

perhaps you have made greater mistakes in your life than you did a minute ago. A nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse." And he gave another sly look, which I must admit made me experience a sudden desire to kick him. Truly there is no fool like an old fool. And yet I am bound to say the man was apparently a thoroughly good fellow underneath, handsome, refined in appearance and manner, and quite pardonably self-confident as to his acceptability with the average woman.

"Yes," he continued, with another sigh, and collapsing into sentimentality again, "Yes, poor girl, she's sat on my knee many a time."

"The deuce she had," I thought, with a sudden, shooting pang of jealousy. "What next?"

"As a child of course, I mean," he hastened to add, observing my startled expression. "I may say I've known her all her life. I doubt she hadn't the happiest of lives with poor Horseman."

"What do you mean?" I cried, half forgetting myself. The plot was thickening. Like Sir Mungo Malagrowther, I was getting it 'on baith haffits.'

"Hush, hush," he said, glancing over to where Hobbs sat, "Perhaps I am mistaken, but I heard it rumored that Horseman was a man of very violent temper, and led her a dreadful life."

"Where did you hear that? Not from or through her?"

"Oh, no," he replied hastily. "I heard it from a friend of mine, a commercial traveller, who used to live at Brighton. He used to visit at the house a good deal. He is now in the States."

Surely that couldn't be my old bosom friend, George Dillon. And yet the coincidence was too close to admit of a reasonable doubt. George Dillon, whom in abject pennilessness I had befriended and opened my house to, for whom I had obtained his first situation, and who on parting with me

some nine months previously had declared, with tears in his eyes, that he owed everything in life to my generosity!

"Yes," continued Barkley, in his prim, old-maidish way, "this individual informed me that they used to have dreadful quarrels, and that he had more than once heard Horseman use very strong language towards her."

"A lot," thought I parenthetically to myself, "do you know about such matters, you old goose."

And he said he several times felt like condoling with her on the subject of her husband's unhappy temper.

"I would like to see the man who would dare to 'condole' with my wife on any such subject," I thought, with a grim smile behind my false moustache.

"But," concluded Barkley, who, I began dimly to suspect, was, with all his good looks, one of those namby-pamby twaddling 'old maids' of men that women detest, and only marry in self-defence—"but" (with a comfortable sigh), "perhaps it's been all for the best. Who knows?"

I felt I would have given a good deal to be able safely to say: "Look here, you old drivelling donkey; Maria Horseman wouldn't marry you if you were the Czar of Russia."

But for the dozenth time I restrained myself, and said, "I suppose you will be calling upon the widow as soon as possible after the funeral."

"Yes, I shall spend Sunday in Brighton, and call upon her on Monday to pay my respects."

"I'll put a spoke in your wheel, my old boy," I thought grimly to myself.

Next moment the moving train put an end to our conversation. Unless under compulsion or protest, I never carry on a conversation on a moving train. The moonstruck, lovesick Barkley made one or two attempts to renew the conversation, but after one or two snubs, subsided.