of convention that he may make a beggar and an exile of himself in any way that he pleases, so long as he reaches that consummation at last. Lord Woodbie knew that there were many roads leading to the devil, and at first he was under some difficulty as to choice. He hung a long time between the Mæcanas-like occupation of theatrical patronage with a prima donna, and the popular character of an Apicius. The first he rejected from a sense of its servility! the latter from its utter in-

adequacy to the end proposed. The prevailing taste of the day led him to Newmarket and the Shires.

While yet an undergraduate he had a string at the head-quarters of turf business, and was in treaty for the Poundingshire hounds, as soon as the present master had finished his occupation. It was supposed that another year would about do for him. He had had then four (and no one ever exceeds five) seasons in a fashionable county.

The room in which we now find him was moderately sized, and most exquisitely furnished. On the left of the door, upon entering, was a long table, round which stood some twelve or fourteen men, all of them dressed as gentlemen who have lately left the table, but exhibiting in their demeanour and appearance a wide variety of intellectual and genealogical type. They stood round while the caster, shaking the dice-box, called his main and backed it.

In the centre was a table, not unlike the table d'hôte of the Hotel des Princes or the Grand in Paris, where plate-glass, flowers, fruit, and champagne and claret invited the players to refresh themselves after a successful *coup*. There is nothing so appetising as winning a thousand or two.

On the right of the room was another table, more frequented, perhaps, than the hazard-table. It was covered with a roulette cloth, and the ball continued to roll while the players were invited to make their game.

Here and there, between the two, or standing over the fireplace discussing the chances of the Two Thousand candidates, were small knots of men, with their pencils and betting-books in hand.

"Will nobody back anything?" said a languid voice from the centre.

"Yes, I will—seven. Seven it is—wait till I've thrown out. Don't go, old fellow. Seven—five. I'll take the odds. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll lay you four hundred—five it is; that's seven monkeys you owe me, Cardington. I'll lay you four hundred to one against the Scud for the Derby, if you'll lay me five to two against Rasper for the Guineas. Come, that's on the square."

"No, I can't back the Scud at that price. You want Meredith——"

At that moment the door swung open, and Tom Meredith walked into the room.

"What's that, Woodbie?" and he pulled out his book. "I'll take you four hundred to one—again, if you like."

"Write it down, Meredith." Which he did.

Tom Meredith had been drinking; he was perfectly master of himself, but there was an excited look about him, and his eyes were restless and inflamed. His face, too, had become thinner, even in these few weeks, though he was still as handsome as ever, and an excellent type of the English country gentleman. There was no man who showed birth more palpably, in spite of every dis-

advantage, than Tom Meredith. There was, however, a weary look about him, and a worn expression of face, which seldom lighted up, excepting on the subject of his Derby colt.

Among the players at either table were the Duke of Cadwallo, Lord Glenlivat, Fitzwarren, Colonel Cardington, Goodge, and Mulligan. They made way for Meredith, who took the box and threw out at once. As he looked up, he saw Goodge and Mulligan, and returned the formal bow of the first by equally slight and formal recognition; with Major Mulligan he was less particular: and had the bowing and betting acquaintance of every-day life. His position with Grindley Goodge, after what had occurred, was peculiar. He would willingly have ignored him, had it been possible, but it was not.

At men's rooms, at the club, at Tattersall's, everywhere he met with him; and from the first moment he had been betrayed into a sort of recognition of him. A decided quarrel would have jeopardised the reputation of Kate; better let things take their chance, and avoid familiarity with one whom he had reason to regard as a scoundrel and his enemy.

After playing, with very bad luck, for half-an-hour, he turned to leave the club-house, and was greeted by Lord Woodbie, with whom he had become tolerably intimate.

“Come home with me, Meredith; it's hot, and I'm

tired of this; come and have a rubber, or a game at écarté."

Meredith assented, and they walked slowly down to Grosvenor-square.

"Put lights in the small library, and lay out the card tables; and put some supper and champagne into the dining-room. Has anybody been here?"

No one had been there. At that moment there was a knock at the door.

"Sir Felix Graham and Mr. Fitzwarren," and the servant shut the door.

"What did you do, Graham?"

"I lost a thou.; and Fitz won three hundred of it. I'm come here to get it back again."

This ingenious confession inspired no anxiety, as Graham was proverbially unlucky.

"Then let us begin, or you'll have a participator in your success. I believe Mulligan and Chouser are coming."

"Who's the woman I saw with the Major in the phaeton? They say she's a daughter or a niece."

"Something of the sort; a niece, I believe," said Woodbie, who felt obliged to say something; and he blushed as he said it.

"They say Glenlivat's a good deal there. Old Cruiskeen won't like that."

"The girl would have the worst of it, I should think.

Latimer is quite as good a man as Glenivat; and I know no harm of Major Mulligan, or his family."

Lord Woodbie spoke rather more argumentatively than the subject seemed to require.

"All I mean to say is, that as Glen has no money, and Mulligan can't be a millionaire, the match wouldn't be to old Cruiskeen's liking. She'd look well enough as a countess, whenever the old boy goes; but beauty won't pay the mortgages on the Glenivat property, Woodbie."

"But you think she would look well as a countess, Felix."

"She's the best looking woman I've seen, and I intend to cultivate the Major."

Here there came another knock at the door.

"Then you've nothing to do but to drop another thou. to-night, and let part of it go into his pocket," observed Fitzwarren, languidly.

"What does he give you at billiards, Woodbie?"

"Nothing. I can give him ten out of a hundred. He plays rather a flukey game, or I think I could manage fifteen."

Fitzwarren thought not, so did Meredith; but it was no use to say so; so the young nobleman continued happy in his delusion.

The Major arrived, and with him, not Chouser, but Goodge. Then the party agreed to a pool at *écarté*, which

they played till four in the morning, the principal winners being Meredith and Sir Felix Graham ; but here was no great mischief done, and revenge was promised at the Major's house at no distant period.

Somebody says that revenge is sweet. I hope these gentlemen found it so. But I have my doubts of the truth of that proverb, when it costs six or seven hundred pounds. You may give too much money for a sovereign.

This was precisely the case three nights afterwards, when Major Mulligan entertained a select party at his own house, the only individual of the party utterly indifferent to losses or gains being Lord Woodbie. That gentleman had been exceedingly piqued, without certifying it to himself by the association of any name but his own with Julia Latimer ; and as Lord Glenlivat was just the sort of person to be emulated rather than followed, Lord Woodbie determined to ascertain before long the exact position he held in the lady's estimation. In fact, he was very seriously in love, and, although Lady Woodbie and Lord Cruiskeen, and plenty more earls and countesses, might have turned up their noses at the *mesalliance*, good luck or Providence had brought his juvenile lordship face to face with a very worthy object for the exercise of his affection. So he lost and won, and lost again, cheered by the presence of his divinity, who presided in her uncle's drawing-room, until

11—:

the lateness of the hour and the heaviness of the stake warned her that it was time to retire.

Lord Glenlivat had the best of the play and the worst of the game, and was easily consoled for the preference given to Lord Woodbie by getting back some of his lost thousand.

Woodbie had quite ignored the pleasures of *écarté*, where the lucky abundance of kings in his adversary's hands accounted for his losses, until he had handed over all his ready money, and was wondering where he was to find a few hundreds more for to-morrow. The dilemma was solved by a most respectable old gentleman with a curious accent, who had watched the various encounters with considerable interest, but who had declined playing.

"I O U's," said he, upon seeing one of them across the table, "is nothing. Give a little bill, that's my way : you owe seven hundred, Lord Woodbie." Then and there, to the apparent astonishment of the party, he drew forth a large pocket book, full of acceptances and bills of all sorts. "There, get upon the back of that : just put your name across there. It's for von thousand at three months' interest, at ten per shent ; no commission charged ; no nothin'—just as a friend : that's von hundred more. Now, Major Mulligan, you give Lord Woodbie two hundred change. There, now you got your money. His lordship's got somethin' in hand, and then he'll pay me the thousand pounds ven he can. We always renews."

"I don't see the great advantage," said Lord Woodbie, aughing, and pocketing the notes.

"Vy, you're all satisfied, and it makes the time pass so quick. The three months 'll go like winking, ven you're on the back of a good bill."



CHAPTER XIX.

THE WORLD'S OPINION OF THE TENDER PASSION.

CADWALLO CASTLE was one of those charming places, not very common anywhere, but more so in this country than elsewhere. The externals of pleasure were there in great abundance: parks, lawns, shrubberies, groves, cascades, fountains, and conservatories. They appeared almost endless, and the resources of the proprietor seemed so inexhaustible, that if another mountain were wanting to complete the picture, you would have felt inclined to order it. They had done so by many of the largest trees, and the grand waterfall was as artificial as the crimson and white velvet curtains in the state apartments.

It had two pleasures quite apart from these, and one of the chief ones was the consciousness that you might do exactly as you liked.

There were hacks to ride, carriages to drive, billiard balls to knock about, cigars to be smoked, and a room to do it in. Eating and drinking at all hours, and of the very best. Pictures to look at, and books to read.

One restriction only was placed upon you : you were expected to dine with the duke and his guests at eight o'clock, and to enliven the company afterwards by doing something more lively than going to bed. The duke was too well-bred a man to allow you to be made uncomfortable in his house, but he had a decided notion of the fitness of things, and did not like square pegs in round holes. You were expected to enjoy life as he and his friends enjoyed it, and after the retirement of the duchess and the ladies, it was rather trying to a delicate constitution.

At present the house was full. His Grace of Cadwallo was finishing a very good season, and as he had still a dozen or two of hunters not done up by the six days a week, he was giving a series of mounts to some of his hard-riding henchmen. There was also a goodly sprinkling of handsome ladies scattered about the castle, who rode and drove, and played rubbers and sonatas, and waltzed with one another's lords, or with the guardsmen and idlers who fill up the corners in such houses with great satisfaction to themselves and the women. You were not obliged to gamble, but you

could not play at whist for counters at Cadwallo Castle.

Perhaps a more popular man than the duke—considering the levelling tendencies of the age in which we live—can scarcely be conceived. He had one of those good-looking English faces, not very strictly handsome, full of good humour and colour, with flourishing whiskers, and white teeth. They paid him the compliment of saying that he always ran his horses to win—an odd feather to stick in a gentleman's cap ; and that as long as he had money he was the most liberal of men, though those halcyon times were not of every-day occurrence.

In most houses or families there is an *ami de la maison*, who does an immensity of mischief ; who is always cheerful and inconsiderate ; treading on everybody's corns ; detecting everybody's weak points, purveying family scandals, sympathising with hypothetical misfortunes, and enjoying much satisfaction at the expense of other persons' happiness or reputation. The same sort of person, of the feminine gender, is to be found in small country towns—generally a woman of some consideration—whom no one likes to offend, though no one can explain why. In the more extended sphere of county society, there is not unfrequently the same misfortune to be met with. What provokes me much is, that they are usually smiling, smirking women, inclined to *embonpoint* if not positively stout—of whom it is difficult to believe

anything mischievous. Yet the poison of asps is under their lips. They are wealthy, highly connected, full of little *soins* for other people, which cost them nothing, and with which they buy a great deal.

One of these women was at the duke's. Miss Nisbett—not a woman to offend, connected with half the county, marvellous in good works, wealthy, entertaining largely, full of news and a *mauvaise langue*.

“My dear Lady Florence”—they were in the conservatory, after breakfast, the gentlemen being away—“I have it from the best authority. Why is he not here with his mother?”

“There may be hundreds of reasons. Perhaps he's hunting elsewhere, or gone to Newmarket,” replied Lady Florence, colouring a little as she spoke.

“Ah! there it is. Newmarket. Why is Lord Woodbie at Newmarket? Why, my dear, the woman is a Newmarket woman; a trainer's niece or daughter—some relation to some blackleg or other.” The reason why Miss Nisbett had selected Lady Florence as her victim, was a supposed partiality on her part for Lord Woodbie. “But here's the duchess. Now, duchess, tell me, for I feel so sorry for dear Lady Woodbie; what is this all about? Woodbie's engagement, you know. Such a nice fellow as he to throw himself away.” But the duchess protested her ignorance of the whole affair. “Then, perhaps, it's nothing, after all. I only heard it casually at Venom

Grange the other day ; that amusing creature Glenlivat was there imitating the lady's provincialisms ; and the new man from Nobbley, old Colonel Meredith's heir, took dear Lord Woodbie's part, and vowed the affection was quite Platonic. I'm not a believer in Platonic affections."

"Nor I, in the present case, certainly," said her Grace of Cadwallo, somewhat discomfiting Miss Nisbett, who, however, had gained her point in making Lady Florence a little uncomfortable, and in assuring herself that Lady Woodbie was certain to hear the good news before many hours. And so she did, and being a good mother, became very anxious to hear the story from some of the men, not knowing how much of Miss Nisbett's story was credible. So she lay in wait for the duke on his return from hunting, and took a little turn with him in the garden. Whether he esteemed himself fortunate in being home early, or not, on that day, I cannot tell.

"Now, Cadwallo," said the widowed countess, keeping her crinoline with difficulty free from the duke's spurs, as he sauntered by her side in his pink and leathers, "What's Cecil been doing?"

"Much what everybody else does, I presume. Do you mean anything particular?" added he, seeing his sister-in-law's anxiety.

"But what does everybody else do?" said the lady.

“Well, he plays, I suppose; everybody plays. I do, sometimes.”

Here he flicked off an early flower with his whip.

“Oh, it’s not play; besides, as long as he plays with you——”

“But he doesn’t play with me. Is it debt? because that can’t be very bad at his time of life, and I could arrange anything for a time.”

“No, no, Cadwallo; it’s not that I care about so much; but there’s some woman at the bottom of it all. Miss Nisbett heard it all at Venom Grange. You know she hears everything.”

“She thinks she does, and invents more. If it’s only old Nisbett, most probably there’s nothing in it.”

“But she says Glenlivet knows all about it. The girl is connected with some betting man,—some Mulligan, or Mullingar; a somebody with a terrible brogue. She says Woodbie is always with her.”

“Now I know whom you mean. Mulligan’s niece. A very likely woman to make a hole in a soft place.”

“But is she an adventuress; and is Cecil really serious in his attachment to her?” And Lady Woodbie almost wrung her hands. “I’d do anything in the world to make him happy, but a *mesalliance* is too dreadful to think of.”

“Then don’t think of it, and don’t let old Nisbett call names. She’s not at all a proper person for Woodbie to

marry. Her uncle lives by his wits, and his livelihood is a good one. She hasn't a shilling, but the girl is a lady of good family, I believe, and as handsome as an angel. I believe Mulligan makes a decoy of her; but I never heard a word to her discredit. Still, I don't want her for a niece, even by marriage; and you can get a better daughter-in-law."

"He's very headstrong, Cadwallo."

"And very heartwhole, Emily. If you want to know who she is, ask Boppinton, he knows all about her; he's coming to-morrow."

So Lady Woodbie did ask Lord Boppinton, and he was tolerably communicative. He told her all about the Hibernian uncle and his pursuits; he thought him the more dangerous influence of the two. He said she was well spoken of in Ireland by people who knew her well. She is very handsome, visits with good people, is clever and agreeable, and, of course, would be as delighted to make a match with Woodbie, as Major Mulligan would be to borrow a portion of the first year's income. Lord Boppinton thought also that interference by friends, or even by Cadwallo—the head of the house of Woodbie—would prove injudicious. "Write to him yourself: point out to him that she is not in a position to excite serious sentiments in a man like Cecil; he's plenty of pride, and if you can make him see her as she is—a decoy by which old Major Mulligan

baits his waters, and that he is the intended prey, you may save him much future anxiety, and some thousands at present."

"But do you think Cecil is really very fond of her?"

"Fond of her, my dear Lady Woodbie!" said Lord Boppinton, sententiously, "did you ever know an undergraduate fond of anything but vingt-et-un, and mediæval ritualism? No; but Mulligan is a rascal, and she is a lady, and he might make it difficult for Woodbie to detach himself from a *liaison* of the kind, excepting at a great pecuniary sacrifice. Send him to Vienna for a couple of months; I'll get him attached at once, if you like."

"Poor Cecil!"

Lady Woodbie pressed Lord Boppinton's hand, and accepted the interference in his behalf.



CHAPTER XX.

LORD WOODBIE TAKES A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THE SAME.

THIS was the manner in which the tender passion was discussed at Cadwallo. They were all very good people, too; that is, very good husbands and wives, but they

didn't comprehend that peculiar phase of love which induced an earl, and heir apparent to a dukedom, to attach himself to a sort of Irish adventuress, as they called her ; a Miss Mulligan, or Latimer, or Ladbrook, or something of that kind. If she had been a Lady Mary, now, or even an Honourable, or somebody that had a sort of living acquaintance with the great world, they would have tolerated it. But none of the men had ever seen this woman, and they appeared to know almost too much of her. The worst part of it was that Boppinton, who had estates in the same county as Castle Mulligan, evidently regarded her as a sort of lady.

"It was very awkward," as Lady Woodbie observed, almost *sotto voce* ; "very awkward, indeed. What a comfort it would be if the boy would but marry."

"But not that terrible Irish woman, Lady Woodbie," said the incorrigible Nisbett. And, having rubbed up her friend, as usual, the wrong way, she retired.

On one thing, especially, Lady Woodbie (and she was really a charming person in many respects) prided herself. She believed her great *forte* to be letter-writing. Not that I would have the reader infer that she put pen to paper upon every trivial occasion ; she left that to the newly-finished schoolgirls and sentimental division. What she meant by letter-writing was a different thing altogether. It was a clear, concise epistle, expressive of

her opinion, in plain language ; and as it was only employed upon certain occasions, it served as an outlet to her ladyship's feelings, when a task worthy of such interposition presented itself. The present was manifestly such an one. Having left all the women in the castle settling the programme of a drive to some showplace or other, she retired to her room, and placed herself at her desk, wondering, in the mass of advice which she felt it her duty to give to Lord Woodbie, where she should begin.

On one thing she came to a speedy conclusion—that the main subject of her letter should appear last—it should be the clencher.

While the lady collects her thoughts, it is worth while to turn back to Lord Woodbie, and see what use he was making of his time.

No one knows the value of promptness better than he who has proposed just half an hour after his hated rival has been accepted ; and Lord Woodbie began to be seriously alarmed lest some of the numerous admirers of the lady should anticipate him.

His life was not that of an anchorite in any respect. He was always gambling ; and his leading purveyors were a couple of unjust stewards. Grindley Goodge supplied him with horses, and Mo. Davis with money to pay for them. The two drove a thriving trade at his expense. But his principal losses were at Mulligan's,

where he had become an almost daily guest. The Major took care that the dinners were good, and the company not too penetrating ; and between the '44 claret, and the manual dexterity which belonged to most of the party, Lord Woodbie suffered considerably. Having but little luck to back, he backed his want of it, and came to grief accordingly.

But there was always at Mulligan's one satisfaction. He sat by his divinity, and drank in happiness to which the loss of a fortune could have been no counterpoise. They returned to their pleasant meetings in Ireland, and both were glad of a subject in common which could not be shared by other people. Major Mulligan, too, was the most considerate of hosts. Whatever his impatience to begin his work of robbery, be it at billiards or cards, he was always submissively patient to Lord Woodbie's inclination for his niece's society. How many mornings he passed in innocent conversation, or in the *dolce far niente* of incipient love-making, which must have been devoted to far more dangerous occupations but for what began as a Platonic affection ! The basis of two thirds of the good in this world is an honourable devotion to woman.

But this could not go on for ever. The Major could not always be out in the morning. He was compelled to be an occasional witness to the dalliance of the turtle doves in his own drawing-room. Paternal were his looks upon

these occasions; the semblance of virtue sat nobly upon him. His manner and appearance stood the test of this electro-plating well. He really was in no hurry; for, like the man with the single snipe, though he liked the excitement of shooting at him, he didn't want to kill him. The Major had but one niece, and she was very useful to him; still, if Woodbie proposed, who was she to say no to an earldom and thirty thousand a year? There were two prospective advantages which made the well-bred ruffian most anxious to catch his hare.

He was wary, too, as well as anxious. "Surely the net is spread in vain in the sight of any bird;" so he said not a word to Julia, and only flattered Lord Woodbie through his palate. He knew his niece too well, and Woodbie scarcely well enough.

The morning of the memorable conversation at Cadwallo Castle there took place a still more memorable one in Major Mulligan's front drawing-room—one which astonished the principal actors in the drama, and which would have given society a refreshing notion of the characteristics of an adventuress.

"Ah! Miss Latimer; now you're angry."

