

... my experience a lesson in the world, under this very roof? Now, what's the matter with you? You're a better man than Macormac took me for, before I was born. But Punchestown, week, Mrs. Lushington, you'll find Dublin an good as both."

"Sure! I'd like to go to Paris next winter, mamma," exclaimed the second girl, with a smile that lit up eyes and face into sparkling beauty. "Just you and me and Papa, and let the family stay here in the castle, to keep it warm."

"And have your hunting, Norah," replied her mother. "Indeed, then, I wonder to hear you."

"Are you fond of hunting?" asked Miss Douglas, edging her chair nearer this kindred part.

"It's the only thing worth living for," answered Miss Norah decidedly. "Dancing's not bad, with a real good partner, if he'll hold you up without swing you at the turns; but, see now, when you're riding your own favorite horse, and him leading the hunt, that's what I call the greatest happiness on earth."

Mrs. Lushington stared.

"Ye're a wild girl, Norah!" said Lady Mary, shaking her handsome head. "But, indeed, it's mostly papa's fault. We're something of the savage left in us still, Miss Douglas, and even these children of mine here can't do without their hunt."

"I can feel for them," answered Satanella earnestly. "It's the one thing I care for myself. The one thing," she added bitterly, "that doesn't disappoint you and make you hate everything else when it's over!"

"You're too young to speak like that," replied the elder lady kindly. "Too young, and too nice-looking, if you'll excuse me for saying so."

"I don't feel young," replied Miss Douglas simply, "but I am glad you think me so."

If Lady Mary liked her guest before, she could have hugged her now.

"Ye're very pretty, my dear," she whispered, "and I make no doubt ye're as good as ye're good-looking. But that's no reason why ye should live upon air. The gentlemen are still in the dining-room. It's seldom they come out of that before eleven o'clock; but I've ordered some dinner for ye in the library, and it will be laid by the time ye get your bonnets off. Sure it's good of ye both to come so far, and I'm glad to see ye, that's the truth!"

The visitors, however, persistently declined dinner at half-past ten, p. m., petitioning earnestly that they might be allowed to go to bed, a request in which they were perfectly sincere; for Blanche Douglas was really tired, while Mrs. Lushington had no id of appearing before the charet-drinkers at a disadvantage.

To-morrow she would come down to breakfast rested, fresh, radiant, armed at all points, and confident of victory.

Lady Mary herself conducted them to their chambers, peeping into the dining-room on her way back, to hear about the good run that had kept her husband out so late, and to see that he had what he liked for dinner at a side-table. Her appearance brought all the gentlemen to their feet with a shout of welcome. Her departure filled (and emptied) every glass to her health.

"Not another drop after Lady Mary," was the universal acclamation, when Macormac proposed a fresh magnum; and although he suggested drinking the same toast again, a general move was at once made to the music-room, where most of the ladies had congregated with tact and kindness, that their presence might not add to the discomfort of the strangers, arriving late for dinner to join a large party at a country house.

With Satanella's dreams we have nothing to do. Prospero seldom affords us the vision we most desire during the hours of sleep. Think of your sweetheart, and as likely as not you will dream of your doctor. Miss Norah helped her new friend to undress, and kissed while she bade her good night; but with no more came her own maid, looking very cross (the servants' accommodation at Satanella's town was hardly on a par with the accommodation of the mansion), complaining first of the fire from sleeping in a draught, and, secondly, with a certain tone of triumph, that the closet was Jackoon—a small squire of great pretensions.

"Prestor John? The Archbishop of Canterbury? The great Panjandrum? How should I know?"

"I don't believe you do know. And I don't believe he knows. It will be rather good fun to see you meet."

"Who is it, dear?" (Impatiently.)

"Why, St. Joseph. He came yesterday morning."

Blanche's face fell.

"How very provoking!" she muttered; adding, in a louder voice, and with rather a forced laugh, "That man seems to be my fate! Let's go down to breakfast, dear, and get it over!"

CHAPTER XII.
ONE TOO MANY.

At breakfast, for an old soldier, the General showed considerable want of military skill. Miss Douglas, indeed, assumed an admirable position of defence, flanked by Norah Macormac on one side, and the corner of the table on the other; but her admirer, posting himself exactly opposite, never took his eyes off her face, handed her everything he could reach, and made himself foolishly conspicuous in paying her those attentions to which ladies do not object so much as they profess. Like many other players, he lost his head when risking a large stake.

