

...announcing a ring of being dashed to pieces out of a phaeton, it would be hard lines never to see Casey Dove again. However, there was nothing for it but to sit still and trust to Crasher's coachmanship. Anything like expostulation with that gentleman he felt would be worse than useless.

I tried to have seen or heard somewhere an anecdote of the celebrated "Hell fire Dick," which exhibits such sanfroid in a dangerous predicament as to be worth repeating. Dick, then, who had attained his flaming sobriquet by the dashing pace and general recklessness with which he drove, was not only one of the most skilful of the old-fashioned Long coachmen, but was equally noted for the cool imperturbability of his mind and the suavity of his replies. One very dark night, whilst proceeding at his usual pace, he was so unfortunate as to get off the road on a common where several gravel pits yawning on each side for his reception, made the mistake as dangerous as it was disagreeable. With a tremendous lurch the coach swung over one of these ready-made graves, and there was just light enough to perceive the fifteen feet or so of sheer descent yawning for its victims. "Where have you got to now, Dick?" exclaimed the box passenger, in accents of pardonable irritation and alarm. "Can't say, sir," replied Dick, with the utmost politeness, while they were all turning over together. "Can't say, I'm sure—never was here before!"

Now, if the Honorable Crasher had been going to be shot the next minute, it is my firm conviction that impending destruction would not have ruffled his plumes, nor agitated the languor of his accustomed manner in the slightest degree. Whether such a temperament is entirely natural, or is not rather to a certain extent the result of education influenced by what we must call the affection peculiar to a class, it is not our business to inquire; but we may fairly acknowledge to a respectful commendation for a quiet respectable country gentleman who finds his neck committed to the keeping of one of these imperturbable, placid, yet utterly reckless adventurers.

The wind was getting up, and a heavy shower of mingled sleet and rain dashing in their faces, added considerably to the discomfort of the whole process.

"This can't last long," murmured Mr. Sawyer below his breath, and holding on vigorously to the side of the carriage the while, as they whirled fiercely through the obscurity. The rush of their career varied only by frequent jumps and bumps that threatened to jerk him clean out over the splash-board. He was not very far wrong in his calculation.

Their course lay along one of those field-roads so common in Leicestershire, where the track on a dark night is not easily distinguished from the adjacent ridge and furrow, and which, delightful to the equestrian for that very reason, as no jealous fence prevents him swinging for a canter on to the springy pasture, or less convenient for carriages owing to the number of gates that delay the passage of the vehicle. They were now approaching the first of these obstacles to their course, and Crasher had not got a pull at his horses.

"It's open I think," remarked the Honorable, peering into the darkness ahead, and endeavoring to moderate the pace without effect.

"I think not!" replied Mr. Sawyer, setting his teeth for a catastrophe. Right away! Three more strides and they were into it!

A cracking smashing noise of broken wood-work—one or two violent bangs against the splash-board—a faint expostulation of "Getty, my lad!" from the Honorable—a tremendous jolt against the post, which was torn up by the roots—and Mr. Sawyer found himself on his face and hands in an exceedingly wet furrow; a little stunned, a good deal confused, and feeling very much

ing an angry reply, when the sound of a horse's hoofs advancing with considerable rapidity changed it into a vigorous call for assistance.

"Hill-ho! hill-ho!" shouted Mr. Sawyer. "Hill-ho! hill-ho!" answered a jolly voice, as the hoofs ceased, and came clattering on again, noting that the rider had pulled up to listen and was coming speedily to help. "What's up now?" asked the jolly voice, in somewhat convivial accents, as an equestrian mass of drab and leggings, which was all that could be made out through the darkness, loomed indistinctly into the foreground. "What's up now, mates? got the wrong end up, wrost this turn, sure-he."

"Come to grief at the gate," explained the Honorable. "Didn't go quite fast enough at it, Sawyer," he added, half reflectively, half apologetically, to his friend.