The speaker was Lord Woodbie, who was sitting near the lady, and bending down with an appearance of interest in her answer, which the previous tone of half badinage in which they had been talking scarcely seemed to render necessary.

“Angry, Lord Woodbie! No, certainly not; that privilege belongs to others.”

“Why not to you? I never seem to please you.”

Here he hesitated, as if he had said too much or had more to say.

“You once called me Cecil.”

“We were younger then.” But Julia Latimer blushed, and turned from him. “Besides, our situation was different.”

“I don’t see it. Be the same to me, Julia, and let me be the same to you.”

“My Lord, you don’t know what you ask! It’s impossible!”

“Tell me how to please you, Julia—I’ll do it;” and in a boyish way he added, with a sigh, “Ah! I’d give the world if I had it.”

“Less will do, Lord Woodbie.”

“Call me Cecil.”

Miss Latimer hung her head for a moment.

“Cecil, cease to play cards and billiards with my uncle and the men you meet here.”

“Why, I can beat him, and often give him ten or fifteen.”

“Possibly; but—but he can’t afford to lose. Then there are Captain Goodge and Mr. Chouser, both such lucky players.”

“Yes, that’s where it is. Goodge really knows nothing

of the game, and I don't believe in luck in the long run."

"Ah! so it is you combat every request I make. Listen, Lord Woodbie. Can you give up cards, and dice, and gambling for me? Will you learn to live a life different from that of your present associates?" Here she hesitated, as if she had said too much; but proceeded: "My uncle is kind to me, and loves me; but if you would really please me, you must not come here. Can you find no better occupations than these?"

Lord Woodbie stood with his eyes fixed on the ground, for they had both risen, while Julia Latimer seemed to have lost all fear, and looked steadily at her lover.

"You have a mother, Cecil. Think that she is always with you."

"Let me believe that you are, Julia."

But she hurried on, without appearing to notice his remark:—

"Cease to affect vices you dislike, and to imitate manners you despise."

"I will; indeed I will," said Lord Woodbie. "And you will love me?"

"Act from a higher motive. Try to make yourself good and great, because it becomes your position to be so." But she did not say that she did not love him, and he augured better for his chance of success.

“And you will love me if I do all this? If you only knew all I feel, and what it is that brings me so often here. You will be my wife?”

“Hush, Cecil! I dare not say so—it is impossible! I am not fit to be your wife. Think of your family, and not of yourself, or me.”

“Not fit to be my wife?” and Lord Woodbie laughed incredulously. “Not fit to be my wife?”

“What I am fit for is best known to myself. Look upon me as your friend, and anxious for your happiness; but leave me——”

And as he attempted again to take her hand, she turned away from him resolutely—almost rudely.

“Now I know you don’t love me,” said he pettishly—for Cecil Woodbie was but a spoiled child after all—“Glenlivat has been beforehand with me.”

“That’s cruel, Cecil!” but he was gone, and in another moment Julia Latimer’s face was buried in her hands, and the tears trickled slowly from between her fingers. At the same moment Major Mulligan entered the front room by the folding doors.

“So ye’ve refused him, Madam!” and the expression of his face was not good to look at.

“I have. He knows nothing of the life you lead; the precarious subsistence of yourself and your friends. He scarcely suspects that the woman he loves is an adventuress.”

“I shouldn’t like to be the man that would say that before my face.”

“There are thousands that say it behind your back ; and you know best whether it’s true. Am I employed to dazzle and blind your victims, while you pick their pockets ? ”

And the girl looked like a Pythoness.

“Are ye mad, or blind, or dreaming ? ”

“No, I’m wide awake. Let me go out and earn an honest livelihood by washing a door-step. If your family pride sinks low enough to make you a swindler, it might well have spared me for a servant. Or if I am to be sold, let me have a master I despise ! Marry me if you will, but I’ll not act a lie towards the man I love.”



CHAPTER XXI.

A MULTITUDE OF COUNSELLORS.

Two persons, to say nothing of the lady herself, were mainly affected by the result of the conversation related in the last chapter—Major Mulligan, and Lord Woodbie. The Major’s was a most reasonable sorrow. It is hard to have so many hopes shattered at once ; so many irons

in the fire come out cold. No more billiards for the present, that seemed quite clear; no more of those pleasant private sittings at *écarté*, so profitable to the holders of cards. Whatever was to be done in that way must now be done at the Club, where anything beyond a certain number of kings was regarded with suspicion. And then the upshot of it all, a refusal of a coronet and thirty thousand a-year, upon the reputation of which he might have rested, at all events, if not retired altogether, and have lived cleanly for the rest of his days. Providence had really hit him hard this time; for his determinations of repentance were so sincere. "D—— the girl! she doesn't know the wickedness she's been guilty of." There's almost as much temptation in want as in wealth. Not absolute want, but the want of more than you can get.

Woodbie himself was a terrible sufferer. If any man had seen his breakfast-table the next morning, at four P.M., he might have guessed it. A fragment of roll torn in pieces, not eaten; an attempt upon some fish, quite futile; cutlets and early asparagus cold on the dish; coffee-pot quite full, and champagne bottle quite empty. It was clear his lordship had begun his reform at once, for he could not smoke. When he left his bed, it would have been difficult to detect that it had ever been made; it hadn't been slept on; and the sheets were in one corner, the blankets in another, and the pillows equally

divided between both sides. "Nature's soft nurse" had not visited him that night, and his own was lately discarded. His letters, which, with one or two exceptions, is an euphemism for bills, had not been attended to; and even a request for money from Mo. Davis, who was now sitting disconsolately in the dining-room, had received no notice whatever.

The truth is, that this young nobleman was, as his sporting friends would have said, badly hit. He was hurt all over. His head was hurt, for he never calculated on such a violent blow as being loved, and refused for his vicious propensities, or an idea. His heart was hurt; terribly, he said: and his vanity was hurt. Not a difficult part to wound. Altogether, at five P.M., he didn't feel as if he should ever get over it. Mo. Davis, it is true, tried to divert his thoughts into another channel by presenting a little acceptance, overdue, for a couple of thousand, but scarcely succeeded: and as soon as the Jew was gone, a host of cheerful companions gave their opinions on his case as freely as if they had been paid for them by a handsome retainer.

"Cecil, my good fellow, you've been going it," said Lord Glenlivat, who condescendingly lighted one of the regalias so distasteful this morning to his lordship. "You've been lighting the candle at both ends, and in the middle. You must pull up. Yours is a bad case. The only thing for you to do is to marry. It's a danger-

ous remedy for youngsters ; but if you don't you'll go to the d——” This assumption of superiority from Glenlivat of all men was not calculated to soothe the wounded spirit. “ Besides, Woodbie, you might marry deuced well. Anybody'd have you. You've lots of money ; and I haven't a shilling, you know. There's Lady Florence ; she'd have you in a minute. She can't marry without money, or I'd propose.”

Now, what a charming companion Glenlivat must have been—so much tact ; just as if he couldn't see that he didn't care for Lady Florence or anybody else. And then the little noble's chaotic mind gave quite a flourish of—no, not trumpets—imprecations, at which Glenlivat's hair stood on end. He wasn't the man to appreciate Woodbie's feelings, that's clear.

Fitzwalter was not much better.

“ Why don't you go back to Christ Church, Woodbie, and take a degree. Most respectable thing in the world. Look at Dumble ; d——d if he won't be Foreign Secretary before long ; and, with an uncle a duke, a fellow can do anything.”

Take a degree ! he felt like it. Foreign Secretary ! at this moment brain fever, or death on the gold coast, would be preferable ; for who feels pity for a Foreign Secretary. But then Fitz was ambitious, and had once written for the Newdigate.

In a day or two Saunterre, seeing that the “ young 'un

was shuck " by something or other, suggested Paris. "For," observed he to himself acutely, "if it's a woman, and it most likely is one woman, there's nothing like counter irritation—not in the homœopathic form, but by dozens, Sir—hang it, by dozens."

I don't know that his persistency would not have been rewarded by acquiescence if another medical practitioner had not stepped in with a specific. All admitted that Woodbie was "shuck." It was no use fighting against general assumption; the fact was taken for granted; all that remained for the faculty was to put him on his legs again.

"It won't do, old fellow, so I tell you," said Lord Croxton, looking in upon the youngster's seclusion, and finding him moping over a *Court Journal*; "it won't do. You want change. You're pounds out of form. You couldn't be handicapped with a plater. You're not fit to gallop half a mile with a 5st. 8lb. Come with me. I'm going down to the Pytchley. I'll put you up. An imperial crowner will do you more good than these imperial pints. You've been playing with those rascals at the Club. All alike; d——d swindlers; Cadwallo, Goodge, Pinchbeck, Mulligan—infernal rascals—all gamblers. There's nothing like hunting; it will put you all right in no time. There's two more weeks in the open, and then three in the woodlands. We'll go down to-morrow."

And Lord Croxton, who was sincere in every word he

uttered, and believed it all, to the prejudice of his best friends and relations, had nearly persuaded Lord Woodbie to go with him, though not exactly upon the principle and with the motives he urged.

“What a thing it would be for her to hear that I was trying to break my neck! I’ll go with Croxton; and won’t I ride! I’ll astonish the Pytchley men. That fellow Glenlivat’s often down here. I wish I may meet him in a run; I’ll see which is the best man then. I’ll ring and order my hunting things to be packed to-morrow; it is better than sitting here. What a beastly hole this London is! I must get some money, and——”

Here the door opened, and a servant presented the second post letters on a tray.

“Bills, bills, bills, bills,” said his lordship, shying them into the fire as fast as he looked at them. “Chouser—so I thought. Mosquito coming for the Guincas. I always told him he would; he’ll win, too, if he doesn’t look out.” Mosquito was a dead ’un, and Chouser knew it. “New brand—Colerados. Mr. Mitchell—opera-box. Private view, old masters. Weights for Warwickshire Handicap—forty subscribers; twenty-five paid forfeit. Hallo! my mother. What’s up now? Nobody dead? Not Cadwallo, I’ll be bound. Well, I shouldn’t care if he was. What can it signify to me?”

And, having looked at the rest, Lord Woodbie selected his private letters, disposing of the rest by a summary

process. Lady Woodbie's alone claims any notice at our hands. It was written without external marks of agitation.

“*Cadwallo, March —, 18—.*”

“MY DEAREST CECIL,

“You know that I can have no motive in paining you, excepting for your own good. I hear sad accounts of your extravagance and folly. I can forgive the former as easily as you imagine you can afford to pay for it. But there are some debts which encumber a man for his life. My darling Cecil, don't mistake me. Report is very busy with you and a certain Miss Mulligan, or Latimer, the niece of a gentleman whose house you frequent for purposes of play. She is manifestly an adventuress, and used by her uncle as a decoy. You are not the first, I am given to understand, for she is young and beautiful. I know your affectionate disposition, and how easily you are cajoled. Her whole object in life is to meet with an eligible *parti*, and I urge you to be cautious how you give a handle to report. That terrible woman, Miss Nisbett, talks about your being engaged. Of course no one believes her, and we all know the thing to be impossible. But an *exposé* would annoy Cadwallo almost as much as it would me, and would entail heavy pecuniary losses possibly, for those sort of people always go for heavy damages. Lord Pinchbeck tells me that

your hair wants cutting sadly ; you must go to nobody but Douglas. Truefit used to come to me, but he's old-fashioned. Bright colours are very becoming to your complexion. With much love, and best wishes for your welfare, here and hereafter,

“ Believe me, my darling boy,

“ Your very affectionate mother,

“ CECILIA WOODBIE.

“ P.S.—Lord Boppinton will call ; he has much to say to you.”

And Lord Boppinton did call. He was a clever, straightforward person, of good position, and exercising, wherever he went, a certain influence. After half-an-hour's conversation on different subjects, he said—

“ And now about these unfortunate debts. They can be paid at once at a little sacrifice. There's no use in disputing them in your case.”

“ Disputing ! ” said his lordship, starting.

“ Yes ; you have been cruelly swindled by this fellow, Davis ; but what can that signify ? Mulligan and Goodge, and these fellows, are in society, so that, between ourselves, we can't say all we think. Mulligan can give you about fifty out of a hundred at billiards, and Goodge goes by the name of Bismarck, or Warwick, the king maker. You think well about Vienna. It's a capital appointment, and I'll call to-morrow morning and

introduce you to the Minister. I'd something to do to get it ; but it's all right now. Cadwallo's delighted, and they want you to run down there for a few days before attaching yourself, which you can easily do. *Au revoir.*"

And Lord Boppinton was gone. He hadn't mentioned the lady ; he knew better.

And there was Lord Woodbie planted ; his anticipations of sensational suicide cut short ; engaged to the British Embassy without opportunity of declining ; made to understand that he had been out-played, which, however, he did not believe ; and Cadwallo thrust down his throat, as the head of the family, whom it was not decorous to set at defiance. Considering his age and his antecedents, we are not surprised to find him in Vienna, not having paid his visit to the Pytchley.



CHAPTER XXII.

THE TWO THOUSAND DAY.

IN due time came the Two Thousand Guineas day—and perhaps more cheerful weather had seldom been seen at a Spring Meeting. Newmarket Heath at the end of April may or may not be a pleasant place, according to circumstances. I have seen it rain in that

determined manner, at that season, that the Polytechnic liver would hardly have kept the wet out, and within five minutes dry you up again with a mixture of sun and wind that would have puzzled the fireman at Cre morne.

Sometimes the whole plain is covered with dust, which whirls round you, and as effectually shuts out pleasure and view as the clouds which enveloped the mother of Æneas, and sometimes a wind penetrates the inmost recesses of your clothing as effectually as a bowie knife the inmost recesses of an American senator. But nothing of the sort happened on this memorable occasion, and the proverbial popularity of the Queen with the clerk of the weather seemed to have transferred itself to the metropolis of racing.

Two or three minor events—three, I think—had come off with fatal opposition to the backers of horses. The Ring was in ecstasies of delight, and the gentlemen had been lumping down their money on a handicap sweepstakes of twenty-five sovereigns, six subscribers, N.Y.C., as if it was “now Fortune, *après*—the end of the world.”

There went in one bet alone almost as much as a winner of the Derby would have carried on his back some years ago. Then there was a rush back to the ring, and the numbers slowly went up. Sixteen starters. Five to two Rasper, four to one Mosquito, one hundred

to fifteen Locomotive, and so on, down to forty to one.

The crowd was enormous ; there was but little left of the Newmarket of old. The rail and the Press had flooded the Heath with a vagabond crowd, and every idle vagrant or bankrupt shoeblack, who was looking for a fourpenny loaf for twopence, saw it through the medium of the betting ring. There was nothing they would not lay against ; and, with a not rare infatuation with losers, nothing the others would not back.

“Cadwallo,” said the admiral, “what’s the meaning of this ? They say that the Rasper’s to be pulled. There’s a strong party against the horse, it seems ; and not a very respectable one. Do you know what it means ?”

“If it is so, I can explain it. There’s nothing to be got out of Rasper, either way ; but Goodge and his friends have laid out every shilling in the world against the Scud for the Derby. Now,” said Cadwallo, “they have a direct line for Flying Scud, through Rasper and his trial horse ; and if Rasper wins to-day, the Scud will be at even betting for the Derby, and our friend Goodge will find himself in the hole ; for he’ll never get out.”

“And which way is their money for the Guineas ?”

“Mosquito’s their best horse ; but they’ve backed the

Rasper for a trifle, to give a colour to the transaction," said the duke.

"Who rides, duke?" and the admiral directed his glasses to the board.

"That depends ; if the right man is up I shall back him ; for there are plenty of our best jockeys who would rather cut their hands off than pull a horse, and plenty more who are only desirous not to be found out. Let's go down to the bushes. It's all right, F—— is up. I'm going to the ring for a minute ;" and, cantering back, he laid out another five hundred on Rasper ; and then joined the admiral at the Bushes.

The race was run very much as other races have been run before and since. Three or four were refractory at the start, and one ran half way up the course before he could be pulled up. Six jockeys were fined for disobedience to the starter, all of which fines were paid by the owners ; and one was dismissed for disobedience to his master (who ordered him to get off first, and lead as far as he could), and was not taken into service by the starter or the stewards that we heard of.

"Now they're off!" "No, not yet!" "Yes, they are!" "No—it's that brute, !Confederate!" "Now they are—at last—here they come!" and in a close and serried body down they came across the flat ; a term singularly appropriate to some *habitués* of the heath at Newmarket. As their gay and glistening colours shot

by, the inexperienced eye detected nothing but a mass of equally excited hard-pulling horses ; but the quick glance of the admiral and his colleague told them at once that Mosquito was keeping his place on sufferance ; that Locomotive was coming a little too soon ; that Confederate was allowing himself to be shut out at the bottom of the hill ; and that the favourite was going well within himself, hard held, on the other side of the course.

The change came at the bottom of the ascent. A rank outsider began to creep up ; Confederate was foiled in an attempt to get through his horses ; the majority dropped behind one by one ; and the race remained between four or five, of which Mosquito, Locomotive, the outsider, and Rasper, were the most conspicuous. Half way up the hill Mosquito "cut it," and the outsider challenged Locomotive. All eyes round the judge's stand were fixed on the two, who came on locked together ; now one, now the other ; the shouts were redoubled ; twenty lengths from home, either's race, and both beginning to reel—blue, black—black, blue—as the whips clung round the sides of the beaten horses, when suddenly (as if the horse had dropped from the clouds, separated from the other two by a third of the width of the course) a yell, such as could proceed only from the mouth of Mr. Harper, the toast-master of glorious memory, or a successful backer, was heard shouting, "Rasper, Rasper for a thousand ; the favourite wins in a

canter, by G——,” at the moment that F——m, who had ridden him splendidly throughout, called upon him for a final effort, and cantered in a winner by a length.

The first Spring Meeting is early to cry out ; but the Two Thousand was saved from the fire for the gentleman. Such a week had not been known for a length of time. It really seemed as if there could be no more money to go through the season ; and their credit was about as bad as their finances.

“What have you done, Fitzwalter, on the week ?” inquired Major Mulligan of that gentleman, meeting him at the Club on the Saturday.

“Lost on everything but the Guineas ; I’m a couple of thousand on the wrong side of my book. What have you done ?”

“Bedad, I’ve lost a fortune, as usual ! I’d backed Mosquito to win me seven thousand, and Locomotive four—never hedged a shilling of it : and now Rasper’s at four to one for the Derby, and Flying Scud nearly at even. You can scarcely get two to one.”

“Have you seen Grindley Goodge this morning ?” said Fitzwalter.

“Not yet ; but I’ll see him soon enough. Didn’t we back Mosquito together ? I’ll have to pay and bolt. What shall ye do about the Derby ?”

“I can’t afford to back the Scud at such odds, but

I'm afraid to be against him. He'll win if he's all right."

"Ye think so, do ye?" and the Major's rubicund visage appeared not pale, but long. "And why?"

"Because they know the length of Rasper's tether, and Tom Meredith's not such a fool as to have taken 5,000 to 2,500, which he did at Newmarket on the night of the race, if they didn't think it was all right. Woodbie's very heavy against him, and has sent to me to get some of it off."

"Woodbie? Has he, though? But he can't take such odds as that! He's been laying 10 and 12 to 1, over and over again."

Grindley Goodge and Chouser entered the room, and Major Mulligan joined them immediately.

Chouser's face was usually expressive of nothing beyond one or two of the vulgarist and most ordinary passions—hunger, thirst, avarice, fear, disappointment. Not so Grindley Goodge: he felt strongly, and expressed vehemently in his features malice, cunning, self-indulgence, cruelty, boldness. One redeeming quality he had—an absence of fear. He was generally indifferent to circumstances; it might have been real courage, but it might have been that his greater fear of poverty or disgrace urged him to bolder measures than his friends. He had also a readiness of resource which produces confidence, good or vicious, as the case may be,

The case at present with the confederates was gloomy. Goodge knew it, and had boldness enough to look it in the face.

"We've a thousand or two left, Major; where's the rest to come from? We've a thousand to receive on Monday at Tattersall's, but the Guineas has played the devil with us. The position of the Scud in the market has floored us both;" and he bit his lips till the blood came, and clenched his fist with rage.

"There's Woodbie," gasped Mulligan, "was worth two thousand a year at billiards ever since he left Elton. Bedad, here's Mo. Davis!"

And the four continued in deep consultation for a length of time.

"Try the boys first!" said he at last; "and who's to do it?"

"Why, I can't," said Goodge. "Davis, you must find somebody—somebody you can trust; and who'll trust you? Bid high enough, Mo.; it's a case of life or death. Besides, there's the girl. Without that, my revenge is but half complete," he thought, rather than expressed in words.

