

dient pupil. But how did you get so clever, Clara?"

I ventured the unprotected name, and she took no notice of the liberty.

"I told you I had had a riding-master. If you are not afraid, and mind what you are told, you will always come right somehow."

"I suspect that is good advice for more than horsemanship."

"I had not the slightest intention of moralizing. I am incapable of it," she answered in a tone of serious self-defence.

"I had as little intention of making the accusation," I rejoined. "But will you really teach me a little?"

"Most willingly. To begin, you must sit erect. You lean forward."

"Thank you. Is this better?"

"Yes, better. A little more yet. You ought to have your stirrups shorter. It is a poor affliction to ride like a trooper. Their own officers don't. You can tell any novice by his long leathers, his heels down and his toes in his stirrups. Ride home, if you want to ride comfortably."

The phrase was new to me, but I guessed what she meant; and without dismounting, pulled my stirrup-leathers a couple of holes shorter, and thrust my feet through to the instep. She watched the whole proceeding.

"There! you look more like riding now," she said. "Let us have another canter. I will promise not to lead you over any more fences without due warning."

"And due admonition as well, I trust, Clara."

She nodded, and away we went. I had never been so proud of my mare. She showed to much advantage, with the graceful figure on her back, which she carried like a feather.

"Now there's a little fence," she said, pointing where a rail or two protected a clump of plantation. "You must mind the young wood though, or we shall get into trouble. Mind you throw yourself back a little—as you see me do."

I watched her, and following her directions did better this time, for I got over somehow and recovered my seat.

"There! You improve," said Clara. "Now we're pounded, except you can jump again, and it is not quite so easy from this side."

When we alighted, I found my saddle in the proper place.

"Bravo!" she cried. "I entirely forgive your first misadventure. You do splendidly."

"I would rather you forgot it, Clara," I cried ungraciously.

"Well, I will be generous," she returned. "Besides, I owe you something for such a charming ride. I will forget it."

"Thank you," I said, and drawing closer would have had my left hand on her right.

Whether she foresaw my intention, I do not know; but in a moment she was yards away, scampering over the grass. My horse could never have overtaken hers.

By the time she drew rein and allowed me to get alongside of her once more, we were in sight of Moldwarp Hall. It stood with one corner towards us, giving the perspective of two sides at once. She stopped her mare, and said—

"There, Wilfrid! What would you give to call a place like that your own? What a thing to have a house like that to live in!"

"I know something I should like better," I returned.

I assure my reader I was not so silly as to be on the point of making her an offer already. Neither did she so misunderstand me. She was very near the mark of my meaning when she rejoined—

"Do you? I don't. I suppose you would prefer being called a fine poet, or something of the sort?"

I was glad she did not give me time to reply, for I had not intended to expose myself to her ridicule. She was off again at a gallop towards the Hall, straight for the less accessible of the two gates, and had scrambled the mare up to the very bell-pull and rung it before I could get near her. When the porter appeared in the wicket—

"Open the gate, Jansen," she said. "I want to see Mrs. Wilson, and don't want to get down."

"But horses never come in here, Miss," said the man.

"I mean to make an exception in favour of this mare," she answered.

The man hesitated a moment, then retreated—but only to obey, as we understood at once by the creaking of the dry hinges, which were seldom required to move.

"You won't mind holding her for me, will you?" she said, turning to me.

I had been sitting mute with surprise both at the way in which she ordered the man, and at his obedience. But now I found my tongue.

"Don't you think, Miss Coningham," I said—for the man was within hearing, "we had better leave them both with the porter, and then we could go in together? I'm not sure that those dogs, not to mention the steps, are good footing for that mare."

"Oh! you're afraid of your animal, are you?" she rejoined. "Very well."

"Shall I hold your stirrup for you?"

Before I could dismount, she had slipped off, and begun gathering up her skirt. The

man came and took the horses. We entered by the open gate together.

