

...a struggle observed of his... it was a sad... lay five to two on the...
However, the Honorable never dreamed for an instant of disputing Mr. Tiptop's flat, and consoled himself by thinking what a start he would get and how he hoped the hounds would keep out of his way. By the time Topsy-Turvy's clothes had been replaced, and a handsome pony examined and approved of, the party, much to old Isaac's disgust, adjourned to Mr. Sawyer's stables, where they were good enough to express their approval of the roan and his companions in that conventional tone which is so much less flattering than one of sincere abuse. These gentlemen hardly know Mr. Sawyer well enough yet to give their honest opinion, and perhaps it was fortunate for the sake of Isaac's peace of mind that they did not.

"Useful horse, Sawyer," observed Mr. Savage, considerably sparing the groom the labor of stripping them.

"Useful horse," repeated Captain Struggles and Major Brush in a breath, the latter adding, "and seem pretty fit to go. While the Honorable Crasher, who had not ventured further than the door, remarked that he thought Isaac-a Dandy the best shaped one of the lot, but conceded, in a faint whisper, that the rest of them looked very like horses, remarkably useful horses indeed!

Our friend was not deficient in penetration, and by no means a person to have been nearly a week in the shires without finding out what this epithet means. "When a man tells me he has got a useful horse," Mr. Sawyer was once heard to observe, "I interpret it that he is the owner of a useless brute, which he wishes to sell me!" And Mr. Sawyer was not deceived by the politeness of his companions. He held his tongue however, but more than once he caught himself brooding over the offensive adjective during the evening.

"If the roan is only half as good as I take him to be, and I can but get a start to-morrow," thought our friend, "I'll show them what my useful horse can do!" Miss Dove went to bed, too, and that cursed fellow of Popsy-Turvy hasn't sent down my new boots! Never mind—I've got the right spurs at any rate, and it won't be my fault to-morrow if I don't go for the gloves, as we used to say in the Old Country.

He dined at home, and reduced the allowance of snuff considerably, also consumed but one of the Languas before going to rest at the sober hour of 10.00. Mr. Sawyer's stomach has a nervous system into consideration, and on this occasion, with all his good confidence (and it is bad as much as his indignation), he was indeed resolved not to throw a chance away.

CHAPTER X.

"HAIL! SMILING MORN!"

When we read in 'Bell's Life,' the 'Morning Post,' or the Northampton paper, that the Pychley hounds will meet on Wednesday at Crick, we confess to the same sensation which the old coachman is said to experience at the crack of the whip. We call up a picture tinged with the colors of a memory that Time has no power to fade. It seems again to be a soft-eyed morning in the mild winter or the early spring, and the sky is dappled with serene and motionless clouds; whilst here below, a faint breeze from the south whispers of promise and fragrance only biding its time to exude from Earth's warming bosom—she sleeps, the mighty mother, but in repose she is clothed in majestic beauty, and instinct with vitality and hope. On such a morning the

compliment to... partly out of respect for the good horse. Now we observe a scarlet group collected in a knot, where the hounds meet in the centre of the village, and the church clock points to five minutes before eleven, as we had the cherry huntsman "Good morning," and exchange our back for our hunter.

Mr. Sawyer probably felt very much the sort of sensations I have endeavored to describe, as he lashed along on the free-going Dandy, in company with some of his new companions. If so, he kept it to himself. Our friend was a man of few words at the best of times; and when, as in the present instance, "big with high resolve," taciturnity personified. Also, notwithstanding the want of the new boots, he had "got him self up" to day with peculiar care. The result, I am bound to admit, was not entirely satisfactory, and, when that is the case, a man's loquacity is apt to decrease in proportion. However, the roan, or "Hotspur," as we must now call him, made a pretty good figure, as far as appearance went, even among a bevy of celebrated hunters, and his master felt a considerable accession of confidence when he found himself fairly mounted and ready for the fray. Miss Dove, too, had arrived in company with her papa. There was no doubt about it; she did look remarkably well in her riding habit.

Mr. Sawyer, a little nervous and rather ashamed of it, doffed the velvet hunting cap, and rode up to accost her. I need scarcely observe that the young lady's greeting was of the coldest and most reserved. The last time she had been all smiles and sunshine, so, on the principle of rotation, to-day must be one of frigidity and decorum. It's a way they have, you see, and one that seldom fails to put the inexperienced to utter confusion. A man cannot be said to know what the agony really is till he has suffered from the fits—both hot and cold. Take warning, John Standish Sawyer! you who have once before burnt your fingers, and had cause to dread the fire. Miss Mexico, with her quadrillion stain and her thirty thousand pounds, was a queerish one to manage; but she was a fool to Miss Dove.