So Mo. Davis, the old ex-tobacconist, was left to find something more than money. But Mo. Davis had his own reasons for not disputing the orders of Grindley Goodge, and they were tangible enough.

Where was the money to come from which he had ad-

vanced on bills and other equally valuable securities, before the death of old John Sykes ?

The old Jew would have been willing enough to let the Captain—or the whole British army for that matter—rot in gaol. He loved vengeance; sometimes he ground his teeth when he thought what a fool he had been, and how little he was likely to get either from Goodge or Chouser, unless he became a catspaw to get it. But he loved one thing more than vengeance, and that was money. He was a practical, energetic person enough, too much given to wringing his hands, and cursing his eyes and limbs, and calling on Moses when difficulties arose, but at the same time given to acquiring—having a bargain on hand, likely to produce a half-penny clear gain, not quitting it.

Such is the badge of all the tribe, and therefore he prepared to do the best he could for his clients, though he hated them cordially.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BITER BIT.

ON a common about a mile-and-a-half from Middlethorpe, and the same distance from Nobbley, there was a public house, known as the "Hare with many Friends." It was situated by the side of a road, a bad road, full of cart ruts and dirt, leading to unimportant places, with wastes or covers on each side of it; picturesque in the summer time, and the resort of wandering tribes of gipsies tinmen, touts, and vagabonds of all kinds. Surrounded by such features, and thus removed from much traffic, it is not to be wondered at that the Hare—the proper and original name of the house in question—should have numbered among its friends a very bad lot. It had no respectable connection. The only real gentlemen that ever went into it were men whom the hounds had brought into the covers beyond, or on to the moor; and who wanted a bucket of gruel, and a crust of bread and cheese, before pursuing a long and homeward journey. Both the one and the other were said to be as good as could be.

The landlord of this public was probably as well known and as little trusted, as the hostelry itself. He was a tall,

broad shouldered fellow, with very long, thin, shakling legs, capable, however, of carrying his body with great rapidity over a distance of ground when the watchers or keepers of the neighbouring estates were after him. He combined with the longest legs, the most consummate impudence, and an inflexibility of lying, which almost imposed upon strangers. He was occasionally to be seen doing an odd job or two for the farmers, when short of hands, for he had a gipsy-like and instinctive knowledge of horses and dogs, and was the most unmitigated poacher in the United Kingdom. His name was Mark Heron.

A few days, or rather nights—for the sun was just down—after the spring meeting at Newmarket, Mark Heron was coming along the road which led from some spinneys to the common, in the direction of his own house. He was accompanied by a stooping figure, which somewhat delayed the lengthy stride of the publican. The man in question might have been anything in the way of trade or profession, from a travelling tinker to a hedge-row lawyer; he could have been but of one nation, and that the Jewish. His dark eyes, thickly curling black hair, and heavy beard, with an unmistakable nose, declared his birth as plainly as if he had asserted it in Syrio-Chaldaic.

“I know young Grindley Goodge. Ay, many’s the lark we’ve had round these spinneys here of a night.”

It was Mark Heron who spoke, and not too loudly.

"I've heard he was a wild 'un," said the other.

"Best fellow at night I ever see. He's had a lot of his uncle's pheasants."

"His uncle's pheasants! vot vos that for?" inquired the Jew, taken aback.

"He was the only chap as ever I see as liked doin' mischief for nothin'."

"Vell, Master Heron, this ain't for nothin'; and we can afford to let you stand a raker to nothin' on it. There's only two in the race, and if the Scud don't vin, the other vill. Have you made the boy safe?"

"You shall see Tommy Piggott yourself."

"I don't care about the boys; I'm a hinfidel. But if they don't come off right there's no couters. Them's my instructions."

Saying which, the two walked into the public, and adjourned to an inner room, until household affairs took Mark Heron into the tap, and left the old Jew to his own reflections.

The gallery of pictures which remained to amuse him, consisted of the "Dog Billy in the Pit at Westminster," "Molyneux and Cribb at Moulsey Hurst," "Lord Ongley's Coventry in a Light Buggy," and a likeness of Cadland.

The Jew rang for a pipe and some brandy and water, and drew from his pocket a daily paper. To judge by his nervousness, the leaders were highly Christian in

tone, or the money article more promising than usual. At length the door opened, and closed again gently, but very securely.

The new comer was a lad of about eighteen or twenty years of age, not bad in features, but with a suspicious look about him which seemed to say, "Now you want to take me in, but it won't do." He was active, short, and strongly made about the shoulders and arms. His dress was strictly of the stable pattern; his trousers tight, his waistcoat long, his coat of a rough cloth, tightly fitting, and coming just to his seat, with side pockets. This was Tom Piggott, the boy who looked after the Flying Scud.

Tom Piggott took a seat in an arm-chair by the fire-side, almost facing the Jew, who sat on the other side near the table. He then drew a short pipe from his pocket, which he filled with tobacco from a tin or brass box, and smoked for a few seconds in silence. After which, a slipshod maid brought in a pint of ale, which she placed upon a small round table, and went out.

The Jew, after a few minutes more of silence, in which the two looked at one another, made a few remarks complimentary to the weather. They were not responded to by the boy, who smoked on in silence, looking rather as if he thought that the other wished him to answer only for the purpose of stealing his teeth. He tried to break fresh ground.

“You’ve some very nice country about here, young man.”

“Well, it’s well enough in its way, not so flush o’ quids as it might be.”

“It’s a nice country for your employment, any ways.”

“And what might you call my employment, if I may make so bold ? ”

“I should say you vos employed in the stables, as I see you yesterday about a mile and a half from here.”

“That’s not a bad guess. Now I’ll tell you what you are. You’re a old tout, and you wants to know all about our horses.”

“S’help me ! ”

And the Jew was rather taken aback by his impudence.

“There, never mind about that. I scen you once or twice before in this neighbourhood. I s’pose you wants to know all about t’ Scud. Now I can tell ye better nor anyone ; for I looks arter him. The question is, what do you stand for ’liable information ? ”

This was coming to a point with a vengeance, and made the business lighter than the old Jew had expected.

“Now, what do you want to know ? ”

“Oh ! my good boy ! Vot a boy it is, to be sure ! I do love a honest boy. I see it in his eye at once.”

Here the young vagabond winked, and seemed to treat the business very lightly.

"Well, then, it *is* about the Flying Scud. Can he win the Derby?"

"What do you mean to stand?" said the youth, still blowing steadily from his pipe.

"You've laid the odds to a couple of hundred, you have."

"Oh! I have, have I?" said he.

"Yes. Leastways, it's been laid for you," replied the other.

"But that won't make him win, stupid, will it?"

"Ve don't want him to win. You can make him lose."

And the Jew's voice sank to a mysterious whisper.

"Whew! that's your little game, is it? What! you walley's my reputation at two hundred. No, that won't do, old Abrahams. Make it five, and I say done. Five hundred's something like a start."

"You're certain he can win?" said the old man.

"There's nothin' in it but him 'and another.'"

"He might be bowled over," said the other.

"Or break down a little before the day, or have his head in a pail o' water the morning, or get nobbled plating, or something. Now, how much down?"

"Down? Ah! that's another consideration."

"Well, what's the consideration? Say twenty down," said the young one.

“ Bless the boy ! twenty pound ! where’s the money to come from ? ”

“ I don’t ask no questions about that, as long as it do come.”

“ Say ten ; p’r’aps we might find ten,” said the Jew, coaxingly.

“ I think Captain Goodge can find twenty,” said the boy, confidently.

“ Captain Goodge ! ” repeated the other ; “ what do you know about him ? ”

“ I knows all about him, and the rest o’ the party. The Scud must be got out o’ the way, mustn’t he ? You’ll want to get at him, some on ye. Who’s to let you in if I don’t ? You’ll maybe like an impression o’ the key ; who’s to get it for you better than I ? It ain’t quite settled who’s to ride him, but they won’t put him up without my knowin’ all about it beforehand. Now do you think I’m worth the twenty pounds or not ? If not, I’m off ; and look out for squalls. I know they’ve laid against him. Mind, I don’t say he can win ; but they’d rather he didn’t try. You see one’s always a certainty, and the other ain’t. But if you think that’s worth twenty pounds—why, down with the flimsies, Lazarus.”

And Mr. Thomas Piggott held out his hand invitingly.

Some smothered conversation ensued for about ten minutes, at the end of which time these two worthies separated. The Jew went towards the station, and as he

approached it, he divested himself of his long beard, moustache, and stooping gait; and throwing his ragged old cloak over his arm, applied for a ticket in the highly respectable person of Mr. Mo. Davis.

Tom Piggott found his friend Robert waiting for him under a haystack, at no great distance.

“Now, Bob, it’s all right. There’s twenty pounds down—ten of ’em for you, the rest for me. They only want to get at t’ Scud, just one ten minutes in his box, to have an impression of the stable key, and to know beforehand who’s going to ride—that’s all. They’re a pretty lot, ain’t they?”

“And we’re going to give it ’em,” said Robert, laughing, as he put the tenner into his pocket. “We’d better be off, or we sha’n’t be in time for Nat’s lectur’ on honesty to-night.”

Mo. Davis was right about “them boys;” he had better have remained an infidel.

I have no high opinion of Robert’s looseness of principle on the subject of money; but when we take into consideration that the respectable inhabitants of Reigate, Totnes, and Yarmouth, with numberless others, are only deterred from the acceptance of tenners by the insignificance of the offer, poor Robert was not so much to blame.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN APPARENT MISTAKE.

STABLE morality is lax indeed, so we can scarcely wonder at the delight of the boys in having got a ten pound note apiece out of the old Jew under false pretences. We do not pretend to say what name the Central Criminal Court might have been pleased to give to that sort of ingenious robbery; nor how far the Gadshill-like spoliation of the spoiler would have met with sympathy in a court of law; there can be no doubt that the practices of their trade exonerated the boys from the necessity of any conscientious scruples that a pedestrian education might have raised.

The manner, too, in which they disposed of their newly-acquired wealth, resembled that of persons who, having acquired by questionable means during a long life a handsome fortune, and having enjoyed its acquisition and its uses, are willing to compound with Providence for their avarice or dishonesty, by leaving the whole of it to divers charitable institutions, or churches. There is in this process a most ingenious hedge, for the proceeds are rendered profitable — according to their

expectations—for another world, as well as that which is gone.

So these boys, having got another man's money in their pockets, and believing that it ought righteously to be employed for the benefit of their peculiar class, carried it straight to their friend and adviser, Nat Gosling.

Having told him the story, and exhibited their wealth, he naturally praised their adroitness, and prognosticated a long and brilliant career of success in that field of operations peculiarly fitted for the display of their ingenuity.

“And now, boys,” added he, at the close of a somewhat lengthy, but eloquent address, “what do you mean to do with it? You wouldn't keep it?”

“Keep it,” replied Robert, “certainly not, Nat. We came here to ask what we should do with it.”

The dissenting blood of Tommy Piggott was not equal to such liberality all at once, but he acquiesced silently in the verdict of Nat, that “it sarved the old beggar right, and the money must meet a great public demand. Now, lads, it shall all go on to the Scud. You'll only double it. Your master's too honest a man by half to go about by hisself. If I'd a worked the oracle, the horse would a' been at twenty to one instead of two, and your fortune would a' been made. Ah! Squire Meredith, you're too honest by half. They'd like to have such a backer of horses as you at the Corner every day in the week, and two for Sundays.”

The old Jew—who had reconverted himself into the retired tobacconist, bill discounter, and turfite, was only so far chagrined at the absence of his twenty sovereigns, in that they were no longer in his pocket. “Parting” was painful to him under any circumstances, and even the cheerful prospect of doing a robbery on the largest scale at a future date, did not entirely recompense him for present outlay. Of real misgivings he had none.

There was a frank simplicity about Mr. Thomas Piggott, and an appreciation of his own interests in his persistent demand for ready money, which blinded the Jew to the possibility of his getting it elsewhere than from him. His notion that Tom Piggott knew which side his bread was buttered, was perfectly correct. He knew remarkably well, and travelled straight to his point. It was because he hoped to get more by being honest than by being a rogue, that he remained so; of moral responsibility he knew nothing, and cared less. Beguiled by his own thoughts, which consisted in much mental arithmetic as to the good or bad names in his possession and the amounts in excess of his payments shortly coming due, Mo. Davis travelled comfortably up to town.

Having satisfied his appetite and the requirements of his toilet after his night’s journey from Yorkshire, he sought the lodgings of his employer in Piccadilly. He found him—as usual at that early hour—alone, sighing over the losses of the night before, cursing Tom Meredith

instead of his own vicious propensities, which lost him his uncle's favour, and, what he valued much more, the Nobbley estate, and devising some means by which the Derby might be made to replenish his finances. It is true that he had other resources for filling his pockets, and so have many men, but they require circumstances for their development. Cards and hazard cannot be played every night in private successfully, without exciting suspicion or something more. At a club such a thing can be done with much greater difficulty, and there is a simple mode of exhibiting suspicion without challenging a quarrel. No man need play écarté or whist by compulsion, and men were becoming more and more shy of Grindley Goodge and his friends daily.

“The cleverest fellow out” does not convey the highest personal compliment when applied to play, so much as to politics.

“Well, Mo., what have you done?”

Upon which Mo. gave him a glowing account of his success.

“And so you promised five hundred, and gave him twenty. I don't care about the twenty, but that five hundred. You're lavish; two would have been ample. Why, Mo., he's but a stable boy. Five hundred would buy a duke.”

“Vell, I don't care about the five hundred; the twenty hurts me.”

“Why so?” said Goodge, astonished at his confederate’s reasoning.

“Von’s gone. We shan’t have to pay the other; two’s enough.”

“Honour among thieves, Mo. Let the boy have his money if he gets it. It’s well to have a friend at court. You’re sure of the impression of the key? We ought to have it in a day or two.”

“Sure, he proposed it hisself, and about getting at the horse, and about the joekey. Oh, he’s been up to the game before.”

“Never, Mo.; you’ve been done. The bad ’uns hold their tongues, and leave you to talk. They open their hands, and keep their mouths shut. Did Mark Heron talk to you?”

“Something about the veather, and about you. He didn’t say a word about the horses.”

And here Mo. Davis felt that he had made a mistake.

“Of course he didn’t. You should have talked to him. He’d have taken your money and have done the work. He’s the most infernal rascal in England. What did he say about me?”

“Vell! he vasn’t over complimentary—about the same, I think, as you says of him.”

An opportunity of rubbing up his friend and confederate which Mr. Davis was not likely to omit.

“And how did the settling go off, Captain, on Monday?”

Was it pretty easy? S'help me, if it hadn't been for the Rasper there wouldn't have been a gentleman left with an acre of land. Vy, my friend Heli Solomons, of Wardour Street, bid three hundred thousand last veek for Lord Mainstone's place in Staffordshire, and they'd have elevated Ikey Solomons to the peerage if he'd a changed his religion."

"Don't you wish you had the chance, Mo.? Thanks, however, to some of your friends and Lawyer Shavecote, they pulled through, and have got something to go on with for the Epsom Meeting."

"Vell, I always says the aristocracy owes us a good deal."

"Let us hope it will pay you, but as it won't come till after the Derby, I'd advise you to turn your attention to the Scud."

With which advice Captain Grindley Goodge proceeded with his toilet, preparatory to visiting his usual places of resort.

His first visit was to Major Mulligan, who was out. He desired the servant to say he would call again in the afternoon, and turned once more into Regent Street. Hence he walked—for it was a fine morning, and the streets were amusing enough—to Long Acre.

"Can I have a carriage—a close carriage—a brougham—as light as possible, to go into the country, Mr. Pannell?" said the Captain, looking at the same time through Mr. Pannell's warehouse.

“You can’t have anything lighter than your own, Sir.”

“My own won’t do. I want it to go down into the north. Something a pair of horses can draw at a pretty good pace. A dark colour picked out with red.”

“No doubt we can find you something, if we haven’t it. When do you want it? The painting, if you’re particular as to colour, will take a few days.”

“I shall have to send it away the day before the Derby. Say the Monday in the Epsom week.”

“It’s a busy week : there’ll be some difficulties.”

“They must be overcome. Come, Pannell, money’s nothing ; it’s for a friend ; and if you want anything yourself you can have mine.”

“Very good, Sir ; we’ll manage it.”

And then arrangements were made, and the brougham was to be dropped at the Middlethorpe station the Monday in the Epsom week.

After some other visits, which Grindley Goodge found it necessary to pay, he reappeared at Mulligan’s house, and this time he found his friend at home.

“Mulligan, I fear we’ve been sold by the boy. Davis seems to me to have made nothing of his journey. I shall wait till the day after to-morrow, and if we get no further intelligence, there is but one thing to be done.”

“And what’s that?” inquired the Major.

“The trainer’s too dangerous, but we must try Nat Gosling.”

“What! your uncle’s head man? Bedad, Grindley, it’ll blow the whole business.”

“Can you devise any other means of stopping the Scud? If he starts right it’s a certainty.”

The Major pondered, but answered nothing.

“I hear he’s furious at Meredith’s behaviour towards the girl—his granddaughter, or whatever she is. Nat Gosling has his weak points. He’s fond of money. He loved his old master, and perhaps he may not split upon me for his sake. I’ll offer him the chance of a gentleman for a son-in-law.”

“Do ye mean yourself? He’ll be proud enough till he finds out the trick, and then——”

“Trick, man! it’s no trick. I’ll marry the girl, for if Flying Scud does win the Derby, I must go. If the boy fails us—and I feel certain he will—it’s our only chance. He comes up to the neighbourhood of Epsom on the Saturday before the race. I know every stall and every box in the place; once in there, and the thing is done. Rasper wins, and our fortune’s made. You’ll be in Castle Mulligan, Major, in six weeks.”

“And you in Nobbley Hall.”

And if anyone could have seen the faces of these men, they would have perceived the truth of what we have before remarked, that self-interest was the mutual bond of union between these rascals.

CHAPTER XXV

GRINDLEY GOODGE GETS TOO FAR NORTH.

IN accordance with his previously-formed opinion that nothing was to be done, save with old Nat Gosling himself, Captain Grindley Goodge packed up his portmanteau, and made his way by train to Middlethorpe. He arrived there in due time; for not having as yet adopted the glorious motto of his late profession, "Mortem Peto," he was fortunate in not having to travel by the London, Crasham, and Over line, in pursuance of his schemes. There's a protection which watches over rascality, and in this instance it sent its client down by the London and York Mail safely. Whom the gods love they take to themselves young, so that a great many of their friends must have had property on the southern and eastern sea-coasts, I presume.

"Anybody been here to inquire for me, John?" said the Cap'en, as soon as the waiter had put the claret upon the table and was preparing to leave the room.

"No one in particular, Sir. Mark Heron, him as lives out on the marsh beyond Nobbley there, was here the

afternoon : he said he'd look in again ; he's here most evenings ;" and John proceeded to draw the red stuff curtains, and to what he called tidy the room, by making a great deal of noise with a few chairs, opening and shutting the sideboard drawers, and moving about the dessert, which consisted of six dilapidated figs and a few biscuits.

"Then, if he comes again let me see him ;" and, with a hasty "Yes, sir," and the half-dirty napkin, the symbol of his office, under his arm, the waiter left the room.

What Grindley Goodge's reflections ought to have been, when left alone at a country inn, within a mile or two of a handsome property which he might have been now enjoying but for his own want of discrimination between the good and the bad, or the real sweet and the real bitter, it's difficult to say. I know what they were—that he had come down to Middlethorpe on a very difficult duty, but one absolutely necessary to be got through, some way or other. As to giving it up and returning without some sort of progress towards its accomplishment, that never entered his head ; it was just as far from his intention as cutting the throat of Flying Scud, or burning down the stables where he lay ; indeed, if anything, it was rather further, for he would not have hesitated at either of these courses if he had seen any means of escape afterwards. The latter idea did come

across him once, and nothing but the absolute certainty of discovery, and the improbability of finding a trustworthy agent, dispelled it from his mind. His fear of poverty was almost as great as his fear of transportation or hanging, and his moral tone was low enough almost for murder, if it could but be accredited with the character of justifiable homicide. Whilst, indeed, he was wondering what sum of money would induce a vagabond like Mark Heron to put his head into the noose for him, that worthy was announced.

“Sit down, Mark,” said the Captain to that long-legged individual, who at once seated himself, placing his hat on the floor by his side, bolt up against the wall, with as much indifference as if he had been ordered to snare a hare, or stop the earths for to-morrow morning ; “and, John, bring in some brandy-and-water and a pipe for Mr. Heron.”