"Why, it's Master Crasher!" exclaimed the jolly voice, in a lighted tone. "Well, to be sure! Not the first gate, neither, by a many—only to think of it, well, well! But come, let's see what's the damage done—dar! dear! you'll never get home to-night. You must come up to my place, 'tain't above a mile through the fields—we'll get you put up, nags and all, and send down for the trap first thing in the morning. How lucky I was passing this way! Coming back from market, y' see, I'd just stopped to smoke a pipe with neighbor Mark down at The Holt, and was maken for home in a hurry, 'cause it's rather past my time, you know, when I hear this gentleman a hollerin' murder! Up I comes and finds the ship overboard with a vengeance. What a start it is, sure-he!"

Thus moralizing, and never leaving off talking for an instant, the jolly yeoman jumped off his horse, and lent his powerful assistance to clear away the wreck; shaking The Boy into life again with considerable energy. In a few minutes the four men, leading the two damaged carriage-horses, were stumbling and groping their way across the fields towards the new arrival's farm.

Ere they reached their destination, the owner with considerable politeness introduced himself to our friend. "No offence, sir," said he, "my name's Trotter—Trotter of Trotter's Lodge, and that's my place where you see the lights a-shinin'—Mr. Crasher, he knows me well—think I've met you out a huntin' more than once this season—allow me, sir, we'll have the missus up in no time, and a hearty welcome to you both."

As Mr. Trotter thus hospitably concluded, he ushered his guests into a comfortable kitchen, where a tallow candle was still glimmering in its accustomed place. The master was obviously in the habit of coming home late; but that the practice was contrary to the rules of domestic discipline Mr. Sawyer gathered from the accents of a shrill voice raised in tones of reproach from an upstairs dormitory.

"Trotter! Trotter!" exclaimed the voice, unconscious of visitors, and proceeding apparently from beneath a considerable weight of bed-clothes, "is that you at last? It's too bad! It's nigh upon two o'clock. Mind you rake out the fire, and don't go spilling the candle-grease all about as you come upstairs!"

Mr. Trotter, still perceptibly elevated, winked facetiously at his guests. "Get up, Margery!" he called out; "get up, I tell you! make haste and come down. Never mind your night-cap. Here's two gentlemen come to see you!" And with many apologies and repeated allusions to the substitute "k-y-s," Mr. Trotter stirred up the fire, lit another candle, and proceeded upstairs to rouse his better half.

In less time than you or I as a bachelor could believe it possible, a smiling dame made her appearance from above-stairs, with a neat morning cap over her comely head, and a bright rosy face, very different from the fallow hues of many a fine lady when first she wakes, blushing beneath it. That her petticoat was put on in a hurry, and her gown unfastened behind, was only what

"Alie," the helpmate of immortal Dandio Dimment.

The borderer, however, could not have been more hospitably inclined than was the jovial Leicestershire farmer. Setting aside the difference of time and locality, they had indeed many qualities in common. The same love of hunting, the same daring in the saddle, the same open-hearted hospitality and tendency to push good-fellowship a little over the bounds of sobriety. The only difference perhaps was this, that Dandio Dimment would have been getting up before Mr. Trotter was thinking of going to bed.

I am not going to recapitulate the sayings and doings of those jovial small-hours after Mrs. Trotter had betaken herself once more hopelessly to our couch. The Honorable Crasher, always a gentleman, though rather a torpid one, was equally at home with a duke and a drayman, perhaps more in his element with a hunting friend like Trotter than either. The good runs they recapitulated, the horses they remembered, the grey that was bought by Mr. G—, and the chestnut that had carried Lord W— so well for years, the fences they had negotiated—nay the very toasts they proposed and did justice to, would fill a chapter. It is sufficient to say that when Mr. Sawyer awoke in the best bed-room about sunrise the following morning, he had a racking head-ache, his mouth felt like the back of a Latin grammar, and the only distinct recollection with which he could charge his memory of the previous night's conversation was his host's recipe for making a young horse a safe fencer, which he certainly did not then feel in a condition to adopt.