"Confound the girl! what does she mean by it?" said the humiliated swain to himself as the hounds moved off towards the gorse. He felt a little disgusted, and not a little irritated; just in the humor that makes a man ready for a bit of excitement rather keener than ordinary. He thought he had never felt so like riding in his life before! With the natural instinct of one who knew himself capable of going in the first flight, the observant Sawyer proceeded to scan narrowly each of the surrounding sportsmen as looked to him like "meaning mischief." Out of a hundred riders it was not so difficult as might be supposed to pick a proportion of flyers, and the proportion, as my hunting readers will not dispute, was little over ten per cent. Shall I name them? Shall I add lively enterprising and energetic gentlemen to the list of my mortal enemies? Heaven forbid that I should do anything so invidious and ill-advised! Mr. Sawyer did not know them, and why should I? Each of the hundred, doubtless, believed him one of the chosen ten. I fancy that every man who goes out hunting thinks he only wants an opportunity to show his back to the rest of the field. I fancy that when the opportunity does come, he lets it slip in hopes of a better and that no one attributes to want of nerve, horsemanship, or common sense, that failure on which it would be no bad investment to offer each equestrian nine to one! Well, everybody has an equal chance on a fine scenting day, when the fox has slipped quietly away, by good fortune only seen by a countryman, with the quansy, who couldn't halloo to save his life. When the two or three couple of leading hounds have flashed a hundred yards or so over his line, thus enabling the body of the pack to join them,

Manate, owing to Mr. Sawyer's abortive attempts to open in the same, a good deal of conversation, rhetorical rather than complimentary, is the result.

"Put you whip under the latch," says one.

"Got the wrong hand to it," sneers another.

"What a tarnation muff!" vociferates a third.

"Ware heels!" exclaims a fourth, as a wicked little bay mare, in the thick of them, leaps out with unerring precision, and one man says, "What a shame it is to bring such a devil as that into a crowd!" and another opines "The kick will be out of her before two o'clock!" and the owner, profuse in apologies, is only thinking of slipping through the gate, and going on to get a start.

Meanwhile Hotspur makes himself profoundly ridiculous, passing the gate when the latch is down, and wincing from it when he ought to shove, also finding himself totally unassisted by the crook of his master's whip, which keeps slipping on the wet green wood, waxes irritable, rars up, and threatens to vary the entertainment, by performing a somersault into the next field.

"Let me do it for you, sir," says a good-natured young farmer, and Mr. Sawyer wisely abandons his office of door-keeper, and after about forty people have hustled by him, manages at last to edge his way through.

By this time the hounds have been put into the gorse. Nineteen couple are they of ladies, with the cleanest of heads and necks, straight and fair on their legs and feet as so many ballet-dancers, and owning that keen wistful look, which is so peculiar to the countenance of the fox-hound. They dash into the covert as if sure of finding, and Parson Dove, standing erect in his stirrups, watches them with a glow of pleasure lighting up his clean shaven face. "There's a fox, Charles, I'll lay a bishopric!" says he, and a whimper from Truelove confirms the parson's opinion on the spot.

"Not a doubt on it! sir, not a doubt on it! one if not a brace!" replies that functionary, with immense rapidity. He loses very little time indeed, at his phrases, or his fences, or anything else. In another moment he is up to his girths in the gorse, cheering on the beauties, who are working up the scent with a vast deal of musical energy. The master casts an uneasy glance at the crowd, countless anxieties and apprehensions cross his mind. One way the fox will be headed, another the hounds will be cut off a third leads up to the village, and we all know how fatal are houses and pigsties at the commencement of a run. But the fourth side is clear; happily the hounds are even now bursting eagerly towards it.

Diverse occupants engross the attention of the field; few of them seem to be much taken up with the business in hand. Here a gentleman is giving a farmer's horse a gallop preparatory, as it would appear, to a purchase. There another is detailing the last news from Warwickshire, to an applauding audience. Struggles, on his feet, is adjusting a snaffle-bridle more comfortably on the head of a game little thorough-bred. Savage is discussing the merits of a new novel with a literary friend. Major Brush is taking up a link in Miss Dove's curb-chain; that damsel, very killing indeed, in a little hat and feathers, is surrounded by admirers, and yet, *lassata, nondum sattata*, in inwardly regretting that she had snubbed poor Mr. Sawyer so gratuitously at the meet. You see, however low or one may rate the value of his vassalage, still a victim always counts for one, and it is a pity needlessly to throw away the veriest weed that helps to make up one's chapter. Truth to tell, Mr. Sawyer was not thinking about her. He had crept on, as he thought, unobserved, to a place

"A MERRY GO-ROUND."