“Now,” said he after a pause, “you know what I want with you ;” and Grindley Goodge scarcely allowed himself to speak above a whisper. “Why haven’t we heard from the boy ?”

“Boys,” replied the other, with equal care, “are worth nothing. You can’t trust ’em at the best o’ times ; besides, the old stable’s watched so ; there’s the policeman goes up every evening, and Sam Turnbull, the old constable, sleeps in one of the outhouses ; and as to Nat Gosling, he’s got a truckle-bed in the next

box, they do say. Besides, that young Piggott's such a young liar. It wasn't much use sending an old clo' man down here; he hadn't a chance wi' that young scoundrel."

"And you think that he never meant——"

"Meant! bless ye, no; not he. He's as slippy as a cat on walnut shells. Besides, he couldn't ha' done anything, if he'd meant to."

Here Grindley Goodge lay back in his chair thoughtfully, while Mark took a sip of his brandy-and-water.

After a pause he said—

"And you think he can win?"

"They do. He's been well tried, but nobody knows what it was but Nat and the new Squire."

"And how does Nat Gosling get on with his new master and the cottage?"

"They do say he's uncommon put out about Miss Kate, and wants money to repair the house."

Again Grindley Goodge thought.

"Now tell me, Mark, do you think anything can be done in that quarter?"

"Well," said Mark, weighing his words, "he's the only one as can do it, if he fancies it; and as he's only backed the horse since the Criterion, just for a ten pound note or so, why, if you was to make it worth his while—but he's a terrible chap for money, is old Nat—you mun bid high. He likes something down."

Grindley Goodge thought if that was the only difficulty it might be got over. But he said nothing more for a minute or two, and then inquired, abruptly enough, whether Mark Heron had seen Phœbe Glossop lately.

“Oh, yes! not very long ago. She’s left the Hall, and gone to live at her aunt’s cottage, near the lodge. She and Mrs. Kettle didn’t hit it. Phœbe says Miss Kate had somethin’ to do wi’ it; but I can’t say about that.”

“Who plates the horses now, Mark?”

“Why, I’d used to do it, in your uncle’s time; you know, it was my trade once. But the Squire and I aren’t the best o’ friends; and as the Scud’s going to Leatherhead, or somewheres handy, on Friday, they’ll have their own man.”

At the beginning of this speech the Captain looked up, as if he saw something; but relapsed again into thought as Mark Heron finished his remark and his brandy-and-water together. Then he took his leave; and the Captain having got his slippers and monkey-jacket, proceeded to indulge in his cigar before retiring to rest.

On the following morning, about nine o’clock, there was a very pretty face looking out of a cottage window not far from Nobbly. Had the owner of that face had the slightest idea of receiving company, it would have been much cleaner; for Phœbe Glossop was a slatternly

beauty, who made up for general indulgence by a most rigid equality to the occasion. She had no idea that Grindley Goodge was so near to her, or even now she would have withdrawn from the gaze of an old and favoured admirer.

“Why, Phœbe,” said he, approaching, “you’re very busy this morning.”

“Lawk-a-mercy!” I believe that is what Phœbe said, but the orthography is difficult. “Lawk-a-mercy, Captain Goodge! how you make one jump to be sure.”

And then the Captain having come close up to the open window, paid the young lady some compliments on her beauty, which were broad and strong, and received with that relish which the physical palate of such persons exhibits for onions or oatmeal-porridge.

“So you’ve left the Hall, Phœbe,” said the Captain.

“Indeed, I have. Things is different there now.” And she shrugged her shoulders pettishly. “Miss Kate and Mrs. Kettle lays their heads together, and there’s no pleasing everybody.”

“I should think you hadn’t much difficulty in pleasing anybody, Phœbe,” said the Captain, again through the open window.

“Oh! go along wi’ ye, do. There, you’ll have aunt here in a minute.”

But the young lady herself didn’t move from the window, neither did the Captain.

“Then you don’t see much of Kate Rideout now, Phœbe.”

“’Deed but I do, though. What do you want to know about Kate Rideout?”

“I! why nothing at all—that is—I don’t—but I’ve a friend that wants to know something about her, and I said I thought I knew a good little girl down here that could tell. So he desired me to give her this little present, and find out all about her;” saying which the Captain slipped a sovereign into Phœbe’s hand, and put on a more business-like-looking face than heretofore.

If Phœbe Glossop loved flattery, she was by no means insensible to bribery; wherefore accepting the present as demurely as might be, she proceeded to unfold to Captain Goodge all she knew of the movements of Kate Rideout, past, present, and to come.

She informed her supposed admirer of the gossip which was afloat in Middlethorpe relative to Tom Meredith’s desertion of her; of her presumed anger at the slight; and at Nat Gosling’s sympathy with her disappointment; and she also informed him that she was to leave Nobbley for the house of Mrs. George Ireland, the well-known south-country trainer’s wife, where she would remain during Nat’s absence with the Flying Scud, for the coming Derby. Precise information on that subject she was unable to give; but she told the Captain enough

to set his fertile brain to work upon the mischief he had been brewing, and promised a fresh instalment between this time and the day of her departure. Phoebe had had the benefit of a liberal education at the village school; her orthography was not altogether blameless, and her pothooks and hangers were not those of a professional calligraphist; but she was proud of her accomplishments in that way, and was about to put them to a more profitable use than that of inditing love letters and assignments to the ineligible Hodges and rustic swains whom she kept in tow around Middlethorpe. Having thus secured a willing spy in the neighbourhood, and one who would not be sorry for the discomfiture of one whom she had been accustomed to regard as a "stuck up thing," the Captain took leave of the ex-housemaid of Nobbley Hall, and proceeded along the path, which led by the paddocks and stabling, to the cottage of Nat Gosling and his granddaughter.

Nat's surprise at seeing the Captain enter was considerable, though perhaps not so great as it might have been; for he had just come from the paddocks, where he had been talking over the Scud's chance for the coming event with Mr. Masterman. His position in the establishment rather resembled that of a superior stud-groom than the more important one of trainer; in evidence of which I may as well adduce the fact, that while the Scud was to be accompanied to the south by Nat Gosling

himself, the other was to be left at Middlethorpe in charge of the yearlings and other animals on his master's premises; and the last pious ejaculation of Nat had been, that all he hoped was that Mr. Grindley Goodge had burnt his fingers; and now the two stood face to face on the threshold of Nat's door.



CHAPTER XXVI.

A NICE PAIR.

NAT GOSLING, when he looked at the Captain, of whom he had just been thinking, regarded him much as the rest of the world did—a fast man, not scrupulous, something out at elbows, quite capable of much evil, not incapable of good, a little ill-used about his uncle's property, and assenting to the roping, bribing, milking, touting, and trickery of the turf, in acquiescence of the system more than inclination for personal rascality. So, when he saw who it was that stood face to face with him, he took off his hat and bowed him into the house, as he would have done the Duke of Cadwallo, or Tom Meredith himself—perhaps even more heartily than he would have done the latter.

“Sit down after your walk, Captain; glad to see you.”

“Well, Nat, I hope you’re comfortable in your cottage,” said the Captain, after a little chat on indifferent subjects—the weather and the “good going” on the moor. “I suppose Kate is still living with you?”

“’Deed is she—she’s likely to now,” added he, with a sigh. “Wo’re pretty comfortable, though, notwithstanding a hole or two in the roof.”

And Nat said this in an apologetic tone, as much as to say, “You needn’t be sore about this part of the property that your uncle left away from you.”

“I should have thought his buildings were usually in pretty good repair. However, there oughtn’t to be much difficulty in doing that for you. The inheritor might afford an odd hundred or two for repairs—just to start you right. I shouldn’t mind doing it myself for an old servant.”

Nat wondered, in his own mind, to what this could possibly be the prelude. He wasn’t long in ignorance. After a word or two more about the disposal of the old man’s property, in which Captain Goodge thanked God he didn’t depend upon any man’s will, he said—

“I suppose, Nat, you know how intimato Kate and I used to bo in the olden time, when we were pretty nearly children?”

“Quite, I should ha’ said. Ah! I recollect.” And

tho recollection recalled old John Sykes's first-formed intention of marrying tho two. "You're both on ye a good deal altered since then."

"Not so much as you think, Nat. We're taller and older—perhaps you think one of us uglier; but there's something of old times left in us still."

Nat Gosling, who set up for a "'eute chap enough," was regularly flabbergasted now, for he generally suspected every man of an object; but he couldn't see his way at all elearly through the Captain's last remark. As it was intended well, however, he thought it only right to make a civil reply.

"Glad on it, Sir, glad on it. Aint much good in change, I'm thinking."

And the old man's thoughts reverted to Tom Meredith and the past. Still it made it difficult to Goodge to go on. He always seemed to be beginning again.

"I almost wonder Kate hadn't forgotten her old play-fellow, after being so long with my regiment," said he, returning to the same charge.

"Not likely: she aint ono as forgets. Short memories don't make long friends."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Nat; for you know more about Kate Rideout than any of us. The people did say—I don't know that it's true, that Tom Meredith—No—Well, it was during my absenee."

Nat always got a little warm on the subject of Kate.

and he therefore protested against the Squire having anything to do with the business.

“Light ornamental ware and iron pots don’t swim well together, I always says ; so, after all,” and here Nat a little forgot his position, “it’s all for the best.”

“Well, Nat, I don’t know how far your opinion about iron pots and ornamental ware may be correct ; but I don’t think I’m quite such an iron pot as to make it dangerous for Kate to swim with me.”

The words were scarcely out of Grindley Goodge’s mouth before Nat Gosling rose to his full height. To an impartial observer, and a close, his face assumed an appearance of anger—certainly to Goodge himself, of great astonishment. “Well it might,” thought that gentleman, “if he’s within any distance of the truth.” But Nat sat down, with his hands on either knee, facing his guest and evidently waiting for more. It came, and plainly enough for an honest man.

“As I say, I don’t know your opinion of iron pots and light ware. I can’t offer Kate Nobbly Hall”—this was rather a hit—“as Tom Meredith can, more’s the pity ; but if I could I would. The share of what I have may be hers. It isn’t much, but it will do.” Nat sat the very picture of surprise, and continued to stare, while the Captain continued to talk. “Don’t say a word, Nat”—indeed, he was not likely to ; he was only solving the depth of the Captain’s motives—“don’t say a word,

You'll have the cottage as long as you live—and I hope it will be long before Kate and I have to make a home of it." This was about as true as anything well could be, but it sounded false enough to be turned into a compliment to Nat Gosling. "I suppose you've no objection, Nat, to the son of your old friend John Sykes?"

"Objection!" said Nat, at last finding a tongue, and agitated by various doubts and fears of he hardly knew what. "Objection! well, no. Ha' ye seen Kate? She'll have more to say to it than I."

"Kate; no, Nat, I have not seen Kate—to-day; but I hardly think—you know"—and the Captain hesitated and stammered, while Nat replied.

"Ye mun see Kate. It's Kate's business, and none o' mine. She's independent like. She's a curious hanker-in' arter the man; and it's nowadays safe to tackle her. She'd as lief live single all her days, it's my belief, wi' t' cottage and the three thousand pounds—that's to say, counting the two the old man gave her, and which stands in the jint names o' Tom Meredith and Lawyer Quail, in the Three per Cent. Consols, and which will be hers as soon she likes to draw it."

Grindley Goodge didn't reply to this intelligence; but no man of his character dislikes a woman more because she has a couple of thousand at her own disposal; and he had almost devised the most profitable disposition of

it in next year's Derby, when he recollected his other mission.

"And how about the Scud, Nat? He's all right, I presume?"

"He'll win. I hope you're not heavy agin him, Captain. If he stands up, he'll win," and Kate was out of Nat's head at once.

"Will he stand up?" said the Captain.

"Unless you know o' something to make 'un lie down."

And Nat laughed at his own joke.

The Captain knit his brows, and continued—

"I know only his public performance, of course; though I have heard of the milking system, even in such a race as the Derby."

"There'll be no milking here, Captain; he'll run on his merits."

"Then he can't win, Nat. He mustn't win. You know he can't win. Listen to me, Nat," and the man leant forward, looking into the trainer's face. "You've only laid out a trifle on him, and you never did that till he was at ten to one. Why didn't you do it earlier, Nat?"

"We never tried him good enough. It was his public form and improvement."

"So he isn't backed for much, after all," thought Goodge,

“You’ve ten times the amount on his losing, and you can make that safe. He’ll benefit nobody if he does win.”

Nat looked thoughtfully down. He was evidently much puzzled, but whether it was about the tempting offer, or the honour of such a grandson-in-law, or the knocking down the tempter with the poker, is difficult to say. He held his tongue, and I suppose the poison was working while he was not talking.

“He’s a fine horse, Nat, but not made to go down the hill as fast as some of them. He’ll have lost the race before he gets to the Stand. Who’s to ride?”

There was a long pause.

“One who’s no use to us, Captain, in such a business.” Nat had suddenly recovered his vivacity: his cheeks were much flushed, his eyes shone, and he seemed nervous and excited. “He’s as honest as the day. You must do the trick yourselves.”

“A bucket of water and a powder.”

“At the right time,” said Nat, sententiously, still looking down.

“Why! there’ll be nobody hurt but the prophets.”

The idea seemed to tickle the conspirators, especially Nat, who almost forgot his dangerous rôle in the joke.

“The prophets! Oh, that won’t matter. I was a prophet mysel’ to the *Halfpenny Gaff*, once. I took the three favourites allays, and applied to Dr. Shorthouse

for a cock-boat. He allays sent a rare bred 'un; so that did pretty well, for a time; but they all do the same now; and when they none on 'em win, they says, 'We may congratulate ourselves again on our pick—third and fourth; nothing but the shameful way in which the two favourites was ridden, prevented us from being first, second, and third.' ”

Nat seemed to be quite cheerful—for him—and chuckled over the way in which the prophets were done, and likely to be, again.

“And when do you go south, Nat?” inquired the Captain, *sotto voce*.

“By train, on Friday, to Leatherhead,” whispered the other. “We go to George Ireland's. Our stables are apart from his. You must come over there, Captain, the night before. We shall plate him in the morning, and mind you bring the right smith. There, that's all. Mind, it's your business, not mine. No, no money now, Captain; bring the rhino when you come in the morning.”

Saying which, Nat turned away.

“And Kate?” said Goodge, in a tone of exultation, which was widely different from Nat's, though *he* scarcely seemed to feel the degradation of selling his master and his friends, as he might have done.

“Kate's away for a day or two now. She's going to George Ireland's too, and ye must prepare her; or ye'll tak the lassie's breath away wi' surprise, as ye ha' done

mine. Now go, Captain; it aren't good for us to be seen together. There's a d—d nasty pietur' for us to look at between now and next Wednesday week, and we'd better look at it alone. Leastways, I wants no company. I aren't been used to such victuals, and my digestion's a little weak."

Saying which, he dismissed the Captain somewhat uncremoniously.

"And you'll not forget," added the Captain, as he turned on his heel to leave the cottage, extending a hand, and shaking Nat's horny fist.

"Forget! not I! I never forgets. You may go and lay the county o' York to a ten pound freehold agin' him. The Scud's as good as dead."

Saying which, he retired to his room, and, locking the door, commenced a very serious pipe.



CHAPTER XXVII.

GRINDLEY GOODGE MEETS NOTHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE.

NAT's pipe was interrupted by the most extraordinary expressions: expressions which would have astonished the hearer, if such there had been, to the foregoing

dialogue, by their incongruity and inconsistency. At first the old man smoked for some time in silence ; at last he stopped suddenly, placing his pipe on a deal table that stood at his elbow, and closing his hands, said :

“ Well ! I’m d——d.”

He then resumed his pipe, and continued to smoke, looking at the little fire that glimmered in the grate for the purposes of cooking.

Again he stopped, and then he said in a muttered tone, as though he would rather not have been heard—

“ I’d no idea he was such a rascal ; the most infernal rascal alive, I do believe. Boys, o’ course—that stands to reason. They’re open, natural enough, but——” here he heaved a deep sigh, and said once more, “ Well ; I *am* d——d.”

His cogitations from that moment took a more definite turn, and I’ll endeavour to do justice to them.

“ So he really thought he could make me safe, did he ? that’s an amount of impudence I didn’t give him credit for. And he wants Kate. Well, I was taken aback, mind ye ; but I thought there was somethin’ up. I’d rather see her married to such a man as Tom Meredith (the Squire don’t know the mischief he’s a-doin’), without a rag to his back, than to that infernal scoundrel wi’ Raby Castle. I’m half afraid I didn’t do right in refusing the money, though they might a-said I was

playing false. No, it's better as it is; he'll lay out all he's got agin' us, and he'll see the Scud coming wi' seven or eight pounds in hand, if he don't tumble down by the way. I should like to have kicked him out o' doors, or have sent for a policeman; but, after all, I think it's fairer to see if I can't manage the gentleman myself. As to telling t' Squiore, it'll only vex him, and he won't lose half as much as he will if we let him think it's all right. He only wants rope enough, and he'll do the job for himself."

"Well, Kate; so you're come back again. Where ha' ye been?"

For just as Nat reached some such point as this, the door opened and Kate Rideout appeared.

"I've been over to Mrs. Glossop. I wanted to speak to her, and I saw Phoebe, so I stopped to talk to her for a time. But who else do you think I met?"

"Can't say, my dear. Anybody I know?" said Nat, giving a shrewd guess all the time.

"Well, you've seen him before, certainly. But I'll tell you—Grindley Goodge."

"Ah! And what did he say to you?" inquired the old man anxiously.

"Not a great deal," said Kate, but she blushed so deeply that, if it wasn't much, it was much to the purpose, at least.

"Then he wasn't so communicative to you as to me,

my girl," for Nat Gosling, though he had ceased to regard Kate quite so familiarly since the necessity of telling her who she was, made very little difference in his mode of address to her.

"Do you mean that he's been here in my absence?"

And now she blushed scarlet.

"Deed do I, and if you'll sit down I'll let you know what he said. He wanted to make you Mrs. Grindley Goodge."

"I'd as soon be in my grave;" and Kate didn't look such a lamb as she really was.

"You didn't tell him so, girl, I hope?" said Nat, rather afraid lest his own plans for entrapping the Captain should be spoilt by over hurry.

"Not exactly. I was very polite—as, indeed, I was bound to be; but I don't know what he wanted, or why he was here."

And here Kate took off her bonnet, and hung it on a chair, and her beautiful hair came down with the exertion. Then she sat down, and the two looked at one another.

"So you won't have him, Kate?" said the old man in a bantering tone.

"Certainly not, Sir," said Kate, with a look of offended surprise.

"Perhaps you're wrong. A cap'n's a cap'n any day o' the week, and may be a colonel."

“I think I’ve made him understand that his visits here wouldn’t be pleasant to me. I’ve done it without offence to him, I hope. So we needn’t say anything more about it,” and here Kate nodded good-humouredly to the old man, and left the room, as Nat said—

“You’re right, my gal. We’ll say no more about him.”

While the old man had been cursing him, Captain Goodge had been pursuing his way across the fields, towards Mark Heron’s. The first things that he passed were the paddocks and the young stock. These were calculated to embitter his feelings. While they did so, they added to his triumph. To rob the man who had transplanted him, not in his uncle’s affection, but in his uncle’s will, would be a pleasurable, as well as a profitable business; and to do it so surely, with the aid of his own old servant and trusty follower! It was curious that no suspicion was aroused in Goodge by the slender defence made by Nat Gosling.

“He came in so ‘precious’ easy,” said he to himself, “and wouldn’t have the money when he could.”

He saw a boy or two about, and the new stud groom, Masterman, whom he did not know. As to looking at the horse, he cared nothing about him; he might be short of work, or as fine as a star; the horse was going to lose. He couldn’t understand why the old man had refused the money.

“However, I’ll lay it out for him, and if I do win—well ! he shall have some of it.”

Then he went on a little further, until he came to the stile that led out of the meadows towards Middlethorpe, and just as he reached it, who should come up from the opposite side, but Kate.

Their greeting was warm and kindly—on Kate’s part sincerely so, for she sympathised with her old playmate’s losses, though she rejoiced in the good fortune of Tom Meredith and old Nat.

“I hardly expected to see you here, Captain Goodge,” said she, after some few minutes’ desultory conversation.

“No, Kate; it’s not the place for the hoir to the property, is it? But why are you so formal? Why don’t you call me Grindley, as you used?”

“Oh, times are changed since then, you know,” and Kate blushed.

“Indeed they are—a good deal changed,” said he bitterly.

“I didn’t mean that, indeed I didn’t,” said the girl, really distressed.