"How can you be so cruel, Clara?" I said. "You will always misinterpret me! I was quite right about the dogs. Don't you see how hard they are, and how slippery therefore for iron shoes?"

"You might have seen by this time that I know quite as much about horses as you do," she returned, a little cross, I thought.

"You can ride ever so much better," I answered; "but it does not follow you know more about horses than I do. I once saw a horse have a frightful fall on just such a pavement. Besides, does one think *only* of the horse when there's an angel on his back?"

It was a silly speech, and deserved rebuke. "I'm not in the least fond of such compliments," she answered.

By this time we had reached the door of Mrs. Wilson's apartment. She received us rather stiffly, even for her. After some commonplace talk, in which, without departing from facts, Clara made it appear that she had set out for the express purpose of paying Mrs. Wilson a visit, I asked if the family was at home, and finding they were not, begged leave to walk into the library.

"We'll go together," she said, apparently not caring about a *de-dé* with Clara. Evidently the old lady liked her as little as ever.

We left the house, and entering again by a side door, passed on our way through the little gallery, into which I had dropped from the roof.

"Look, Clara, that is where I came down," I said.

She merely nodded. But Mrs. Wilson looked very sharply, first at the one, then at the other of us. When we reached the library, I found it in the same miserable condition as before, and could not help exclaiming with some indignation:

"It is a shame to see such treasures mouldering there! I am confident there are many valuable books among them, getting ruined from pure neglect. I wish I knew Sir Giles. I would ask him to let me come and set them right."

"You would be choked with dust and cobwebs in an hour's time," said Clara. "Besides, I don't think Mrs. Wilson would like the proceeding."

"What do you ground that remark upon, Miss Clara?" said the housekeeper in a dry tone.

"I thought you used them for firewood occasionally," answered Clara, with an innocent expression both of manner and voice.

The most prudent answer to such an absurd charge would have been a laugh; but Mrs. Wilson vouchsafed no reply at all, and I pretended to be too much occupied with its subject to have heard it.

After lingering a little while, during which I paid attention chiefly to Mrs. Wilson, drawing her notice to the state of several of the books, I proposed we should have a peep at the armoury. We went in, and, glancing over the walls I knew so well, I scarcely repressed an exclamation: I could not be mistaken in my own sword! There it hung, in the centre of the principal space—in the same old sheath, split half way up from the point! To the hilt hung an ivory label with a number upon it. I suppose I made some articulate sound, for Clara fixed her eyes upon me. I busied myself at once with a gorgeously hilted scimitar, which hung near, for I did not wish to talk about it then, and so escaped further remark. From the armoury we went to the picture-gallery, where I found a good many pictures had been added to the collection. They were all new, and mostly brilliant in colour. I was no judge, but I could not help feeling how crude and harsh they looked beside the mellowed tints of the paintings, chiefly portraits, amongst which they had been introduced.

"Horrid!—aren't they?" said Clara, as if she divined my thoughts; but I made no direct reply, unwilling to offend Mrs. Wilson.

When we were once more on horseback, and walking across the grass, my companion was the first to speak.

"Did you ever see such daubs?" she said, making a wry face as at something sour enough to untune her nerves. "Those new pictures are simply frightful. Any one of them would give me the jaundice in a week, if it were hung in our drawing-room."

"I can't say I admire them," I returned. "And at all events they ought not to be on the same walls with those stately old ladies and gentlemen."

"Parvenus," said Clara. "Quite in their place. Pure Manchester taste—educated on calico prints."

"If that is your opinion of the family, how do you account for their keeping everything so much in the old style? They don't seem to change anything."

"All for their own honour and glory! The place is a testimony to the antiquity of the family of which they are a shoot run to seed—and very ugly seed too! It's enough to break one's heart to think of such a glorious old place in such hands. Did you ever see young Brotherton?"

"I knew him a little at college. He's a good-looking fellow."

"Would be, if it weren't for the bad blood in him. That comes out unmistakably. He's vulgar."