A mile-and-a-half of grass, some six or eight fences, and the sustained brilliancy of the pace, have had their usual effect on the moving panorama. A turn in his favor, of which his old experience has prompted him to take every advantage, enables Mr. Sawyer to pull Hotspur back to a trot, and look about him. He is in a capital pace, and has every reason to believe the new horse is "a flyer." Hitherto, he has only asked him to gallop, best pace, oversound turf, and take a succession of fair hunting fences in his stride. Hotspur seems to know his business thoroughly, and though a little eager, he allows his rider to draw him together for his leaps, and the way in which he cocks his ears when within distance denotes a hunter. Mr. Sawyer is full of confidence. He has been riding fence for fence with the Honorable Crasher, whose pale face wears a smile of quiet satisfaction. The latter has indulged Topsy-Turvy with two awkward bits of timber, and an unnecessary gate; the mare is consequently tolerably amiable, and though she throws her head wildly about if any other horse comes near her, may be considered in an unusually composed frame of mind. The huntsman has been riding close to his hounds, in that state of eager anxiety which the philosopher would hardly consider enjoyment, and yet which is nevertheless not without its charms; all his feelings are reflected, in a modified form, in the breast of the master. The latter, riding his own line, as near the pack as his conscience will permit him, is divided between intense enjoyment of the gallop and a host of vague apprehensions lest anything should turn up to mar the continuance of the run. He has already imbibed a qualified aversion for Mr. Sawyer, whom the instinct peculiar to his office prompts him to suspect as "a likely fellow to press them at a check;" while he knows his friend Crasher so well, as to feel there is but one chance with that mild enthusiast, viz., that Topsy-Turvy should come to a difficulty before the hounds do. Besides these four, Captain Struggles and Major Brush are very handy, whilst Mr. Savage heads another detachment in the next field, of which Miss Dove, riding with considerable grace, is at once the ornament and the admiration. Her father has lost his place from a fall, but is coming up with steady skill and energy, going as straight as if he were close to the hounds, and ready to take every advantage. At the first turn in his favor he will be with them as if nothing had happened. In addition to these, many scores of sportsmen are scattered over the neighboring district, and a serried mass of scarlet, which may be termed not inaptly, "the heavy brigade," is moving in close column down a distant lane.

All this our friend observes at a glance, but his attention is soon arrested by the business in his front. The hounds, having over-run the scent a trifle, swing to the lane again with dashing confidence, and take it up once more with an energy that seems but increased by their momentary hesitation. They might have been covered by a sheet hitherto; now they lengthen out into a string, and the leaders scour along, with their noses in the air and their sterns lowered. Every yard increases their distance from their pursuing horsemen. They are pointing to a dead flat surface of old yellow grass, with patches of rusches and ant-hills interspersed. There would appear to be a mile or more of plain without a fence, and he wishes in his heart that he was quite sure Hotspur could jump water! Presently the hounds disappear, and

yer. Not that he thinks so exactly, for

"Turned by them sheep!" says Charles, and casts his hounds rapidly forward and down wind. No: he has not been turned by the sheep; he has been cursed by a dog. Charles wishes every dog in the country, was with Cerberus, except the nineteen couple now at fault.

"Phant has it," observes the master, as Phant, feathering down the side of a hedge, makes sure she is right, and then flings a note or two off her silvery tongue, to apprise her gossip of the fact. They corroborate her forthwith, and the chorus of female voices could scarce be outdone at a christening. Nevertheless, they are brought to hunting now, and must feel for it every yard they go.

But this interval has allowed some twenty equestrians, amongst whom a graceful form in a habit is not the least conspicuous to form the chase once more. Great is the talking and self-congratulations. Watches are even pulled out, and preparing arrais announce the result of their observations, each man timing the burst to the moment at which he himself came up.

"How well your horse carried you!" and a soft voice at Mr. Sawyer's elbow; die! he, Papa?" added the siren, appealing to Reverend Dove, who was eagerly watching the hounds. "We all agreed that the vest cap was the best of it."

She wanted to make amends to him for her rudeness in the morning, and this is the opportunity to choose. The hardest male heart is sufficiently malleable under a combined influence of heat, haste, and excitement, though how this girl should have made the discovery it is beyond my ingenuity to guess. How do they discover thousand things, of which we believe that to be ignorant?

Mr. Sawyer smiled his gratitude, as he opened a gate for the lady, and very nearly let it swing back against her knees. He had not acquired sufficient practice yet at his gates; that's the truth; and perhaps there where other portals wherein his inexperience had better have forbidden him to venture Miss Dove was fast luring him into a country which, to use a hunting metaphor, was very cramped and blind, full of "doubles," "squire-traps," and other pitfalls for the unwary.

Hounds are apt to be a little unsettled after so rapid a burst as I have attempted to describe, and it takes a few fields of persevering attention to steady them again. After this, however, I think we may have remarked they make but few mistakes, and a fox well rattled, up to the first check, huntsmen tells us, is as good as half killed.

The description of a run is tedious to all but the narrator. What good wine a man should give his guests, who indulges in minute details of every event that happened!—how they entered this spinny, and skirted that wood, and crossed the common, and finally killed or lost, or ran to ground, or otherwise put an end to the proceedings of which the reality is so engrossing and the accounts so tedious. I have seen young men longing to join the ladies, or pining for their cigars, forced to sit smothering their yawns as they pretended to take an interest in the hounds and the huntsman, and the country, and their host's own doings, and that eternal black mare. I can stand it well enough myself, with a fair allowance of '41 or '44, by abstracting my attention completely from the narrative, and wandering in the realms of fancy, cheered by the flushing fluid. But every one may not enjoy this faculty, and you cannot, in common decency, go far asleep in your Amphitryon's face.

To be Continued.

Wild ducks are passing northward in great numbers, so the farmers say, which is regarded as an indication of a late winter.