“Well, I don’t think you did. But it’s true; they are changed by the wrong and robbery that’s been wrought; but he shall pay for it, this Mr. Quail and his new squire, Tom Meredith.”

“Oh! you mustn’t think that—indeed you mustn’t,

Cap—Grindley, I mean,” for Kate was half frightened at his vehemence. “Tom—that is, the Squire, is quite incapable of such a thing.”

“And why should you defend him, Kate? It doesn’t appear, from report, that he exhibited very much feeling for you.”

Nor Mr. Grindley Goodge, indeed, much delicacy, and so thought Kate, who replied—

“I can scarcely misunderstand your allusion, so if you’ll allow me, I’ll pass on.”

And an unwilling tear stood in Kate’s eyes as she attempted to cross the stile.

But Grindley Goodge had no idea of parting with Kate in this humour. He saw he had made a mistake, and endeavoured to amend it.

“Ah, Kate, you must forgive my irritation. All I see here reminds me of what I ought to have been; every acre within sight—by the laws of honest right—belongs to me, and I can’t bear to think that it is in the hands of another.”

Here he paused, and Kate forgave him in her heart, which was a very tender and sympathetic one, and her eyes told him so. So he continued—

“Kate, if things had happened as they should, I had one object—it was to have shared it with you.”

Kate shook her head, for she thought how much right she had now to have been mistress of Nobbley, and yet

how willingly she would have been the trainer's wife, could it only have been so. This accursed wealth had brought nothing but misery, to her, at all events.

"God knows, Grindley," said she, "how I wish you had had Nobby. I'd willingly give it you all if I had it in my power."

A speech which was certainly calculated to inspire less daring lovers than Grindley Godge with new hopes; and it did inspire him.

"Then listen to me, Kate;" and he attempted to take her hand and draw her towards him, as he leant against the stile; but Kate resisted.

"No, no! not now! impossible! let me go!" and with that she endeavoured to make her escape.

"Kate, you know how I have loved you since we were children,"—which was not true—"and now I only regret that I have nothing to offer you worthy of your acceptance,"—which was true. But Kate only struggled to escape from her new lover, and not at first with complete success. "Ah, the way of the world, Kate; it seems hard to lose everything with the estate; you'd have judged me differently if I'd been the possessor of Nobby in the place of a man who has shown himself unworthy of you."

"Thank you, Sir," said the girl, releasing herself at the same moment; "you insult me more than him by

such language. No, Captain Goodge, not a step further. I shall call for assistance, which I know I can have in a moment ;” and with a light step, but a blushing face, she walked rapidly away from the stile in the direction of her own home.

We have heard her conversation with Nat Gosling on her arrival, and can guess how really remote was Grindley Goodge’s chance of attaching Kate Rideout to his establishment in any position whatever.

“Mark,” said the Captain, half-an-hour later, as he appeared at Mark Heron’s door on the edge of the moor, “come out, and bring your hat.”

So Mark Heron obeyed in as little time as might be.

“Send a boy down to the Blue Posts for my port-manteau, and tell him to meet me at the three o’clock train. Now, Mark, I shall want you in town on Tuesday next, the day before the Derby. Can you come ? ”

“Well, Master Grindley, I got a smartish——” began the publican and horse chanter, plater, and breaker, by way of enhancing his services.

“There, that’ll do : yes or no. It’ll be worth your while. When I say that, you know what I mean.”

Mark’s eyes twinkled : he did know.

“Yes, then ; and I say, Cap’en, you’ll give us your tip for t’ Darby.”

“I only prophesy the dead ’uns, and I’ll put you on to one when we meet.”

Saying which, the Captain took his way to the station.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

MULLIGAN GROWS RESPECTABLE.

WHEN Grindley Goodge got into the train, he had not much more to do than to reflect on his preparations for the following week. Vanity made him think it probable that Kate Rideout felt more kindly towards him than she had allowed him to think. He saw that he had played a bad card in abusing Tom Meredith; but as that gentleman’s chance was necessarily over, by his own device, he did not conceive that Kate had anything better to fall back upon than himself.

Besides this, he was one of those men who are eminently sanguine; and she certainly had let fall some expressions which were at least akin to regard. Then he was what he called in love; and, having made up his mind to that fact, he believed that any amount of pressure would be acceptable, if he could but convince Kate of it.

Love, however, was a very secondary passion in Grindley

Goodge's breast. He loved himself, and money; and just now he added revenge, which made up a very respectable trio—a trio likely to urge him to anything within reach of more than ordinary daring. For Grindley Goodge was a very tiger at bay. All his cunning in the open, in a *cul de sac* all his ferocity.

Nat Gosling was a curiosity; always had been since Grindley had known him. Not a likely man to have come so readily into his plans, but still less likely to have refused money. Besides, the motives were strong, as the Captain thought, in disappointed ambition.

My granddaughter the Lady of Nobbley. Well, it was something to fall back upon in his old age. No wonder he was ready to sell Tom Meredith, and everyone else concerned in the horse.

“Certainly,” said Grindley Goodge, “I should have done so And now for the plan. Nothing can be simpler, as we've arranged it. The horse will be at the stabling, near Leatherhead, occupied by George Ireland. Not among his own horses. That's fortunate. The fewer there are about him the better. One of us, with Mark Heron, must be down there on Tuesday night. The plates have to be changed, or something done to them, early in the morning; as early as possible. Nat will take care of that. I'll make it worth his while to do so. Once in the stable, a bucket of water, which we must have there. and an opiate, unfailing in its effects, and if the

Flying Scud wins the Derby, I'll eat him. With Nat's co-operation there's not even a chance of detection ; and as to failure, the thing's impossible. Now, I'll go and back Rasper, and leave the rest to do the dirty work. We've plenty of time between this and Wednesday, and a very nice haul we shall make of it. It's as safe as Mulligan's billiards, or Chouser's écarté, and twice as expeditious."

It was dark when the train from Middlethorpe reached London ; and Grindley Goodge called a cab, and went straight home. It was necessary to see Chouser or one of the confederates soon, the sooner the better ; so, having dressed himself, he went off to Major Mulligan's. There were lights in the drawing-room, and the Major was at home.

That worthy man's nights were usually passed in providing for the wants of the day. He was the most industrious of men, like an ant, working for twelve hours, and spending the proceeds in twelve more. When others were sleeping, the Major's eye was ever open, and we can only record our pity for the worm that was late or early enough to be caught by him.

Lights now fitted to and fro. The Major was evidently holding high festival, and Grindley Goodge watched anxiously, as he saw various figures moving backwards and forwards across the room. The room did not present the appearance of one fitted for the divulgence of a secret

so inviolable as that which the Captain carried about with him.

Of course he was admitted, and, upon joining the group, he was not a little surprised at what he saw.

At the table in the centre of the room sat the Major, a ladylike old woman of a certain age, to whom he was presented as Lady MacStickler, Fitzwalter, to whom the reader has been already introduced, and the Duke of Cadwallo. Seated near the fire, which was still burning in the grate, though not far from the end of May, was Julia Latimer, engaged in that mysterious work, which allows of constant idleness, but which seems by its quickness to make up for lost time, when it is going. I believe they call it crochet; and near to her, on the same side of the room, was no other than Lord Woodbie, who was indulging in his usual amusement of taking the odds, or laying them; the only difference being, that he had descended from ponies to fivers.

As Grindley Goodge entered the room in fact, his attention was directed first to the young earl, by hearing, "How's the game now, Major?"

"One, love, in your favour, Woodbie," said the Major, sorting his cards.

"I'll take you fifty-five to forty about the game, uncle," which the accommodating uncle, who was there to watch over the interests of his newly arrived relative, took at

once, adding, "I'd rather take your fifty to forty about the rubber, Cecil."

"You can have that too, if you like," replied Cecil; but his grace declined doing both, as being a little beyond his mark; and then Woodbie applied himself sedulously to playing with a ball of thread on the sofa, which, belonging to the work in the hand of the lady, appeared to have some magnetic connection with the lady herself.

The Captain took a seat, and entered into conversation with the two unengaged parties, which appeared to be carried on in a tone not calculated to disturb the players. It continued until Captain Goodge was invited to cut in, and the Duke of Cadwallo relinquished his seat. After a long time, however, Lady MacStickler, pocketing a sovereign or two as her winnings, and leaving the others to settle their heavier balances, rose, and, bowing to her niece's guests, carried off Julia Latimer to her chamber, and herself to her carriage.

In due course of time the Duke, too, carried off Lord Woodbie to his mother, who was in town, declaring that he had never passed a pleasanter evening; and as he had been allowed to retire a considerable winner, we may easily believe him. And so once more the Major and Goodge were alone.

"Why, Major, is Mulligan of Castle Mulligan really dead, and all that stands between you and the property gone to grief suddenly?"

“Not a bit of it, Goodge; what makes ye think that?”

“The man in black that has supplanted the boy in buttons, Lady MacStickler, and the decency and propriety of the stakes and hours.”

“What, me valet, and me cousin, and just the points we’re playing for the old lady! Truth, it isn’t every man ’ud be gambling like you.”

“But you’re surrounded by swells; and the blaze of light extends half-way down the street. Such rascals as you and I can’t talk in the presenco of such a wax-chandler’s shop as you’ve got here.”

And Goodge laughed.

“Speak for yourself, Captain Goodge, if ye please.” But in another moment the Major was consoled and so tickled by the absurdity of his returning virtue as to join in the laugh. “I’ll tell ye what, Goodge—ye’ve no tact. It’s all very well to be poor, but it’s the devil an’ all to look it; and I’m sure you feel the truth o’ that; we wouldn’t any of us like to look the robbers we are.”

“I dare say not—not even your friend the Duke. What brought him here?”

“Lord Woodbie brought him here. Why the d—I shouldn’t he come here as well as any one else, to meet me family and me niece? There’s not a duke in the land has better blood in his veins than the girl that sat

tically to Julia's late seat—"sure not Lord Woodbie himself."

"Oh!" thought Goodge, "that's where we are; we must humour him."

And he did, by a few suggestive inquiries on the subject of Castle Mulligan and the late Sir Andrew MacStickler, who was known to have kept a pack of hounds and an open house, somewhere in the north of Ireland, and to have left his widow nothing but her blood and her settlement (which happened to be a very handsome one) to live upon.

She rented the house at Tantudlem of the heir-at-law to keep him out of the debtors' prison in Dublin.

"But I thought Woodbie was in Vienna?" said the Captain.

"So he was; but he's come back again."

"What for? What's his book on the Derby? The Duke might have settled that."

"Perhaps the Duke's not so fond of settling other people's accounts. The fact is, there's been a something—a sort of understanding or some engagement between him and Miss Latimer, and——"

"You don't mean that?" said Goodge, somewhat sceptically.

"Why not, Captain Goodge? Isn't she fit to be any man's wife? Where'll he find a more suitable companion?"

Bedad, she's been educated like a duchess. Didn't I do it myself, when her sainted mother——"

"Of course, of course, my dear Mulligan. There can be no doubt about that; but there might be certain prejudices——"

"Prejudices, be me soul! I'd like to see 'em——"

"These prejudices are things you can't see. But I congratulate you, Mulligan, with all my heart, and the future Lady Woodbie, too. And now, what do you think about the favourite?"

"If I could see my way out o' this Derby, safe and sound, I'd have done with it. There's old Lady Mac-Stickler, she's a fine jointure, and she don't like racing; and, between ourselves, she's taken a mighty fancy to Julia, as anybody might; and the turf isn't what it was." And Major Mulligan became mighty virtuous in argument, for he'd quite enough of the serpent in him to put on the dove when anything was to be got by it. "And, altogether, what with Woodbie's affair, I'd like to be well out of it."

And as he thought he could get more by honesty, he would willingly have thrown over rascality.

"Then be happy, Major, and be virtuous. It's too late to hedge; and we all stand a raker against the Scud—at least, more than we can pay." And here he sunk his voice to a whisper. "I've squared old Nat; he's to stand in up to five hundred, and he's promised another

five hundred down on the morning. I've the doing of the business myself, so it's all right this time. Now I'll wish you good-night. You shall have the details another time ; but if you want another thousand or two on, be quick about it, and get on at a short price. Rasper may start first favourite now. I mean to lay a thou. that he does, if I can get it on."



CHAPTER XXIX.

LORD WOODBIE UNATTACHED

THE pleasant little party assembled in Major Mulligan's room was such as naturally to create some surprise in the mind of Goodge. The Major had met Lord Woodbie in town two days before Grindley Goodge started for Yorkshire. Then, as he justly observed, it wasn't necessary for him to tell the confederates every man's business ; and Woodbie might have a reason for not wishing to be talked about. He always had regarded with considerable contempt the noisy old carrion crow, who no sooner saw a carcass than he shouted "dead 'orse, dead 'orse." In the present case it was one of those carcasses that would keep any length of time ; so the Major wisely determined to hold his tongue. He

knew his brother ravens would be down upon him quite soon enough ; and they were.

It entails upon me a recurrence to past events, as explanatory of the young earl's unexpected return to London. In Lord Boppinton he found a stern, though a true, friend. Save me from my friends, said he, at the time ; but depend upon it, there was nothing better for him than Vienna. And thither he repaired with a heavy heart and (the only thing to lighten it one would have supposed) a heavy purse. He left the Jews and jewellers, the dealers, the coach-makers, and all that genus, to the care of his mother, and the only book he valued to the Duke. It was a very bad one, but not hopeless if a little judicious hedging could be done. The Seud was his worst horse. He wasn't much missed after the first week, excepting by Major Mulligan, who was having a rough time of it among the Jews, and who stood very much in need of a good name or two up behind him.

Vienna is certainly one of the vilest capitals for an unpaid *attaché* to make his appearance in in Europe. There are such pleasant ways of getting rid of time and money, and infant diplomacy gives solidity and respectability to social trifling. Lord Woodbie was just the man for it. His companions, of course, welcomed anything well off, *distingué*, and utterly indifferent to consequences, and prognosticated another nine days' wonder or two before

long, of which their new *attaché* was to be the hero. But he gave them no chance. The good-looking Viennese made no impression upon him. He was to be seen everywhere. The duty he owed to society took him into the salons: that which he owed to himself to Daum's, Corti's, and the Café Français. He was quite a lion on the Prater, and his neat horses and turn-out were the theme of several tongues which had nothing better to do than to talk about them. To have seen him play *écarté* and *bacarrat*, no one would have believed him to have been broken-hearted; and yet he swore he was so—to himself, that is; and he firmly believed it.

"That was a good dinner, Woodbie, the only decent cookery in Germany," said young Rutherford Carlton, who had lately left Harrow, and was consequently well capable of judging. "I hate your tables d'hôte—everything cold and greasy. Thank goodness we've nothing of that sort in Vienna."

They were now standing outside of the Archduke Charles Hotel.

"No, *toujours a la carte*," replied Lord Woodbie. "What wine was that we were drinking? Seems to me to have no strength whatever."

"You don't drink enough of it," says Carlton. "There goes the Countess Strelinsky; that's something like a woman."

"More like a man," says the other; "you're the most

liberal man in Vienna on the score of female beauty, Carlton."

"And you the least so. If women were trumps, be hanged if I think you'd ever play at cards. Where are you going to-night?"

"Nowhere," said Woodbie; "I don't feel quite up to the mark."

"Then come to the Hofburg, and see a cheerful tragedy, called *Kabale and Liebe*. By gad, it'll do you good."

So they stepped into a fiacre, and went to see some Schiller.

That wonderful drama of love and wickedness is not calculated to raise the spirits, so when they came out, Woodbie was not much better than before.

"I say, Carlton, you don't believe women ever love in that way, do you?"

"Don't I, by Jove!" replies Carlton, not unmindful of a young woman in England, whom he believed to be still sighing for him, through his long and painful attaché-ship, not to herself, but to the British Embassy. "I don't mean to say every girl does of course; but then it depends on the sort of fellow, you know."

And Rutherford Carlton surveyed himself approvingly, as far as he could by a badly lighted street-lamp.

"And Walter, the Major—the lover, you know—I suppose it would be a hard struggle, with all his German

prejudices and so forth to have married a music-master's daughter. It's an awful thing to feel like that."

"Oh, come, I say, Woodbie, you'll give me the blue devils if you go on in that way. Let's go to Corti's, and have some champagne."

"That's just like you fellows. You've no sort of feeling. Now, if I'd been Walter, I should have thrown over the governor, and married the girl."

From which sentiment, coming before the champagne, Lord Woodbie's state of mind may be surmised. After supper he lost a quantity of money, and the next morning he woke dreaming of Julia Latimer; and then he remembered his determination made for her sake, to give up gambling and late hours, and he bethought him that he had not been true to his intention. So for three days he remained at home, and would have nothing to do with the dissipations of Vienna.

Whether it be the sign of a weak or a strong mind, I have not the slightest idea, but for a British nobleman, Lord Woodbie was most preposterously in love—vulgarly so.

You or I—I've no doubt our butcher or baker—might have suffered to the same extent, but his hallucination was unworthy a heartless aristocracy. Why the young man — attaché to wit — had positively been writing letters! Now letter writing is a dangerous amusement, unless entered upon with much dis-

crimination, and letters from Vienna to Miss Julia Latimer, from a newly joined attaché, showed no discrimination at all. We know what he tried in London, both before and after his rejection. The prescriptions were not much varied. Then he took to paper—not the paper of which he had been so profuse aforesaid, but the best cream-laid note, crested and monogrammed, and hot-pressed with words of fire. It did his lordship good to pour out his little soul after this fashion, when Carlton and Trefusis, and Tape, and the rest of them were fast asleep or going through the Viennose mill.

The worst of these epistles—indeed, the only thing that could be said against them—was, that they never got an answer. But it's a long lane that never has a turning.

"Letters from England for Monsieur," said Fritz, the new valet; and having handed them to his master in bed, he left the room.

The effect was electrical. In five minutes he was out of bed, and had rung his bell, and by that evening's mail he had taken leave of the minister and his friends, and was on his way to England. His German enemies declared that Lord Woodbie "had not all five together;" his English friends remembered that the Derby was at hand.

"What, Cecil!" and Lady Woodbie rose from her seat to welcome—well, scarcely that—to embrace her son.

Her ladyship had arrived in town for the season, and

was established comfortably in Grosvenor Square, having dismissed from her mind all fears of the terrible Julia.

“And how did you leave Lord Protocol, Cecil?” said the lady.

“Very well; and very hard up. The Hungarian nobility quite take the shine out of the Embassy entertainments. It’s a charming place to live in, but it didn’t suit me. It’s like an oven now.”

“But consider Lord Boppinton, my dear Cecil, and Lord Protocol.”

“I don’t see why I should. I’m sure they didn’t consider me. I was obliged to go to all the balls in Vienna.”

“They are the very highest class women on the Continent; and the music——”

“I was sick of the music in a fortnight,” said the ungracious son.

“My dear Cecil! But you’ll go with me to dinner to your Uncle Cadwallo’s; you’re just in time to dress,” said his mother.

“Indeed I can’t; I’ve nothing to dress in. Fritz is getting my things from the Custom House, and there’s Bohemian glass enough to keep him till midnight.”

And Lady Woodbie went to dinner alone, while his lordship walked off to the neighbourhood of Langham Place.

I think it must be admitted that if Lord Woodbie had

nothing else, he had considerable determination—a most respectable characteristic, if not a virtue.

The course of the next few days produced a change in the manner of Lord Woodbie which rather alarmed his mother. That lady, sincerely anxious for his happiness, was equally anxious for the family honour. He was quite independent enough to have told her nothing at all of his movements, but he was equally too truthful to allow her to deceive herself when she questioned him on the subject. She pitied her son's infatuation, but it was too genuine to be despised.

“Cadwallo,” said the good lady, “you must help me. Go and look at the woman. See what she's like, and come and tell me all about it. Ceecil's mad.”

“And is marriage the only straight waistcoat you can find for him?”

“Nonsense, Cadwallo; do as I ask you. You see what a mess we made of Vienna. If the woman is but a lady and worthy of him!”

The dear woman regarded no one that she knew quite in that light, but would have been glad enough now to compound for an honourable.

I don't know how Cadwallo managed the business, but Major Mulligan was not the man to throw difficulties in his way.

“Julia,” said he, returning in hot haste from the club, “can ye find old Lady MacStickler, and ask her to dinner

here to-morrow at eight o'clock? Tell her the Duke of Cadwallo is coming, with Lord Woodbie, and we'll be a quiet party, and have a rubber for the old lady."

"She'll come without telling her what's not true; at least she tells me she will come and see me whenever I like."