"Have you seen much of him, then?"

"Quite enough. I never heard him say anything vulgar, or saw him do anything vulgar, but vulgar he is, and vulgar is every one of the family. A man who is always aware of how rich he will be, and how good-looking he is, and what a fine match he would make, would look vulgar lying in his coffin."

"You are positively caustic, Miss Coningham."

"If you saw their house in Cheshire! But blessings be on the place!—it's the safety valve for Moldwarp Hall. The natural Manchester passion for novelty and luxury finds a vent there, otherwise they could not keep their hands off it; and what was best would be sure to go first. Corchester House ought to be secured to the family by Act of Parliament."

"Have you been to Corchester, then?"

"I was there for a week once."

"And how did you like it?"

"Not at all. I was not comfortable. I was always feeling too well bred. You never saw such colours in your life. Their drawing-rooms are quite a happy family of the most quarrelsome tints."

"How ever did they come into this property?"

"They're of the breed somehow—a long way off, though. Shouldn't I like to see a new claimant come up and oust them after all! They haven't had it above five-and-twenty years, or so. Wouldn't you?"

"The old man was kind to me once."

"How was that? I thought it was only through Mrs. Wilson you knew anything of them."

I told her the story of the apple.

"Well, I do rather like old Sir Giles," she said, when I had done. "There's a good deal of the rough country gentleman about him. He's a better man than his son, anyhow. Sons will succeed fathers though, unfortunately."

"I don't care who may succeed him, if only I could get back my sword. It's too bad with an armoury like that to take my one little ewe-lamb from me."

Here I had another story to tell. After many interruptions in the way of questions from my listener, I ended it with the words:

"And—will you believe me?—I saw the sword hanging in that armoury this afternoon—close by that splendid hilt I pointed out to you."

"How could you tell it among so many?"

"Just as you could tell that white creature from this brown one. I know it, hilt and scabbard, as well as a human face."

"As well as mine, for instance?"

"I am surer of it than I was of you this morning. It hasn't changed like you."

Our talk was interrupted by the appearance of a gentleman on horseback approaching us. I thought at first it was Clara's father, setting out for home, and coming to bid us good-bye; but I soon saw I was mistaken. Not however until he came quite close, did I recognize Geoffrey Brotherton. He took off his hat to my companion, and reined in his horse.

"Are you going to give us in charge for trespassing, Mr. Brotherton?" said Clara.

"I should be happy to take you in charge on any pretence, Miss Coningham. This is indeed an unexpected pleasure."

Here he looked in my direction.

"Ah!" he said, lifting his eyebrows. "I thought I knew the old horse! What a nice cob you've got, Miss Coningham!"

He had not chosen to recognize me, of which I was glad, for I hardly knew how to order my behaviour to him. I had forgotten nothing. But, ill as I liked him, I was forced to confess that he had greatly improved in appearance—and manners too, notwithstanding his behaviour was as supercilious as ever to me.

"Do you call her a cob, then?" said Clara.

"I should never have thought of calling her a cob. She belongs to Mr. Cumbermede."

"Ah!" he said again, arching his eyebrows as before, and looking straight at me as if he had never seen me in his life.

I think I succeeded in looking almost unaware of his presence. At least so I tried to look, feeling quite thankful to Clara for defending my mare; to hear her called a cob was hateful to me. After listening to a few more of his remarks upon her, made without the slightest reference to her owner, who was not three yards from her side, Clara asked him, in the easiest manner:

"Shall you be at the county ball?"

"When is that?"

"Next Thursday."

"Are you going?"

"I hope so."

"Then will you dance the first waltz with me?"

"No, Mr. Brotherton."

"Then I am sorry to say I shall be in London."

"When do you rejoin your regiment?"

"Oh! I've got a month's leave."

"Then why won't you be at the ball?"

"Because you won't promise me the first waltz."

(To be continued.)