"If you've got a green horse as you're not very confident on at strong timber," said Mr. Trotter, about the fourth glass of brandy-and-water, "you tackle him my way. You take him him out o' Sundays or any afternoon as you've nothing particular to do, and pick him out some real stiff ones. Give him two or three good heavy falls, and I'll warrant you'll have very little trouble afterwards. That's the way to make 'em rise!—ain't it, Mr. Crasher?"

After such a night's amusement as I have described, gentlemen are apt to be later in the morning than they originally proposed.

Our belated travellers had intended getting back their quarters by eight or nine o'clock, there to make their toilets, discuss their breakfasts, and so proceed to covert methodically as usual, in time to meet Mr. Tailby's clipping pack at Carlton Clump. It was nine, however, before either of them was stirring, and then the hospitable Trotter who was himself going to hunt, and who came in from shepherding as rosy and fresh as if he had never seen brandy-and-water in his life, would not hear of their going away without breakfast. Altogether they did not get clear of Trotter's Lodge much before ten o'clock, and as they drove out of the farmyard they had the mortification of seeing their entertainer mounted on his four-year-old ("Fancy riding a four-year-old after such a night!" thought Mr. Sawyer) on his way to the meet. "And we've got to go home and dress, and then come all this way back again," moralized the Honorable. "I say, Sawyer, I wish I could make this beggar go as fast as we did last night," and Crasher smiled at the recollection, as a man smiles who recalls some peaceful scene of his youth, or some good action which he will never find cause to repent.

This beggar, however, though a good farmer's nag enough, knew quite well that it wasn't his day for Market Harborough, and displayed great unwillingness to improve upon seven miles an hour in that direction. The chance of being in time faded away momentarily. Already they had overtaken several grooms with hunters; worse still, one or two early men on their backs had overtaken them, and they had not yet struck into the high-road. At last the sound of

mantic vacuity; annointed his head till it shone again; affected gloves on all occasions; and set up a ring. Altogether, his exterior was as symptomatic of his disorder as that of Benedict. Also he purchased, at a price-seller's over the way, a representation of a young person washing her feet in a stream, and purporting to be a "Highland Lassie," but of a meretricious aspect which, it is only fair to state, is rarely to be observed amongst the Scottish mountaineers. It was one of those startling accidental likenesses to the lady of his affections, which a man must be as hard hit as Mr. Sawyer to detect. In the hunting-field, too, he adopted an ambitious style of riding, totally at variance with his previous quiet, straightforward form; and a considerable interval of bad-scenting weather enabled him to distinguish himself to his heart's content. When hounds in run best pace, horses have not wind for extraordinary exertions in the matter of fencing; and, moreover, such salutary exploits as are out of the common way can be witnessed but by few, and those are completely engrossed in their own doings; but when the pack checks in every field, a man who chooses to single himself out by charging the ugliest bullfinches and the stiffest rails, either because he wants to attract attention, or to sell his horse, has every opportunity of showing up the latter, and calling down upon himself the animadversions of all true sportsmen. Our friend, with the two horses he bought from Mr. Varnish—both capital leapers—in addition to Hotspur and the grey, had no lack of material on which to flourish away in too close proximity to the chase. Charles Payne, though with a strong fellow-feeling for "keeness," began to hate the sight of him, Mr. Tailby to dread his appearance as he would that of a black frost, and Lord Stamford to find that even his imperturbable good-humor might be exhausted at last.

What is to be expected, however, of a gentleman who has taken to repeating Montrose's well-known lines—

"If doughty deeds my lady please,  
Right soon I'll mount my steed;  
And keen his lance, and strong his arm,  
That bears from me the meed;"

varied by the resolute sentiment—

"He either fears his fate too much,  
Or his deserts too small,  
Who dares not put it to the touch  
To win or lose it all!"

One or other of these romantic stanzas was continually on Mr. Sawyer's lips. After their enunciation, he was used to sigh deeply shake his head, and light a cigar, which he would smoke vehemently for a quarter of an hour or so, in a brown study.

