

JULIET.*

BY MRS. F. LOVETT-CAMERON.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST OF NOVEMBER.

IT was one of those days when Colonel Hugh Fleming was away up in London that "a southerly wind and a cloudy sky" ushered in the first of November.

Of all the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, the first day of November was to Squire Travers the most solemn and the most important.

The first meet of the season was held, according to a time-honoured custom, on a small triangular-shaped common surrounded by three cross roads, and having in the centre a fine group of elm trees, known by the name of Waneberry Green.

Here, by eleven o'clock in the morning on the eventful day, were gathered together half the country-side. There were eight or ten carriages full of ladies on the road by the side of the turf—Lady Ellison driving her roan ponies with her daughter-in-law beside her; Mrs. Blair, in sables and a Paris bonnet, leaning back in the Sotherne barouche in solitary grandeur; fat, good-tempered old Mrs. Rollick, with her three plain but jolly daughters crammed up in the antiquated family chariot, all four laughing and talking very loud indeed all at once, side by side with the Countess of Stiffly, very thin and angular, sitting bolt upright in her brand new carriage, and casting withering glances of contempt and disgust at "those horrible Rollick girls;" and many other representatives of the county families. Besides these, there were also most of the smaller fry of the neighbourhood.

The parsons had come out to see the fun, with their wives and daughters, in unpretending little pony carriages; and the farmers' wives, in wonderful and gorgeous colours, driving themselves in their high tax-carts.

And then there were a goodly company of riders. Ladies of course in any number, most of them having merely ridden over to see the meet and to flirt with the men, though some few had a more business-like air, and looked as if they meant going by and by. Conspicuous among these latter is Juliet, on her three-hundred-guinea bay horse, side by side with Georgie Travers on her old chestnut.

Juliet, with her face flushed rosy with the wind, and her beautiful figure shown off to full advantage by her perfectly fitting habit and by the splendid horse on which she is mounted, looks as lovely a picture as anyone need wish to see, and is the centre of an admiring group of red-coated horsemen; but Georgie is a little nervous and anxious, and keeps looking about for Wattie Ellison, who has not yet appeared.

The Squire of course is in great force, riding about from group to group, talking to the ladies in the carriages, waving his hand to this or that new-comer, consulting his watch every minute, and trotting rapidly up and down as full of business as a general on the eve of a battle.

"Isn't your Wattie coming?" asks Juliet aside of Georgie, for her woman's wit has long ago guessed her little friend's secret. "Ah, there he is, coming up to us now; how well he looks in pink! How do you do, Mr. Ellison? here is Georgie getting quite pale and anxious because you are so late!" and Juliet nods pleasantly as the two lovers with smiles and blushes take up their position at once side by side.

And now the clatter of hoofs is heard on the left, and, headed by Ricketts the huntsman, and backed up by the two whips, in a deep, compact, and mottled mass, the pack of hounds comes trotting quickly on to the scene.

Then at once all is bustle and excite-

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