"Bedad, but it is true, and we'll have as good a dinner as a gentleman ever sat down to. He's asked himself, and I'd not be the man to say no."

And so came the neat little party into which Captain Goodge put his foot, somewhat unceremoniously.



CHAPTER XXX.

LADY WOODBIE MAKES UP A SMALL PARCEL—HER MIND.

"MY dear Cadwallo, how good of you," said Lady Woodbie. "You must have had a trying evening of it."

"On the contrary, I enjoyed it immensely. The Major allowed me to win my money, and the old lady was quite charming. As to the young one, I've told you there was no chance of getting in a word; Cecil relieved me."

"But they're dreadful people. She's a brogue, Cadwallo, I know she has."

“There, don’t fret about it. The merest *soupgon*. Not half so bad as Lady Hermione, and you know she made quite a sensation.”

“Lady Hermione! Yes, but she’s a marquise’s daughter That makes all the difference.”

“None at all. Miss Latimer will be an earl’s wife, and then she might have anything.”

“Ah! Now you’re laughing at me,” said the disconsolate mother.

“Not I. But I tell you candidly there’s not such a girl in all London. Of course I should prefer that her old uncle was already at the hulks—for that’s his eventual finish, beyond all doubt—and that Woodbie’s flame was already in the enjoyment of Lady Mac something’s protection, or property; for I’m told it will come to that. But if you wish Woodbie to marry for love, which I do not—but which, I admit, is likely to settle him, as it has done better men before him—why, don’t throw cold water upon it, because she’s neither a Plantagenet nor a Rothschild.”

The Duke of Cadwallo was not given to weighing chances, and as the descendant of the Mulligans could not be the Duchess of Cadwallo until he was dead and gone, the chance was too indefinite or remote to trouble his family pride. He generally took a good practical view of things, and as he knew Woodbie was going to the dogs, and that he had exhibited unmistakable signs of

a perseverance in the course, if thwarted, he recommended the alternative—a love-match. But then, dukes do not feel like mothers.

“But,” said the lady, after a pause, “are they respectable?”

“Most respectable; she, in her virtue, and he, in his vices—for he’s never been found out, you know.”

“I don’t mean that. I mean in their connexions and people.”

“Didn’t I tell you that the Mulligans, of Castle——”

“I know all that; but, can one be seen with her—can one take her about——?”

“If you’ll bring anything half as good-looking to Cadwallo, I’ll be bound to say that she’ll be overwhelmed with the attentions of one sex, and the jealousy of the other, than which two things nothing can be more flattering.’

The Duke was leaning against the mantelpiece, and was talking to his sister-in-law with as much good-humoured indifference as if personal beauty was the only requisite for the wife of an earl with thirty thousand a year.

“And what had I better do, Cadwallo? As for Cecil, he’s grumbling from morn till night; and now has taken to calling on Lady MacStickler, as if she were an old and valuable acquaintance. He’s so irritable, too, and low-spirited, because I won’t go.”

“She’s a very good woman, I believe, with a fine place, Heaven knows where, and an ample jointure. I remember her husband—old Sir Andrew, an old sportsman—when my father was Lord Lieutenant. He lost half his property gambling at the Kildare Club; he was a three-bottle man. He kept a pack of hounds, which he hunted himself, when his language was something terrible to listen to: he ran away with the great tragic actress of the Dublin theatre, and shot a man in the hip for heading the fox in a vain attempt to break from Buttermilk Gorse, after having been ordered by him to come back to the other side of the cover. In fact, he had as much temper and vice as would serve to make a gentleman of his day; and that’s sufficient for anybody’s purpose. The baronetcy is extinct, but some of the money still clings to his widow, who dined with us at the Major’s. You’d better go and call upon the girl, or the old lady, yourself.”

And here the Duke took up his hat, and prepared to descend to his horses, which had been walking up and down in Grosvenor-square for an hour at least.

“Well, then, I suppose I must, if you say so, and waive all objections, as far as I am concerned; but it’s quite your doing, so I hope you’ll tell the Duchess. Ah! she doesn’t know the trouble of boys; I wish she did;” and Lady Woodbie sighed as if her son was a type of everybody’s son, and as if an inconvenient love affair was

the normal condition of ladies of fashion, while the Duke answered tritely enough—

“You ought to be very glad she does not; if she did, Cecil would never be Duke of Cadwallo, you know; and then he took his leave, with a wish for the mother’s success. He was just outside the door, however, when a thought seemed to strike him, and he returned.

“If I were you I should be very quiet with the old lady, for she can’t be expected to enter into all the feelings of the young one; and I shouldn’t be very much surprised if she were to refuse us, unless you make your proposal very delicately. If Woodbie will go with us to Epsom, there’s a seat on the drag at his service. Tell him the Scud was a little shaky this afternoon, but there’s nothing in it. I’ve seen Meredith—he’ll understand;” and then this Mentor, who really was a very good fellow, and had the kindest intentions towards his sister-in-law and her son, went his way.

Lady Woodbie was perplexed—sorely perplexed—for Lord Woodbie was leading his mother a wonderful life of it. At first, on his return from Vienna, he seemed only too glad to be at home again. That vagrant, latch-key kind of life, in which young England is apt to indulge, whether of the *haute-volée* or the monied aristocracy, from May to August, had at first no charms for him. He was strictly domestic—that is, was seen at breakfast, opened his letters, dined at home once, went to his mother’s box

at the opera one night (he hadn't time for much more), and altogether was so respectable that dear Lady Woodbie began to see that there was something in the *grand passion* of which she had no previous notion.

So much for the first week ; but for the second now—ah ! there was a sad falling off. His head ached ; his hand shook ; he was out at night, and in bed all the morning. He took champagne for breakfast instead of tea ; swore at Fritz, looked pale, and then feverish, and rode his horses at all hours, and nobody knew where ; had a betting-book constantly in his hand, and mysterious visits from Israelitish-looking men. In fact, if Lady Woodbie had known the conventional language of swelledom, she would have seen that Woodbie was “going a mucker.”

And again, too ? this was too bad. After getting him once out of the fire, and sending him so nicely to Vienna, where he ought to have remained as many years as he did months—after paying some of his awful debts in his absence, to have him starting fresh, with a most viciously-constituted determination not to be thwarted, it was most provoking.

Nor could she divine the cause of it. Before—ah ! poor boy—he was in the meshes of a designing woman ; he didn't know whether he stood on his head or his heels. His whole heart was sick. He could not propose—his purpose was unsettled ; he was torn by contending

factions; his love pulled him one way, and his duty to his order another. He was gambling, too, and being duped by her horrid relatives and their associates. He was too strong to propose (at least the countess thought so) and too weak to break his bonds. But now here she was, a self-sacrificing mother, ready to give way; and he had come back from his duties and his pleasures, to throw himself at the feet of his mistress, and run all risks of her displeasure and the world's. Why had he become miserable and ill all of a sudden? Surely when men had a way and a will of their own, and their doubts were dissolved, they had no right to be wretched. She it was who was entitled to the satisfaction of misery. And after what Cadwallo had said, and she was prepared to give way, it was childish to begin his old courses again. She was not a very clever woman, nor a very wise one; but she was a wonderful mother. Just as she had made up her mind, he had unmade his.

Lord Woodbie sat gloomily in his own room tearing up letters and bills on the Sunday preceding the Derby. Fritz stood by receiving a variety of commands, not altogether congruous, and not easy of accomplishment. They pointed to a journey to Switzerland, and to an order on Fortnum and Mason for the day after to-morrow, and "send the brougham round in an hour."

The door slowly opened, and Lady Woodbie came in. She was dressed for a drive, and took a seat opposite to

her son, as the valet retired by another door. She looked at him a moment as if uncertain how to begin the conversation, while he rolled up a note, which he held in his hand, and put into his waistcoat pocket.

“My dear Cecil, you don’t look well. I’m sure Vienna didn’t agree with you, or else it’s that necktie doesn’t suit your complexion.”

“Most likely the necktie, mother ; however, I’m going to try Switzerland.”

“Try Switzerland, Cecil ! What will Lord Boppinton say ? ”

“Most likely just what he thinks, if he says anything at all.”

And Lord Woodbie said this rather pettishly.

“I’m sure he’s most anxious to be your friend.”

“Oh, I hate friends. I wish he’d adopt someone else for a protégé.”

And he twisted himself uneasily in his chair.

“Do you know what I came to say ? ”

“Not the most distant idea, mother. Something very kind, I’ve no doubt.”

“I’ve been talking to Cadwallo ; and I’m going to call on that old Lady Mac Stickler.” Lady Woodbie certainly looked for some acknowledgment of her kindness, but Woodbie turned further away, and muttered something not complimentary to that turbaned dowager. Lady Woodbie regarded her effort as a sort of Sabbatical

penance. "I think it's right to call, as you were received there last year; and then I shall go on to Miss Latimer, and—and——"

"The carriage, my lady," said a servant, opening the door very noiselessly, and holding it open for her ladyship to go out, which she did at once, while Lord Woodbie resumed his seat, which he had quitted rather hastily. And then the door closed upon him, and he heard in another minute the retreating wheels.

"Now that's what I call pleasant! Why the d——I didn't I stop her."



CHAPTER XXXI.

PENITENTIAL VISITING

OLD Lady MacStickler sat in an arm-chair near the window of a house in Curzon-street, Mayfair, about three or four o'clock on that identical Sunday. That in which she was passing a month or two was one of those numerous houses which let for the season, or a part of it, at a very handsome rental; when ladies and gentlemen prefer the delicious dust which emanates from a composition of pounded granite and manure heaps, to

the villainous breath of incense-breathing morn at their country houses. It had all the conventional signs of the Turkey-carpeted dining-room and old-fashioned side-board, the brighter excrescences of drawing-room plate glass, cabinet pictures by eminent copyists, and an amalgamation of delft and china-ware, suggestive of dead and absent rose-leaves. The house was well enough, as it might be, for an old lady and her companion, cleansed and straightened for the beginning of the season; but it was, at best, but a faded beauty got up for an especial occasion, and quite certain to fade again at the proper time.

The old lady sat at the window; and opposite to her, with a good book on her lap, sat her trusty companion, Flurry. Lady MacStickler was a strict Protestant, and her friend Miss Flurry was given to the high school of Ritualism—the only subject on which they seriously clashed—they differed on many.

“What have you there, my dear Flurry?”

“‘The Calendar of Anglican Saints and Martyrs,’” said Miss Flurry, referring to a highly-illuminated volume, and blushing as if she had been caught poaching.

“Where have you been to church this morning?” inquired the old lady.

“St. Ethelburga’s. The music and the vestments were magnificent.”

“You’d see better at Mr. Kean’s theatre. The costumes

are supplied by Nathan. Go, and say your prayers at the Spanish Ambassador's Chapel, like an honest Roman Catholic, Flurry; instead of running about after such childish imitations. I wonder you haven't too much sense."

Miss Flurry, who was usually submissive enough, and who understood old Lady MacStickler's peculiarities well enough to forgive them, was just about to reply to this attack upon her favourite weakness, when a pair of high-stepping horses and very neat carriage drew up at the door of the house in Curzon-street, and a loud knock announced a fashionable caller.

"There, Flurry, my dear, that's one of your friends: she's finished her devotions for to-day; but that's no reason she should disturb me. I'm not at home."

And in accordance with the old lady's custom, her servant appeared in a few minutes, as the carriage drove away, with a card upon a waiter.

"Take it, Flurry, and let's hear who it is. She's no martyr, I'll be bound to say, by the look of her carriage." And Miss Flurry, having recovered her temper, or nearly so, took the card from the salver and read out, "Lady Woodbie."

"Lady Woodbie!" said Lady MacStickler, at first not appearing to recollect who the lady might be, and then, as suddenly, recalling her to mind.

"Well, I'm sorry I didn't see her, I confess. That's

Lord Woodbie's mother, my dear," added she, raising her voice, "and she's come here to look after the interests of her son. She's afraid of his marrying Julia Latimer."

"I don't see why she should be afraid of that."

"Nor I neither. Except that she hasn't any money, and he's spent most of his for a year or two to come. She's too good for him, Flurry; and I shall take care of her when I'm gone. Ah! you needn't look, I'll take care of you, too; but I intend Julia to be my heir, and so I shall tell her."

Miss Flurry knew that she was put down for an annuity, and that was all, and she felt rather sorry that Julia Latimer should have come between her and her hopes of something better. She ventured to remark, not knowing what else to say—

"And the Major?"

"I hate majors, Ma'am. I believe it's far the most vicious grade in the service. There are more Irish majors than anything, and they're always bad. Directly a man becomes a major, I give him up. He has large whiskers, and a red face, and always takes to drinking, my dear. They are the most impertinent fellows alive, are the majors. I intend to have Julia to live with me; and I shall leave her everything I can. I don't see why she should marry Lord Woodbie at all."

"Because he loves her, I suppose," sighed Miss Flurry,

who, being now fifty, was given to indulging tender reminiscences.

“Loves her? I dare say he thinks so. Do you know who the men are that love? Men like your old lieutenant of the navy. He’s worth a dozen of such lovers as Lord Woodbie. Why, I do believe he’d marry you now, if he could afford it.”

Flurry was used to this, and smothered the tears that rose to her middle-aged eyes; for she knew her patroness to be good in the main, and only rough and inconsiderate at times.

“I dare say the good-for-nothing earl thinks he loves Julia, for he’s been brought up in a sort of atmosphere of white cambric and eau-de-Cologne, and loves after the fashion of such men; but as to love, except for himself, my dear Flurry, I don’t believe in it. A good jointure’s a likely thing to strengthen it, if he feels any for the girl; and if not, she’ll be all the better for it to share it with an honest gentleman.”

It would have been pleasant for Lady Woodbie to have heard this, if she could have done so. As it was, she had plenty to do to collect her thoughts; for she had undertaken a difficult and disagreeable task, and somewhat unfitted to her powers and inclinations. The streets were clear of carriages, and the drive was over almost before her ladyship had made up her mind as to the purport of her visit.

Miss Latimer was at home, and alone. The usual occupation of the Sunday before the Derby among betting men precludes the necessity for mentioning the absence of the Major—a regret which Lady Woodbie was unable to appreciate.

He was in excellent company, however, comparing books with his acquaintances, making a final inquiry after *The Rasper*, *Locomotive*, and *Flying Scud*, and waiting patiently for Lord Woodbie, whose attachment to the niece mysteriously included a hankering after the society of the uncle—a connection which seems to be about as close as German literature and the German flute.

When Lady Woodbie was ushered into Major Mulligan's handsome suite of rooms by his new valet, Julia Latimer did not express the astonishment she felt, because she was incapable of doing so. But if Julia felt surprise of one kind, Lady Woodbie was not free from the same sensation, arising from other causes. Lady Woodbie's appearance at all at Major Mulligan's house had been not only unexpected by Julia Latimer, but, for particular reasons, entirely inconceivable. Miss Latimer's appearance so far exceeded Lady Woodbie's anticipations of personal beauty and *physique*, that she gave way to a prolonged look of admiration before she apologised for an intrusion, which she had undertaken on the authority of her brother-in-law and her son. She had been so un-

fortunate as to find Lady MacStiekler from home, or she should have asked for a personal introduction to Miss Latimer before calling. The Duke of Cadwallo, however, who had passed so pleasant an evening in her company, had assured her that the visit might be paid without giving offence. Altogether, the Countess, who started from Grosvenor-square with a feeling that she was about to confer a great honour, and a hope, self-contained, that the poor girl would not be much oppressed by a person so much above her, was taken aback. Julia's large eyes gleamed with a curious mixture of surprise and defiance. She drew herself up to her full height, which was far above that of Lady Woodbie; and it was not till her ladyship had got through a considerable part of her apologies, that she motioned her to a seat and resumed her own. The mention of Lord Woodbie's name brought the colour to her cheek for a minute, and then left it pale as before. Her lips, too, trembled slightly, and a look of gentleness filled her eyes, as the lids dropped, and the long lashes swept her cheek. She was as handsomely dressed as Lady Woodbie herself, and looked as if she were fitted to be the mother of kings, not earls.

But they found their tongues at last, and then a bond of union drew these two women to one common subject.

"Oh! how much he must have owed, Miss Latimer, to the influence you have so happily exercised over him,"

said the elder lady, flatteringly, "since the first day he made your acquaintance."

"I would have held him back from vice and thoughtlessness, Lady Woodbie, had it been in my power; but——"

"It is in your power; and I am come——" here Lady Woodbie meant to have said that the family had determined upon overlooking the difference of position, and of assenting to so disadvantageous a marriage, because they saw no other chance for her son. But she was reduced to the simplest form of entreaty. "You will continue to use that influence by a nearer and dearer name than that of friend; I am, indeed, flattered by the preference——"

"Stay, Lady Woodbie, you labour under some strange error, and I do wrong to deceive you. I can never be more to you or your son than I am now." Here Julia Latimer rose from her chair. "I would do all I could to serve him or you, but there are objections to the course you hint at which are insurmountable."

"But, Julia," said Lady Woodbie, getting more anxious as the chance appeared more remote of success, "all difficulties on our part have vanished. His marriage will no longer alienate his family, and allow me to say——"

"Yes, Lady Woodbie, possibly on your part, but not on mine. I know not by what trick he was brought

back from Vienna ; the letter he showed me was not mine. It was cruel by him, cruel by us both," and here one tear fell from the overcharged lids upon her hand ; " but it could not be helped."

" And you reject him—you would reject him, if he were to offer himself ? "

" I have refused him, Lady Woodbie, before and since his return, and would do so again."

Here Lady Woodbie stared with unfeigned astonishment indeed.

" And would nothing move you—nothing, Miss Latimer ? I come to you as a suppliant ; I throw myself on your mercy. What would remove the obstacle of which you speak ? "

" A sense of my own sufficiency to save him, and nothing short of it. I cannot believe that the time has yet arrived." Saying which she rose, and Lady Woodbie, sad and baffled, was compelled to retire.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ABDUCTION OF KATE RIDEOUT.

THE antecedents of a man, whether self created or thrust upon him, have a great deal to do with his actual position. Many a man makes a struggle for Mayfair who would be much better off in the New Cut, if he did but know it. But it is so hard to retire from one's self as it were, and enter upon a new lease of existence. It does not matter, either, whether a man be a rascal or not, he is just as sensitive on the point; and having been all his life a vagabond of high caste, he feels more sensitively the necessity for joining the pariah tribe of villains.

It will not have escaped the observation of the discerning public that there were degrees, though not in the intensity, at least in the conditions of rascality, belonging to the confederates. Major Mulligan and Captain Goodge had begun life as unprincipled as they had continued it; but then they had begun it among certain classes, and they had no wish to descend. As long as Mayfair or St. George's-in-the-West were tenable they had no idea of benefiting the purlieus of Farringdon-street or St. George's-in-the-East by their experience. Con-

genial souls they might have found in either, where successful scoundrels would have appreciated their efforts in the cause of Bohemianism, but they would have ignored their fine clothes and delicate stomachs, and their effluvium of dandyism, which clings round descending ruffianism, as the scent clings to the fading roseleaf.

Chouser had less of this. An attorney's office offered few points of pleasant or aristocratic retrospect, and the miserable sinner looked forward to his career of dishonesty to put him into a better class of society—to push him up instead of down. So there's nothing incongruous in finding Chouser something out of the pale of modern notions as to locality. He was of the world without being in it; and as Pimlico may be talked of without a blush—if you forget to mention Ebury-street—by the side of Piccadilly or Portland-place, Chouser had selected that resort of increasing popularity for his *Lares et Penates*. It was near to Tattersall's, which was something, and was far from Cursitor-street, which was more. It afforded a ready exit to the park, the Mall, or the club on red-breeches days, and an entrance into convenient obscurity when Fortune hid her face behind the clouds of temporary pressure. In search of Chouser, there we shall find him.

At a table covered, to a certain extent, with small scraps of paper, sat the person we are looking for, and opposite to him, lounging in a comfortable arm-chair (for

there was every appliance of comfort, and even luxury in the room) sat Grindley Goodge, a well-balanced hat lying lightly on his head, a cigar in his mouth, and apparently lost in admiration of a very neat boot.

The other ^{*} was more actively employed : he was writing with apparent satisfaction, and stopping at intervals to inspect his work. At such times he would take up one or two of the strips of paper and notes, and compare them closely with his own performances.

“ Well, old fellow, will it do ? ” said Captain Goodge, sticking his hat firmly on his head, and leaning forward with some show of anxiety.

“ You’d better come and look ; ” and the Captain did so.

