

SADDLE AND SABRE.

(Continued).

"Norman Slade?" ejaculated Furzedon, as the scene in the paddock at Epsom shot athwart his brain. "What the deuce does Norman Slade know about me?"

"He knows who you are and what you are," replied Kynaston sternly. "He knows that you hounded Bill Smith at Epsom, and means that all the world shall know it too."

"If he dares to bring such a charge against me," blustered Furzedon, starting to his feet, "I'll prosecute him for libel."

"Then you'll precious soon have the opportunity. He intends to bring your case before the Jockey Club at once, and has vowed not to rest till you're warned off the Heath."

"Let him. Giving a jockey a glass of wine is not hounding him. A fig for Norman Slade and his threats. He will find that charge rather difficult to substantiate."

"He says not," rejoined Kynaston; "and he is not the man to say so unless he has full proof of it. I have given you due warning of what is in store for you. Henceforth, remember, we are strangers to each other."

"As you like," sneered Furzedon; "but you seem to forget that you made as good a thing out of Bill Smith's drunkenness as I did."

"I bet against a jockey who is unfit to ride as I do against a horse who is unfit to run, but I don't take part in bringing about that state of things."

"And you mean to say that I do!" exclaimed Furzedon angrily.

"I say nothing about it, one way or the other, and have nothing further to add than—good-morning." And as he spoke Kynaston rang the bell and made his visitor a formal bow of dismissal.

For an instant the blood surged in Furzedon's temples, and he felt a fierce inclination to spring upon Kynaston; but, mastering his passion by a violent effort, he turned on his heel, and abruptly left the room without recognizing his host's salutation.

When Furzedon reached the street, he began to think seriously over this disaster that had befallen him. He had blustered and denied everything to Dick Kynaston; but, for all that, the charges were true, and he could see that the Major believed them to be so. The mere fact of being proclaimed a money-lender would, he knew, damn him socially; nor was he at all certain that Norman Slade would fail in proving the charge he intended to bring against him: he had employed men to lead the great jockey to his destruction. Ralph Furzedon had seen a good deal of the dirty side of life; it was not the first time he had used men as tools to effect his purposes; and he knew what such confederates were worth. Paid to do the work with which their employer fears to soil his own fingers, they are prompt to sell him afterwards to any one who will buy their information. Ah! why had his nerve failed him at the last moment? These men had done their work well and sufficiently, but he was afraid; he stood so much money against Belisarius that his heart failed him; he determined to make assurance doubly sure. Just those few drops in the last glass would effectually madden the man's already heated brain, and destroy all judgment; but it put him—Furzedon—terribly in the hands of his myrmidons, who, dexterously as it was done, could not fail to see it. How had this all come against him at once? It was so many months back that he had thought all danger of discovery was over. Then, again, how did Norman Slade learn that he traded in money under the name of Jordan & Co.—that was a secret he had jealously guarded. He had thought that known only to the confidential clerk who acted as his representative; and, as far as he could feel certain about any one, he was certain of that man's fidelity and discretion.

Where had Slade acquired this information? Those myrmidons of his might have been bribed to betray the story of the great Epsom race; but of his money-dealing they had no knowledge. How had that closely-kept secret come to light? And, for the present, Ralph Furzedon was utterly at a loss to even suspect who it was that had divulged the mystery of his occupation. But he was at no loss to recognize the danger of his position, and his brain was already busily scheming as to how it was best, how it was possible, to meet these unpleasant revelations. He ran no risk of being entrapped by the meshes of the law; but his social ostracism was imminent. As a pawnbroker, and the perpetrator of an infamous Turf robbery, that world he so coveted to mix with would have none of him, and this to Furzedon meant the loss of all he deemed life worth living:—the end of his ambition; to figure in that world, and at the same time to in some wise pull the strings of it; to know of the skeletons in the cupboard, and look cynically on at the raree show—and what men know more of these last than usurers and solicitors?—all that would have delighted Furzedon. Well, there was no necessity for it as yet, for he supposed the best way out of the imbroglio would be to go abroad for a time. Stories of this sort speedily blew over, and, unless the affair was kept constantly before it, in a week or two the world would cease to talk about it. Norman Slade, too, would be checkmated about that Epsom business; it would be little use bringing such a charge against a man who had crossed the Channel, and Furzedon felt that he should get out of the scrape cheaply at the expense of a few months' absence from London. Better for him that the charge should be dropped than brought, even if not substantiated.

One thing, however, puzzled Furzedon much; he could not conceive how it was that his identity with Jordan & Co. had leaked out; there was no one whom he could suspect, for, strange to say, that Prance might have betrayed him never entered his head. His relations with that worthy had been so long dropped, and he so rarely encountered him, that he had forgotten that Prance knew all the history of his past life, but he swore a great oath of vengeance against the man who had proclaimed the fact that

he was a pawn-broker and a usurer, should he ever discover it. And, though in his first surprise at finding Norman Slade so accurately informed as to his antecedents, Prance had not occurred to him as the informant; still, sooner or later, it was pretty certain to flash across him, and then it was likely that vow would be kept with ruthless exactitude.