Our friend's reflections, however, were not wholly dipped in the roseate hues of hope. Stern misgivings would come across him, as to the imprudence of the career on which he had embarked. He was spending a deal of money, that was the fact; and he had always, hitherto, been of a saving disposition, rather than otherwise. In the prosecution of his schemes against Miss Mexico, his outlay, indeed, had been principally in cheap jewellery and lavender-water—articles of fascination for the purchase of which he would have been handsomely reimbursed by that lady's thirty thousand pounds, if he had got it. But in the present case, not only was his extravagance much greater, but it is mer justice to state, that he had never weighed Miss Dove's fortune or the want of it in the balance with her attractions. The former flame had half a plum; the present might not have half-a-crown. Bah! what of that? Those eyelashes alone were worth all the money!

Nevertheless, a stud of horses, though consisting only of the modest number of hunters and a hack, are not to be kept for nothing, more particularly when away from home. Independent of stable-rent, forage, subscriptions to hounds, and necessary douceurs to different individuals, any man

Isaac shook his head. "Well, sir," said he, "you know best. Who's to ride?"

"Oh, I should ride him myself, of course," replied his master, with a toss of the head that as much as said, "With such a jockey, he's sure to win." "Ride him myself, and do all I know, you may depend," he added facetiously.

Old Isaac reflected. "Have you ever ridden a steuplechase?" he added, after a moment's consideration.

Mr. Sawyer was obliged to admit that he never had.

"Well, then, I have," said the groom. "You don't know what it is. Such a blazin' pace through the fields! and such an owdacious scuffle at the fences! Nothin' but a professional can keep his head at that work; and he often gets it broke. Better not try it, master; better let it alone. They'll only make a fool of ye."

Mr. Sawyer waxed indignant. "That's my business," said he; "yours is to get the horse fit. I tell you I've entered him—Wood-Pigeon by Wapiti. He'll be first favorite the day of the race. Do you hear?" I depend upon you to get him thoroughly fit."

Isaac scratched his head. "Fit!" he repeated. "Yes—I'll get the horse fit: you get the rider. If you must have a turn at it, take my advice, master. You get yourself in good wind; keep your head clear; jump off the moment the flag drops; never let his head go; and, above all, sit still."

After this, Isaac could never again be brought to open his mouth on the subject.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE BALL.

When a man has not been provided by Nature with more than an average share of personal advantages, that same process of dressing for a ball after a bachelor's dinner-party is an affair of considerable trouble and dissatisfaction. To devote those minutes, that are wont to pass so pleasantly in the enjoyment of conviviality or repose to the cares of the toilet, is in itself a severe infliction; but the contrast is rendered all the more aggravating by abortive efforts to eradicate the effluvia of tobacco-smoke, to disguise the appearance of satiety, not to say repletion, attendant on four courses and a dessert, with champagne and claret at discretion, and to achieve that general aspect of light and airy gaiety which even middle-aged gentlemen of spherical proportions consider most captivating in the eyes of the fair.

All these difficulties had Mr. Sawyer to encounter on the night of the Harborough Ball.

Yes, the important event had arrived at last, after much discussion by stewards and lady patronesses, and general differences of opinion amongst all concerned. After protestations from some that they could by no means fill their houses, and assurances from others that nothing would induce them to travel such distances by night in bad weather, and declarations from all that, for their own part, they voted the whole thing a bore, the day was at length fixed, the musicians engaged, the supper ordered, and the room prepared.

"It was to be a capital ball," said one, "comprising the *elite* of three counties, and at least as many beautiful *debutantes*." "There would be nobody there," vowed another, "but the M.F.H., and the M.P., and old Mrs. Half-caste, with a brvy of the townspeople." The room would be cold, prophesied the malcontents; the supper scanty, the roads slippery, and the moon obscured. Miss Cecelia Dove, in talking the matter over with her mamma, inclined first to one, and then the other of these opinions, supporting each in turn with vigor and tenacity. Under any circumstances, however, she had determined to go.

(To be Continued.)