“ That’s very good ; but that Meredith (the M and the D especially) is not quite so good as Woodbie. ’Pon my soul, Chouser, that’s wonderful. I’d give a good deal to be able to do that. You’ll find it d——d useful.”

“ D——d dangerous, you mean, I suppose,” said the other.

“ Dangerous ; what ! done in that way ? Not much danger if you always take my advice. However, we don’t want it yet. As to the note, that’s nothing ; it’s only a lark.”

“ A lark that one might be shot for,” replied the less aristocratic but more practical member of the firm, “and not much to be got out of it, either.”

“You make a mistake, Chouser; with Kate at the head of our table in Piccadilly, we should command such elements of success, and——”

“Well, it’s your business, not mine. Women are expensive luxuries, and I prefer hunting for my own truffles. However, there’s the note. I don’t want to know what you’re going to do with it.” Saying which he rose from his chair drowsily, stretched himself, and swept all the little scraps of paper into the fire, which, though very small, were alight. The Captain at the same moment walked to the door, which resisted his efforts to open.

“Stop,” said Chouser, “it’s locked. There; now you can go.” On which intimation Grindley Goodge left the house.

It was the Monday before the Derby, so he looked in at Tattersall’s and inquired the odds, which he got. Rasper had supplanted the Scud in the betting, and Locomotive was third. The Scud was a little shaky, for the public did not know what Tom Meredith and Grindley Goodge knew—that the Scud was safe at Epsom, or, rather, within a few miles of it, under the hospitable quarters of George Ireland, and under the immediate superintendence of old Nat.

Grindley Goodge had been what the Americans call “well posted-up” in the news from Nobbley. His scribes and spies, Mark Heron and Phœbe, could not have con-

ected an epistle between them as orthographically correct as—as—well, there's such a choice of similes that it is hard to select : suppose I say as—that of the last on the list of competition for Her Majesty's Service : but they managed to make themselves comprehensible.

The intelligence amounted to this—and it had better come in any language than theirs—that the Scud was wonderfully improved ; that two attempts to get at him had failed—the one through the lad, the other through the top opening of the door ; that he was in Leatherhead, or near it ; that he was safe to win the Derby if he did not tumble down, unless some unforeseen accident should prevent it. That was Mark's information, and it was as correct as his pothooks were difficult to decipher. Phoebe's subject matter was not a horse but a woman ; and she wasted no time in periphrases. Her compliments were sparsely scattered, notwithstanding her admiration of Grindley Goodge, for she had already discovered that business was paid for by that gentleman, not according to the halo of pleasure or sentimentality which surround it, but by the efficacy of its results. She therefore went boldly to the point, and like a hound which has been once blooded, lost no time in scenting what was now to be run in view. She had informed her whilom admirer that Kate Rideout was to pass through town on Tuesday afternoon on her way to Mrs. Ireland's, and that a carriage

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was to meet her at a station we will call Clairville, on that line, at six o'clock, to convey her to her entertainer's.

Mr. Grindley Goodge had laid his plans with considerable forethought. The carriage to go to Yorkshire was, of course, remanded. He took into his service as great a rascal as could be found; and of such there is no lack, when funds are not wanting to pay for them. The life which Grindley had led since his earliest days was one which gave him every facility for finding characters suited to the attempt he was about to make, and his own vanity fostered the preposterous notion that, once in his hands, the victim herself would be only too ready to acknowledge his powers.

When Grindley Goodge went out of Chouser's lodgings, it was near midday; he had, therefore, time enough to put his plans in execution. They were well matured; and, after calling at Tattersall's and booking a bet or two somewhat ostentatiously, one with Meredith, who happened to have gone down there thus early, he proceeded to a mews at the back of Piccadilly.

"Dixon, you understand," said he, addressing a dark, good-looking man, who looked like an officer's servant in undress; "call for Mrs. Wilson at the address I gave you, to-morrow afternoon. Drive slowly down to Clairville; you had better not put up in the place. Give this note to the person claiming it; but be sure you ascertain

beforehand that she has arrived, and is expecting a carriage to meet her. You know her, by sight?"

"I lived with old Mr. Sykes for six months, and can scarcely have forgotten her," replied the man, with a perfectly cool and unembarrassed air.

"Go up to the platform—the chances are, the other will wait below till she comes down. Get some one to stand with your horses. They are not known, and the brougham is not like mine."

"I think I've seen one like it," again said Dixon, smiling.

"So have I; however, that's neither here nor there. Mrs. Wilson will be with you, and you will drive them back to the cottage at N——, and return with them to town on Wednesday."

Dixon touched his hat, and in a few minutes both master and man had left the yard.

It had been no difficulty for Grindley Goodge to find a representative, of middle-aged respectability, to take care of Kate Rideout during her journey; but when he hit upon Mrs. Wilson, he found one of those invaluable treasures who, having lost her situation for being accessory to a burglary, had lived upon her wits and a presentable person, always dressed in black silk, ever since. She looked like a good, motherly woman; but, had she been a rabbit, she would undoubtedly have devoured all her young.

Fortune favours the wicked. Almost in every circumstance of his cruel and heartless design Grindley Goodge was successful. Dixon met with the provincial wayfarer with his fly for a Miss Rideout, who was expected by the train at Clairville. Where there's a public there is beer, and Dixon did not scruple to avail himself of the amiable weakness, said to be indigenous to the Britisher. He left him enjoying his beer and his leisure, while he presented his credentials at the station. Kate Rideout was as unsuspecting as a little coquetry, and a strong inclination to believe what she read, was likely to render her. Besides, what could she know of a world like Grindley Goodge's? She was well inclined to trust a note which bore the characteristic signature of Nat Gosling, and which told her that Squire Meredith had sent down his landlady and his brougham, to bring her to town the next day, as poor Mrs. Ireland was too ill to receive her. There was nothing so very odd in all this. Some fever, perhaps; something catching. And when she saw the respectable figure of Mrs. Wilson, and was assured that the cottage to which she was to be taken on her way to London was the property of the Squire, she was reassured, if any doubts had ever oppressed her.

"Now," said Grindley Goodge to himself, waiting for Mark Heron in a fresh public-house in a suburb, "she'll never forgive Tom Meredith this second desertion, when

she finds he doesn't come near her ; or, having compromised herself, she won't be sorry to make matters square by going abroad with me."



CHAPTER XXXIII.

SOMEBODY NOBBLED.

IN the meantime the fly had returned to Mrs. Ireland's with the startling intelligence that no Miss Rideout had arrived by the six o'clock train.

"Then why didn't you wait, John? Just like his stupidity"—(an aside).—"You might have thought of something besides your own inside," added the irate lady, then cognizant of John's maudlin state.

"Please, Ma'rm, I did wait, and there worn't no inside—ask pardon, no young lady for Leatherhead."

As John had once been a coachman, the mistake was excusable. Then Mrs. Ireland and Nat Gosling laid their heads together, and came to a natural conclusion that they should hear to-morrow, and that Kate wasn't a likely girl to come to grief without their hearing of it. Mr. Ireland, too, a man of wisdom, experience, and many summers, accounted for it in many ways :—"Day before the Derby ;" "Illness ;" "Trains late—must be so ;"

and this latter suggestion, on such a day, sets further inquiry at rest.

“How’s the Scud, Nat?” inquired the old man, good-humouredly, sipping the tea which Mrs. Ireland—in a very jeweller’s shop of presents, a very Mechlin of lace, and a garden of artificial flowers—had poured out for him. Mrs. Ireland was not a woman to be forgotten by her husband’s patrons, and their presents were neither far between nor few. On great occasions she wore them all, and the eve of the Derby was one of them.

“He’s just as right as a trivet. Did ye ever see a horse look finer or better? But, ye see, he’s only second favourite now, Mr. Ireland. I can’t make it out. I think he’s better than Rasper by five pounds, and seven better than your horse. But we’ll know by this time to-morrow.”

Mr. Ireland laughed good-humouredly.

“Well, Nat, I don’t say you will, but if you don’t win now, it’s my opinion you’ll never have such a chance again. Our horse is in rare fettle; he’ll make ye gallop, you know. As for Rasper, I don’t like him all over. Still, he’s a good public runner, and I don’t wonder he’s first favourite. But he won’t win; the Derby’ll come here, Nat; so mind, missus, you has a bottle or two of champagne ready against we come home; we haven’t time for much else than business at the course.”

And when old Mr. Ireland and Nat Gosling parted for

tho night, the latter to a cottage next to Flying Seud's box, they had a rather anxious time of it; but the old man was fast asleep when Nat Gosling lit a light, and shoes in hand, slipped very quietly down stairs. The stars were shining, but the sun was already beginning to break in the east. It was a day big with the fate of thousands. Nat, as he looked into the stable, where he saw the faint glimmer of a light, couldn't help knowing that he held in his hands the fortunes of a few honest men and most of the rogues of the country. He almost repented him as he thought of the part he was playing, and wished he had secured the tempter, or repulsed him: "and then," sighed the old fellow, "he'd a got at him some other way, and burnt or poisoned my gallant Seud. No, no; we've got him safe enough, and he may hang himself with his own rope. If we win, Grindley Goodge and his friends will never show here any more." By the end of which soliloquy he had reached the stable-door.

"Robert, Robert, I say! D—— the lad! how he sleeps. Since he found he couldn't ride, he's taken to sleeping wi' great perseverance. Robert, I say!"

And this time he spoke a little louder, and knocked at the door. In another minute Robert was at the leek, and admitted the intruder.

"Why, Nat, I suppose you couldn't trust me; so you've come to have a look round," said Robert, with a reproachful tone.

“Trust you? Oh, yes, Robert, I can trust you wi’ anything but wittles; and I’m come to show you that I can. How’s t’ Scud?”

“Never see a horse look like him last night, when we did up. There! he’s moving now;” and at the same moment the horse appeared to get up, and shake himself, as far as could be conjectured through a two-inch door.

“That’s Waterspout, next him, Robert; he’s a rare bred ’un, he is—half brother to the Scud; and as he stands in his bandages, it ’ud take a clever man to tell the one from the other.”

“Never see sich a likeness in my born days,” says Robert.

“Take and put him into Scud’s box, lad; we’ll change him for an hour or two. Does ’em good to change the air.”

“Never heard tell o’ that before,” said Robert, partly to himself, at the same time proceeding to obey Nat Gosling. He was about to call another boy down the loft, when he was stopped by Nat.

“Hold your tongue, Robert; we’ll do it between us. We needn’t disturb the other lads. There!” said Nat, changing the horses, and patting Waterspout as he crossed over. “You didn’t do much to-day, and you won’t be wanted again till the York Meeting. You can put his water into the box with him; let him have it when he

likes. I'm expecting the farrier to look at his feet early this morning, and then we can send him back by train. The rest of the lot stop over till Ascot."

Saying which, old Nat took his seat upon a bucket in the temporary bed-room of his *protégé*, Robert, and saw his orders carried out. It was scarcely light when the farrier and his assistant arrived.

Grindley Goodge was at a flash publichouse in a suburb on the road to Epsom, waiting for Mark Heron. When he arrived, the conversation between them was not long nor elaborate, but characteristic. Goodge had given his hack to the ostler, and was standing in the garden at the back of the house. He had not to wait long.

"Mark, are the disguises, the dresses, all right?"

"Everything. I've a friend in a gipsy camp, that gives me a bed, and I shall be at the 'Golden Plover,' Captain, before four o'clock to-morrow morning. I'll bring the things. You've got a hack, and Jim the Picman 'ull mount me. Now I'm off for the course."

He was just going, when bethinking himself of something, he turned, and said in a whisper, "Captain, you promised me a tip, can you do it now?"

"A certain loser, Mark; those are what I sell—the Scud. Don't fail me, and you shall have the doing of it. It's only a bucket of water, and this," upon which the

Captain took from a side pocket a small blue paper packet, and exhibited it stealthily. "Don't be late. Send the man round with my hack, Mark."

In another minute Goodge was gone on his road to the course, whence, at the usual time, with a heavy heart (for this was a desperate venture) and a lightened pocket (for things had gone badly to-day), he turned his horse, as the sun was going down, across the country, towards the "Golden Plover," an unfrequented inn near — Common.

The reader will now be at no loss to know who were the two persons presenting themselves to the astonished Robert and the expectant Nat, soon after the change of horses from the one box to the other. We have seen, indeed, that upon previous occasions Mark Heron had acted in the capacity of plater to some of the stables round his own neighbourhood. His early training had been under a village blacksmith of great local celebrity, and his own natural turn for horse-flesh, and his gipsy origin and connections, had added to his knowledge and reputation.

Still, Robert was surprised to recognise Mark Heron, who made no attempt at concealment, enter into familiar conversation with Nat Gosling, who at once admitted him and his apparent assistant to the box which had contained the Flying Scud, but which was now tenanted by his half-brother, Waterspout.

The great quality of Robert's mind was not quickness of apprehension, nor curiosity, but unquestioning obedience. There was a quality about him which would have been exemplary indeed in the great rebellion, and which would have had a salutary effect on the independent spirits that chose, most improperly, to think for themselves. Passive obedience was his watchword, and he saw the accursed Mark enter the stable, close the door on himself and his companion, and depart again, without a word. It was enough for him that Nat Gosling was there the responsible party, and all he regretted in the transaction was, the loss of sleep, which Nat's early visit had procured for him, but which he vowed to take out as soon as the Scud had vindicated the honour of his country.

Nat's own proceedings were curious, to say the least of it. He went, without speaking, to the door of the box, opened it, peeped in, and then proceeded to inspect the stable. He looked at first at the horse, which appeared to be perfectly right, then at his feet, which had been left as they were before the visit, and lastly at the bucket, which was nearly empty. He then returned to the door, and said in a hoarse whisper, accompanied by a broad grin—

“Robert, my lad, he's drunk two-thirds on it, anyhow.”

“Have he?” said Bob. “Well, he aint been long

about it. That won't hurt him. It's been in here all night, and was drawed yesterday arternoon."

"Well, I hope it's all right. We must watch him, lad, for they been and put something into it."

"What's that for?" said the boy, opening his eyes.

"They thinks they ha' physicked t' Scud."

"Why, Nat, you never—they arn't gone and poisoned the Waterspout?"

"Pisoned!"

And then Nat's features changed from a broad grin to the very longest of faces, and for the first time he began to see that he might have acted a wiser part if he hadn't been so very anxious to dispute the palm of superior cunning with "they southerners."

"Pisoned! Lor' bless you, not they. They'd never 'a done that. Do you know who it was?"

"Yes, I do. Mark Heron, to be sure. He's as big a rascal as any I know."

"And the other was Grindley Goodge."

"Then he's a bigger, and the sooner we sends for Master Drench, the better."

And we may as well add that Master Drench, the vet., after examining the bucket, assured him that beyond rendering the horse unfit to go more than half-a-mile at three-quarter speed, no harm would result from a quick, but harmless, opiate.

"Five hundred pounds," said Nat, after having made

Robert a confidant, and sent him off with a note to Mr. Meredith by the earliest train. "It's a deal o' money. A 'orse is a wery mischievous animal, after all—worse than a woman. In natur' he's honest and noble, but he's the cause o' more meanness and villainy in man than the whole female sex put together."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FLYING SCUD'S YEAR.

It was a lovely morning, the 29th of May, 18—. All Regent Street, Oxford Street, Bond Street, Piccadilly, St. James's, Pall Mall, was awake at an unusually early hour. Empty phaetons, broughams, omnibuses, and hansom cabs, in the highest state of decoration as to frontlets and rosettes, to say nothing of the very brightest brass harness, were taking up passengers, or on their way to do so.

On public conveyances the ominous word "Epsom" was printed in the largest type, and on the private ones the huge hampers, strapped and corded, proclaimed the same inevitable destination. Along the quieter streets of Dover, Albemarle, Duke, Jermyn, and at the clubs, nothing could be more resolute than the manifest and manifold Newman's greys and professional Derby britzkas which awaited their occupants, and which had put in an appearance of severity in the blue jackets and white breeches, and the Fortnum- and Mason-like providence of the rumbles.

Here and there drags were seen coming round corners at that peculiar pace which is a grand symbol of

curbed impatience, or were standing in the morning sun, with a stout coachman on the box and a couple of light grooms at their heads. Grosvenor-place and Belgravia, if later on their legs, were not less lively when there; and the veriest stranger could not fail to perceive that something more than common was on foot in the wealthiest, the largest, and the most energetic capital in the world; and so there was.

For a week before everybody we had seen in the streets was going to have a pair of Newman's greys. Newman's greys, like the champagne of Rheims or Epernay, seemed to be unlimited, and we gave no more credit to the one than the other, when we took into consideration the amount of supply and demand. But when we saw what we did see on that identical morning, we were bound to admit that there were more posters in London than we believed to exist in the whole world, since the institution of the railway. They were not all Newman's greys, as they used to be; but they were black, brown, and bay—some with legs, some without them—but every one of them had a fine coat on, and had been got up, in the way of crupper and bearing reins, in accordance with the traditions of the day.

The traditions of that day are curious and exhilarating. "The Fenian movement and the war with Prussia is postponed until after Wednesday next," says the Minister from his place in the House, in consideration of the

Derby. "*Cedunt arma togæ;*" and we live until after Wednesday over a powder-magazine with as much confidence as the Israelites through a Sabbath-day's warfare.

All schoolboys regarded the Derby day, in every part of the civilised world, as a holiday; and, though I have known them in school on that day, there was no flogging; the utmost tenderness was observed for their errors. "*Gaudet equis, canibusque,*" which has reference to the well-known dog, of course. All the girls' schools are out on the Clapham Road. The wildest license is given to the tongue and to the teeth; and both are well ahead of reason and digestion. The veriest slave becomes a free man; shillings become half-crowns; and the tailor's apprentice borrows his customers' clothes. The universal world wears its gayest colours; and from the appearance of the course, an amnesty appears to be proclaimed to the hulks and prisons at large.

Nothing is so poor that it doesn't rejoice; nothing so stupid that it doesn't know the way to Epsom; nothing so virtuous that it doesn't intend to have cakes and ale; and nothing so prudent as not to have backed something or other. What cares an Englishman for the Rinderpest or General Bankruptcy, any more than for General Banks, on this anniversary? Have you robbed the till? No. Then do it at once, and lay it out on the Flying Scud. You are in debt to your butcher? He can afford

to wait till after Wednesday; you'll be in funds. Grandmother dead? What! this morning? Oh! of course, you had left home before the postman arrived. Wife won't go without a new bonnet? Then go without her. Ah! that wouldn't do at all. Then let her have the bonnet. "Breathes there a soul," &c.; you know the rest. Certainly not; high, low, rich, poor—all are on their way to the Surrey hills; and of these countless thousands by road or rail, there's not a soul that doesn't rejoice in his holiday, excepting poor book-makers.

The Duke of Cadwallo went down on his drag; and on its roof a goodly company of the British aristocracy, among whom was Lord Woodbie. The Duchess and Lady Woodbie were inside. The Cock, at Sutton, produced a stoppage; as, indeed, did one or two other favourite localities, especially the turnpike gates.

The wretched and staring population of an overworked, underpaid capital, was in its shirt-sleeves and pipes on the top of waggons, donkey-carts, omnibuses and tumbrils. An epicene class gave delicacy to the sportive jokes, and softened the roughness of the Bacchanals.

The professional gentlemen preferred the rail. "Business is business," said they, "and if we can find a flat, may we not do him?" and they did him. There was your hundred-to-one man, and your modest, but

inevitable card-sharper ; the men who did the list business, and the perambulating lottery. The road was unproductive to them—hard, dry, stony, and unprofitable. Quiet broughams took down your heavy betters, who were already at their books, and knew how many and what to bar, when once in the sacred precincts of their temple. Mulligan and Chouser and Goodge were among these ; and friendly and cheerful greetings they exchanged with those whom they were bent on victimising, if all came off right.

There goes Woodbie, on the Duke's drag. He'll be in the hole, as old Mo Davis calls it ; and so will his friend Glenlivat. Bedad, he'll have to go."

"Not he," said Chouser ; "those fellows never go ;" and Chouser's bile rose at the contemplation of social wrong.

Grindley Goodge took out his betting-book as they came to a dead halt, and regarded it with tolerable satisfaction. "I have but one bad horse in the race, and I've made him safe."

"Is he a very bad one ?" said his companion.

"Utter ruin ! Keep the brougham by Tattenham Corner, so that we can get off the moment the race is over. We shall know our fate soon after then."