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[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

TALES OF THE LINKS OF LOVE.

BY ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE.

The Whistler at the Plough.

LILLYMERE.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—Continued.

"I'll not believe it, Inkle. If Tom was taken by Lillymere he is not hung, be sure of that. Least I think not; would think not; am sure not; would think not. I'm sure Tom would not have so treated Lillymere."

"Don't know that, Tilda. Tom didn't like the fellow. Lillymere assumed airs of moral superiority, and didn't like Tom. No knowing what he may have done if flush of power. I take him to have possessed the blood and pride of an aristocrat. Tom, like me and mine, was democratic."

"Inkle, you are horrid. My son may have had a tiff with Lillymere about Emily; but he would never have harmed him. Nor would the other do owt to injure Tom."

The unpleasant colloquy died away in the mother's weeping. And though Inkle was silent neither of them slept that night.

Next day Rhoda Renshaw arrived in Conway, much the worse for travel seemingly. She was alone, and declined saying where she had been. Her misadventures on the ocean, occasioned by the pirate ship *El Abra*, were not to be published by her lips. To Inkle's earnest inquiry, she admitted having been as far south as Tennessee eight months previously, and had seen the Red-belt scouts, but heard nothing of Tom.

Rhoda parted from the Duke of Sheerness, Lady Mary and the rest at New York. And they as soon as restored to health after the fearful sufferings in open boats on the ocean, went to sea a second time and got safely to Liverpool. Agnes Schoollar and her companion excepted.

Agnes, when partially recovered, entreated Isa Antry to forge the passage home. She did not explain all. But Lillymere's love had taken possession of her; had become a part of her physical and mental nature. She felt drawn again to the lines of war to find him. In her thoughts, when awake, his image, action, triumph, defeat, wounds, sickness, death, were present and vivid. In her dreams, when asleep, the dear delicious vision of flowering gardens, wedding bells, a bridal procession and orange blossoms came up. But often they dissolved when the procession reached the church. Cannon balls, grape shot, bursting shells, scattered deadly splinters around, exploding on the altar, slaying father and mother, the bride-maids, beadle and church-wardens. Yet strangely descriptive, the fiery explosions of the vision omitted to kill the Venerable Rector of Bolderfield Green, and the tormentor of her life, Adam Schoollar.

The intensity of her love brought around her an atmosphere in which by day and night she lived. Feeling in the weakness of unpaired strength, as if supernaturally strong. Feeling as if transferred into the military costume of Lillymere, riding in battle on his charger. And Lillymere seemed to become Agnes, riding in lady's habit at her side.

And deeper still the amazing illusion. Her soul entered the secret chambers of his soul and body; groping in them as a hand in pockets of another's garments, peering into them as an eye into fair textures held against the light, she discovered in the innermost hiding-place—the folds of a soul within a soul inhabiting his body—demon of horror! She discovered that he loved the Donna Essel Bell Eurynia.

That awakened in her the irresistible impulse to travel west to the war.

Insufficiently recovered from the effects of exposure, five days and nights on the ocean, always wet and mostly without food, Agnes took flight in mid-winter as fast as train in snow-storm might travel, to prove if Lillymere still loved. Or, caring for her in a degree, if he loved another more. And Isa Antry, the compliant companion, united in the hazard with her.

They were yet travelling into impenetrable uncertainty in the Western States, when a lady with a retinue emerged from the States into Canada. It was the Donna Essel Bell Eurynia. Soon she unfolded initiatory magnificence at Montreal. For aught you might have inferred from her evening assemblies, she seemed given wholly to society, music, the poetry of motion, the pleasant duties of hospitality, and to the irradiation of all by lively wit.

In that lying beyond what you might have discovered, the Donna aimed at subduing the influences of fair, fascinating, wealthy rebel ladies gathered at Montreal from the South, where they held court in circles of fashion and military garrison to subvert the judgment of Canadians, and to cover, under social life, dark