He had regained his chambers, and was still pondering over all these things, when his servant brought in a pencilled note, which he handed to him with the intimation that the gentleman was waiting. Furzedon glanced hastily at the note, and muttered to himself, "Sturgeon! now what on earth can bring him here?" He might well ask, for Mr. Jacob Sturgeon was the confidential and personal representative of Jordan & Co., and his visiting Furzedon's rooms was strictly interdicted. As the latter knew, it must be something of considerable importance that led him to disregard his instructions on that point.

"Show him up," said Furzedon; and in another minute Mr. Sturgeon entered the room—a plump, quietly-dressed, prosperous-looking man of business.

"I am sorry to intrude, sir; but, as you can easily guess, it is a matter of importance that has made me disobey orders, a circumstance I thought you should be made acquainted with without loss of time."

"Yes, yes!" said Furzedon, impatiently. "Get on; what is it?"

"Well, sir," replied Mr. Sturgeon, "we've had rather an awkward scene up at the office. A Major Braddock called in about those bills of young Devereux's. He pointed out that Mr. Devereux was in India, and therefore, for the present, quite out of our reach; but that his friends were anxious to come to terms with us, and that he was empowered to agree to any reasonable composition."

"Ha!" exclaimed Furzedon; "I thought they would be glad to come to terms before long. And you, what did you say?"

"Oh! sir," replied Sturgeon, smiling, "I told them the old story—that for money lent upon next to no security, as Mr. Devereux's was, we claimed, and expected to get, heavy interest; that there were also legal expenses, that I would submit what he said to my principals; but that I could hold forth no hope of their foregoing their claims; that we could afford to wait; that, though Mr. Devereux had been unfortunate, we knew him to be a gentleman, and felt perfect confidence in his eventually meeting his liabilities."

"Quite right," replied Furzedon; "and what did Major Braddock say to that?"

"Well, he astonished me not a little, sir. As a matter of course, I looked upon it as only delicate fencing for the best terms on either side, but Major Braddock suddenly interrupted me with 'Stop all the clap-net of your class; we happen to know who your principal is; we know who it is that trades in usury under the name of Jordan & Co.; we know all about the pawnbroker's shop in the next street, and are quite prepared to go into Court if you don't make fair terms with us.' I rejoined that, if compelled to it, I didn't suppose that my principals would object to that way of coming by their own."

"Ah! and what did he say to that?" inquired Furzedon, eagerly.

"Major Braddock," replied Sturgeon, "took me up sharp. 'You mistake,' he said; 'your principal—for you have only one—would be very unwilling to go into the witness-box; he is a good young man, and loth that his left should know what his right hand is doing. No, no! Ralph Furzedon won't wish to figure before his friends and acquaintances in his real character. No; the sooner you let him know that we are aware of who we are dealing with the better.'"

"And that was all that passed between you?" asked Furzedon.

"Pretty well, sir," rejoined Sturgeon; "I told him politely he was mistaken; but he only rejoined, more briefly than civilly, 'Not much,' threw his card on the table, and left the place."

"Quite right to come and tell me," said Furzedon; "you have, of course, no idea how he came by his knowledge?"

"No, sir; I could have sworn that nobody either at the shop or the offices had any idea who Jordan & Co. were, except myself, and the secret has never passed my lips."

"Thank you; that will do," replied Furzedon. "If Major Braddock calls again, stick to it that he is mistaken. Don't come here again unless you think it absolutely necessary;" and, with a careless nod, Furzedon intimated to Mr. Sturgeon that his interview was at an end.

CHAPTER XL.

A MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

"Halloa, Bertie! Where have you been all the morning? Under what pretence have you been evading your military duties? Allow me to congratulate you," exclaimed young Sparshot.

"I've been on a board on forage; but I don't see that that's a particular subject for congratulation," returned Slade, as he took a chair in the mess-room and prepared to satisfy the hunger that his morning's work had created.

"Then you've heard nothing about Tom Henderson's letter, although it specially concerns you?"

"Not a word," replied Bertie. "What has Tom got to say?"

"First of all," rejoined young Sparshot, "Tom has met his Fate, and, as his Fate happens to be possessed of more dollars than a Hussar ever dreamt of, he is going to sell out, and that gives you your troop, Captain Slade."

"We shall all be sorry to lose Henderson," said Bertie, "but promotion is promotion, and in this case we have only to congratulate him on his retirement. But what is this other news?"

"Well, for some inscrutable reason, it seems the authorities have decided to send us out to India at once instead of in the autumn."

"You don't mean that!" exclaimed Slade. "Unless they've good