The hill is a thing to see. Do you want to show a foreigner the wealth, the commerce, the liberty, the glorious intercourse of classes, the grandest spectacle in

the world—the enjoyment of a free people? Let him see the canvas tents and glorious crowds on the hill-side at Epsom. Does he want detail? take him nearer; show him the loveliest women, the handsomest aristocracy, the best equipages, and the most highly-bred horses in the world. But what will he see, too? Vice—naked, deformed, or gorgeously apparelled and disguised; gambling, dishonesty, intemperance, open, undismayed; ignorance and folly running a tilt with chicanery and imposture. And all to improve the breed of horses, and give the hard-worked Londoner fresh air and healthful enjoyment! Come, come; our friend is censorious. There is virtue and honesty, and mirth and intelligence, even on the side of the Derby hill.

There is not much self-restraint, to be sure, in the midst of all this luxury, some of which might go to soothe the distresses or provide for the wants of another Barnsley calamity. But it is but a Derby; to-morrow all will be well, excepting the headaches and the heartaches, and some of the latter may be cured, for what I can tell. The Derby comes but once a year; its pains are not always as shortlived as its pleasures.

Grindley Goodge sat still in his brougham, and Major Mulligan and Chouser made their way to the Warren. The Captain had no misgivings. Seeing is believing; and he had himself superintended the cooking of the Scud. His book was made—he wanted no more. If

Rasper won, he won a fortune, and his friends stood in ; if the Flying Scud, he lost one—one which he had no means of paying. He had from Wednesday to Monday to contemplate ruin. It was not a pleasant prospect, but it was shut out by a pleasanter one. He wondered what the feeling in the ring was just now. The Scud could scarcely be going for it ; or if he did, he couldn't live half a mile.

At that moment Chouser reappeared at the brougham door. His face (if the index to his mind) pointed with nothing but a left hand. Ominous clouds were on his brow.

“Come out, Goodge, that's a good fellow. The Scud is first favourite. They say he looks beautiful.”

“Have you seen him?”

“No ; but the Major is gone to the Warren, and I came back to tell you the result of my inquiries. The ring are laying six to four on him.”

“The devil ! Has anybody seen him since the morning ? What is it, Mulligan ?”

And at this moment the Major made his appearance.

“I've seen him, Goodge. The horse looks as fine as a star. He's just gone into the Warren and is being walked round as quiet as a sheep.”

Goodge bit his lip.

“It's impossible, Major : I tell you I did it myself. I saw him drink a pailful. Bless my soul, man ! it can't be.”

And here he laughed in a manner less reassuring than might have been expected. "Here! champagne, boy—quick!" And he swallowed a tumblerful. "I'll go and see myself;" and he walked away. On his way he met with hundreds of his friends, who would have nothing but "the Scud." But Goodge's book was full.

"Captain, I'll lay you six ponies to four."

The Captain shook his head at one of the best judges on the turf.

"Seven hundred to four hundred and fifty on the Scud."

It was a tempting offer; but just then the Scud came out, his jockey on his back, and the Captain began to think—but no; the thing was impossible—that he'd been done.

The horse galloped well and strong. A sudden idea seemed to strike Grindley Goodge. He walked rapidly away to the start. As he went down he spoke to one or two of the jockeys who overtook him. The favourite must win, was the general opinion, and at that moment he came towards the bottom of the hill from the Warren. There was that peculiar bloom on his coat which denoted superb condition; his eye was bright and clear, and he moved, even in his walk, with the elasticity of vigorous health. Nat Gosling led him, with his cunning old eyes on the ground; he dared not look up. Then Grindley

Goodge looked at the jockey. For a minute or two he thought of the risk. Was it too late? and would a couple of thousand do? But he looked at him, and he saw in his eye an honesty and a resolution as great as Fordham's. He knew it was useless to run the risk.



CHAPTER XXXV

HOW TO PROVIDE FOR SETTLING DAY.

THEY'RE off! A struggling mass fights its way up the hill. Rasper rushes to the front, and Locomotive and the Flying Scud follow. Grindley Goodge can see no more. A good outsider, Argus's cockboat, leads round Tattenham Corner. They descend the hill. The Scud hugs the rails, his jockey not moving yet, while some are hopelessly beaten, and the rest are at work. Opposite the stand it is Rasper or Locomotive, and the shouts reach Grindley Goodge where he stands. No; on the lower side, one hundred yards from home, comes the Flying Scud. All eyes are on the other two, while with one squeeze, and letting him out almost imperceptibly, the Scud is landed an easy winner by a couple of lengths.

Grindley Goodge stayed to hear no more: pale, crestfallen, and cursing his ill-success, he seeks his brougham silently among the noisy crowd. The horses are put to, and without daring to question one another, in half an hour the confederates are on their way back to town.

When a man is simply ruined, there is an end of him—society's done with him; he excites no more interest than if he were dead and buried; but when a man is several thousands worse than ruined, there remains about him a sort of negative vitality, so to speak, which makes him still an object of interest. Above all, if he be concerned in an unfinished elopement, and a forgery, but be still floating on the surface of respectable society, the reader must be content to follow him for a chapter or two more to his legitimate end.

One road lay open to Grindley Goodge and his associates, and that, after mature deliberation, they determined to pursue. We shall see what it was, and how it answered.

"Then," said Grindley Goodge, "you think play at the Club will be high to-night?"

And he prepared to leave Major Mulligan's, where he had been landed after the Derby.

"Faith, I do. They'll be mighty flush of money," replied the Major, turning over some loose silver in an otherwise empty pocket. "There'll be Woodbie, and

Meredith and Glenlivat, and that party. And the money, Goodge?" added he, after a thoughtful pause.

"Leave that to me. It must be got; and we'll try our plan if Mo. Davis fails us." With this he started.

When he reached his own door in Piccadilly, Mrs. Wilson met him. It was still early, and it wanted some hour and a half of dinner time. No one had yet returned to town but himself, though the news of Flying Scud's victory was pretty well known.

"Ah! Mrs. Wilson! is she up stairs?" And he seemed now, for the first time, to recollect that he had another difficult task on hand.

"She is. I think you should see her. She is restless and irritable, and wonders her friend, Nat Gosling, I think she calls him, has not yet been to see her."

"What! on the Derby Day! Come, Mrs. Wilson! You can find an excuse for an absent friend. Has she asked for no one else?"

"Not yet. Is she likely to?"

"Possibly. But she can see no one on a day like this; to-morrow, of course."

And Mrs. Wilson was not slow to comprehend the necessity of allaying Kate Rideout's fears, which were not great, for she fully believed herself to be under Nat Gosling's protection in the lodgings of Tom Meredith.

Meantime, Nat, hearing nothing of Kate on his return from the Derby, had telegraphed to Nobbley, and, we

need hardly say, the answer was anything but satisfactory. But he did not let the grass grow under his feet. In a few hours he had visited the station at Clairville; had called in the aid of the Inspector of Police; had got a clue which carried him in pursuit of his whilom granddaughter; and which landed him that night in London, having left the Scud and his companions under the care of Mr. Ireland until his return.

At half past seven that evening—that is, about two hours after his return to town, Grindley Goodge was leaning over the shoulder of his friend Mr. Chouser, whose face wore a perplexed and haggard look, not peculiar to poverty more than to crime. He sat with his hand on a paper, unwilling to conclude, as it seemed, some difficult or nefarious transaction. He looked at Grindley Goodge with a deprecatory expression; but he was inexorable.

“It must be done, Chouser, and at once. Mo. can’t or won’t assist us without. Tut, man! why strain at gnats after swallowing camels, burdens and all. It will all be repaid, and the bill cancelled by to-morrow. There—that’s right; the man himself wouldn’t know it, if he stood where I do. We’re saved, and shall start again, in spite of all the Scuds in the world;” saying which, he took from the reluctant hand of Mr. Chouser the paper, still wet with his signature.

Eleven o’clock had struck that night when the Turf

Club presented an unusual appearance of bustle. The race was being discussed in loud tones all over the room. Men in every costume were there, from the most elaborate toilette, in which they had been dining, to the same dusty garments in which three hours before they had threaded the Epsom road, or the London streets, on their return from the rail. The owner of the Flying Scud was among them, receiving congratulations, and amidst them all he was thinking, good, simple soul, of the absence of one who might have shared and would have fully appreciated his feeling. He had been dining, and perhaps it is not too much to say, that his excitement was not wholly owing to the events of the day. Lord Woodbie was there, with Fitzwalter and Lord Glenlivat, running through his book, and speculating on an Oaks filly for Friday. The first of these three had allowed all his discretion to evaporate with his new disappointment. It was not long, however, before this amusement became tame; and they adjourned from the spacious apartment in which such public business was transacted, to one of those private rooms where hazard, whist, piquet, or écarté could be indulged in at any hour, and to any extent.

The present occupants of one of these rooms were Major Mulligan, Goodge, Chouser, Mo. Davis, and a young man or two about town, more remarkable for their love of play than for the prudence which dictated

their measure or selection of opponents. They were deep in écarté, when they were joined by the men we have mentioned. For some time the game went on with varied success, and several hundreds changed hands.

As the night advanced the room became thinner, until the more inveterate gamblers were alone left at the table orround it.

Meredith, who had been indulging freely in champagne was, even then, a heavy loser; and had made way for Lord Glenlivat, who, in his turn, relinquished his seat to some one equally unfortunate.

Lord Woodbie had been unusually successful; and whether himself as a player, or covering the stakes of an adversary, was in a vein of luck.

“Come, Meredith,” said he, carclesly, “take your seat again; Goodge’s luck can’t go on for ever;” and as Meredith took the vacant place once more, he put down a heavy stake upon the table.

Again and again he lost, offering his seat, as usual, to some other player. On looking up, after some time, he found the room deserted by all but the confederates, Lord Woodbie and Fitzwalter.

“No, no,” said the Major; “go on, Meredith, and gct it back if you can.”

And Chouser re-echoed the sentiment so congenial to his object. Another thousand was gone, and Meredith continued.

“Whom do you back, my lord?” said the Squire of Nobbley, whose flushed cheek and glistening eye told a tale of violent passion within.

“I shall back the Captain; he’s in luck to-night, and you’re not.”

Again he lost.

“Give it up, Meredith,” said the youngster, good-naturedly; “to-night, at all events, you’re not—not—well, you know, the fact is you’re no match for Captain Goodge.”

Meredith half rose in his chair. “Do you mean to insinuate, my lord, that——”

A chorus of voices arose: “Sit down; no, no; of course not. There! finish the game; it’s all right—five hundred.”

“I say,” began the Squire again, “do you mean——” and again the same remonstrance quieted him.

“I say, then, if I’m not able to play my own game, will you cover that?” and he placed a roll of notes on the table.

Lord Woodbie looked at him a moment, and carefully counting the notes, drew from his own pocket a like sum.

“Yes, I will, Meredith—for the last time to-night. I’ve won enough; this time, however, I cover.”

The game proceeded. Lord Woodbie shifted his position, standing away from the table, and offering no advice to Goodge.

"Four to three," said Tom with flushed and eager look; "four to three; I'll lay the odds."

Again Lord Woodbie moved. "I'll take them," said his lordship, "in hundreds."

"And I," said Mr. Chouser; and the game proceeded.

Meredith marked his four, and Goodge dealt. Lord Woodbie never moved his eye from his hand, and his cheek burned like fire.

"The king!" said Goodge, turning him up. "Ah! you play the knave, the queen, the ace; what, no more trumps, Mr. Meredith? There's the king of spades. Three and two are five—game."

A long-drawn breath succeeded this painful scene, and Tom Meredith turned to Lord Woodbie, and said, "Take your money, my lord."

"Excuse me, that's impossible. I can take my own but not yours."

"Nonsense, my lord;" and the players rose together. "This is child's play. I insist! You refuse? You wish to insult me, Lord Woodbie."

"No, Meredith; the money's not mine, nor does it belong to those men. You've been swindled. I saw Mr. Davis distinctly telegraphing; I thought so before—I know it now; and Captain Goodge slipped the king."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the

cards were thrown violently in his face; and nothing but Meredith's strong arm, and now recovered reason, prevented a blow in return. In a few minutes the room was cleared.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CLOSE FINISH.

IN an age not giving to fighting, and when the mercy of judicial modesty and the cheap arbitration of law heals every wound, it was impossible to pocket up such wrongs, even if your breeches were but able to carry them. Goodge knew this, and the only justice we can do him is to say that, if a bully, he was no coward. It was no regard to Lord Woodbie's age that inclined him to fighting; and when he took his way to Mulligan's room his determination was taken on far other grounds.

Even England has a warm night or two in the year, which will admit of fresh air; and this, of which I write, was one of them.

We have seen at the beginning of this history that the interior room at the Major's opened by a window into a balcony or semi conservatory of lattice-work and ivy, at

this season full of plants. It served for summer contemplation or an evening's siesta. It had not been used this season. On the night in question, however, in the absence of the Major, Julia Latimer had betaken herself from a heated room to the cooler atmosphere of a London sky at midnight ; and, lost in a reverie, of which it would not be difficult to guess the subject, was only roused by hearing voices in the room, which was lighted by nothing but a summer moon.

The first words startled her, and she suppressed her very breathing, so intently was she bent on learning more of the diabolical scheme that unfolded itself in a moment in all its malignity. The words came scarcely above a whisper, but with a hoarse malice that made them ten-fold and terribly audible.

“Don't you see?—my safety, the safety of us all, depends upon his death. Don't talk to me about his age. Lord Woodbie is old enough to win or to lose money, and to give himself the airs of a man. If he wants a lesson he must have it, and boyhood is the time for learning. The forgery of his name to that acceptance will send us all to the hulks, and our best chance is in my shooting him.”

“Then you must find another friend, Goodge. We're accustomed to some curious things in that way in Tipperary, and Galway is no way behind London in its punctilious notions of honour ; but I'll not go out to see

you shoot Lord Woodbie for all the money in the Exchequer.”

Goodge replied in a coarse and heartless rejoinder, and left the house ; and when her uncle retired from the back drawing-room, Julia Latimer made no delay in escaping to her chamber.

Horrified as she was by the disclosures she had thus briefly and accidentally heard, Julia's mind was equal to the occasion. Her lover, after her own generous self-sacrifices for his sake, as she imagined, had been swindled and robbed by the associates of her own uncle, and was now to be ruthlessly murdered, for it was nothing less in intention, by one of them. To the cause of quarrel, for that she divined it to be, she gave no heed. Her duty was clear enough ; and if her own father had stood in the place of Grindley Goodge or Major Mulligan, she would have denounced him. The question was how best to do so, with the certainty of her demand for assistance being speedily supplied.

Lord Woodbie's family presented the readiest channel for his safety ; his mother, or his uncle, the Duke. But was she the person, or in a position to claim it ?—there was the difficulty. The morning's light solved it. The danger was too pressing ; and even now she might be too late ; but the sacrifice of her own self-esteem should be made, where the life of one and the happiness of so many were involved. Long before Major Mulligan had returned

to consciousness of what was passing, Julia Latimer was in Grosvenor Square.

“ My lady was not up.”

“ Was Lord Woodbie in the house ? ”

With a highly-bred stare, and a cognizant look, which would have obtained for him a broken head, had Julia Latimer been as *rusée* as she was brave.

“ He would inquire of his lordship’s own servant.”

“ He was in the house, but not yet moving.”

Then Miss Latimer would stay until Lady Woodbie could see her ; and, having given her card, she was shown into Lady Woodbie’s boudoir, where she had not long to wait. Lady Woodbie was an anxious mother, and she guessed that the errand of Julia Latimer must have reference to her son.

And so it had ; and a very wretched errand it was, when it was accomplished. Lady Woodbie was at her wits’ end, and went at once imploringly to her son. Lord Woodbie was an English gentleman, with the feelings of one. He neither lied to his mother, nor mocked her anxieties. He was willing to meet his present difficulties as his world told him he should do ; but the story of the forgery was new to him ; and though he would have allowed himself to be murdered by a man whom he knew to be a swindler, the feeling of society was against the same necessity for accommodating a felon. His case was in the hands of Tom Meredith, and he had no idea that it

would suffer in them by a knowledge of these facts. For once in his life his lordship allowed himself to be aroused, and Messrs. Sharpus and Doggett, the detectives, with other engines of the law, were soon at work in search of the false acceptance.

Towards the afternoon of the day succeeding the Derby—a day on which so much business had been done—Captain Grindley Goodge sat moodily in his arm-chair in Piccadilly. He was sorely perplexed in his present position as to Kate Rideout, who remained in hourly expectation of a visit from Nat Gosling or Tom Meredith. He would willingly have brought matters to a close; but neither prudence nor leisure dictated such a step. He watched nervously, but resolutely, for the summons which was sure to come.

The door opened slowly, and the servant, Dixon, announced Mr. Fitzwalter, and Mr. Meredith. After the most formal greeting, during which the face of the Squire seemed to gather a force or volume of contemptuous displeasure, while that of Goodge retained a maliciously triumphant expression, the latter said curtly—

“I guess the errand to which I am indebted for this intrusion.”

“I think not, Sir, or you would not have awaited it,” replied the other.

“I am prepared to justify before the world the course

I took to defend my honour in a private room ; I should myself have insisted upon a meeting."

"Which no honest gentleman will feel bound to give you."

"*You* will, at all events, as soon as Lord Woodbie's claims have been first considered," said the Captain, with unabashed front, but lips white with passion.

"Then, Sir, I shall expect a denial of this five hundred pound note, which my servant has only this morning given to me, as the bribe you conveyed to him for his supposed confederacy in poisoning my horse. I have already pointed out to him the imprudence of tampering with such rascality, even with the best intentions ; though it has given me the opportunity of exposing your character, which I might otherwise have lost."

Saying which, Tom Meredith placed the note upon the table.

"A falsehood by which you wish to shield your own and your friend's cowardice, but it shall not avail you."

And Grindley Goodge, who had been standing near the table, seized a whip, and sprang towards Meredith. The latter was too quick for him. He caught the upraised hand of the assailant, and had just wrested the whip from his grasp, when the door flew open again, and, with burning cheeks and bright blue eyes full of anger, accompanied by Nat Gosling, Kate Rideout appeared on the scene.

On seeing Meredith she stopped. The man under

whose name she had been thus entrapped was present. The words of reproach died on her lips, and as she was in the act of falling Tom caught her in his arms.

“Some more of your handywork, Sir. Were it not for her presence, the horse-whip were well employed over your shoulders. The law keeps such punishment for its most cowardly offenders. I’m glad you’ve found her Nat, in time to save her from linking her fate with such a hound.”

“Ah, Squire !” and as he spoke he shook his head, and received poor Kate at the Squire’s hands—the colour was returning to her cheeks with redoubled power—“I’m sorry you don’t know my poor girl better. We’ve found her. Read that note, Squire, and ask that Captain Goodge there whether he knows ought o’ the matter ; if not, we’ll send for Dixon—if the policeman ’ll let him up stairs to speak for hisself. There’s him and his pal, Mrs. Wilson ; but they’re innocent as doves to that fellow that’s been wading through the world up to his neck in rascality, these twenty years past, and calling hisself a gentleman. But come, my girl, we’ll go back to Nobbly. The Squire shall know all about it when he gets there. There’s wickedness enough in these south country lads to beat the devil hisself, let alone the ’cuttest Yorkshireman that ever was foaled.”

With which compliment to London, Nat Gosling turned on his heel and sought the door.

But his way was blocked by our old acquaintance, Mr. Quail, the Middlethorpe attorney, in whose wake followed two policemen, and the unhappy Chouser. Mr. Quail's apologies were ample.

“Time very pressing—Duke of Cadwallo. Sharpus and Doggett. Too much gentleman's paper abroad just about this time, from the Derby to Ascot week. Obligated to be cautious. Unfortunately, an acceptance, purporting to be Lord Woodbie's for two thousand, had fallen into his hands. The negotiator had given up Mr. Chouser, and Mr. Chouser had split. Captain Grindley Goodge must appear before the magistrates, and the cab was at the door.”

Mr. Quail bowed to the Captain, as if he were the most injured man alive, and shook hands heartily with Squire Meredith, whose mission seemed to be fulfilled.

Chouser, Mo. Davis, and Goodge, were committed for trial, and the house at the back of Langham Place, when visited, was found to be empty. Strange to say, the Major passed from society, and left behind him a moderate reputation, as times go. Julia was found at Lady Mac-Stickler's, and one year later in Grosvenor Square; for Lady Woodbie, having persuaded herself that Woodbie could not live without her, at length found means to persuade everybody else of the same.

Nobbley Hall has a mistress—a good one, and a pretty, none the worse for her early troubles. Tom was not

difficult to be convinced, and quite willing to forgive the girl who could be spirited away by the forgery of his own name. He's given up London, and keeps a fair stud of second-class horses; but he has never had a Derby winner since the days of the Flying Scud.

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