Had he cared less, he would have remembered that wisest of all maxims in dealing with others—"Il faut se faire valoir," and she might have appreciated his good qualities all the more, to mark the esteem in which he was held by her own sex. The General could fix a woman's attention, could even excite her interest, when he chose; and many of these laughing dames would have asked no better cavalier for the approaching races than this handsome, war-worn veteran, who "made such a fool of himself about that tall girl with black hair."

Breakfast in a country house is usually a protracted and elastic meal. The "jackeens," whose habits were tolerably active, came down in good time, but the London young gentlemen dropped in, one later than another, gorgeously appaerled, cool, composed, hungry, obviously proud of being up and dressed at eleven o'clock, a. m.

Miss Norah whispered to Satanella that "she didn't like daudies, and daudies didn't like her."

Looking in the girl's bright, handsome face, the latter proposition seemed to Miss Douglas wholly untenable.

"What sort of people do you like, dear?" said she, in answer to the former.

"The army," replied Miss Norah, with great animation. "And the cavalry, ye know—they're beautiful; but a man must have something besides a fine uniform to please me."

"What more can you want?" asked Blanche, with a smile.

"Well, a good seat on his horse, now," laughed the other, "that's the first thing, surely, and a good temper, and a good nerve, and a pleasant smile in his face, when everything goes wrong."

"You're thinking of somebody in particular," said Blanche.

"I am," answered Miss Norah boldly, though with a rising blush. "I'm thinking of somebody I should wish my brothers to be like—that I should wish to be like myself. He's never puzzled; he's never put out. Let the worst happen that will, he knows to do, and how to do it,—a fair face, a brave spirit, and a kind heart!"

She raised her voice, for the subject seemed to interest her deeply. Some of the guests looked up from their breakfasts, and the General listened with a smile.

"It sounds charming," remarked Miss Douglas. "A hero—a paladin, and a very nice person into the bargain. I should like immensely to see him."

"Would ye now?" said the Irish girl. "And so ye shall, dear. He'll be at the races to-morrow. Ye'll see him ride. I'll engage he'll come to the Ladies' Stand. Say the word, and I'll introduce him to ye myself."

... a responsive glance from Miss Douglas while she passed out, with her head up, and a sure sign she was offended, more swing than usual in the skirts of her dress. He consoled himself by resolving that, if the weather cleared, he would ask her to take a walk, and so make friends before luncheon.

Gleams of sunshine sucking up a mist that hung about the hills over the park, disclosing like islands on a lake, clumps of trees, and patches of verdure, in the valley below, glittering on the surface of a wide and shallow river that circled and broke, over its rocky bed, in ripples of molten gold, would have seemed favorable to his project, but that the fine weather which might enable him to walk abroad with his lady-love, was welcomed by his host for the promotion of a hundred schemes of amusement to while away a non-hunting day after the shooting season had closed.

"It's fairing fast enough," exclaimed the cheerful old man. "We call that a bright sky in Ireland, and why not? Annyhow it's a great light to shoot a match at the pigeons; and if ye'd like to w t a line in the Dabbie there, I'll engage ye'll raise a ten-pound fish before ye'd say 'Paddy Snap.'"

"I'll go bail ye will!" assented a Mr. Murphy, called by his familiars, "Mick," who made a point of agreeing with his host. "I seen them yesterday afternoon as thick as payso, an' me riding by without so much as a lash-whip in me hand."

Two of the party, confirmed anglers, proposed to start forthwith.

"There's a colt by Lord George I'd like ye to look at, General," continued Macormac, who would have each amuse himself in his own way. "We're training him for the hunt next season, and a finer leaper wasn't bred in Kildare. D'ye see that suok fence now parting the flower garden from the demesne? It's not two years he was when he broke loose from the paddock, and dashed out over it like a wild deer. There's five-and-twenty feet, bank and ditch, ye can measure it for yourself?"

"Thirty! if there's wan!" assented Mr. Murphy. "An' him flyin over it in his stride, an' niver laid an iron to the sod."

The General, however, declined an inspection of this promising animal, on the plea that he was not much of a walker, and had letters to write.

"The post's gone out this hour and more," said his host. "But ye'd like to ride now. Of course ye would! Ser, Mick! Sullivan's harriers will be at the kennel as usual. Wait till I tell ye. Why, wouldn't the boys get a fallow deer off the old park, and we'll raise a hunt for ye in less than an hour?"

"I'll engage they can be laid on in twenty minutes from this time," declared Mick. "Say the word, an' I'll run round to the stable, and bid Larry saddle up every beast that can stand."

"The General might ride Whiteboy," said his host, pondering, "and Norah's got her own horse, and I'll try young Orville, and ye shall take the colt yerself, Mick. We'll get a hunt, annyways!"

Mr. Murphy looked as if he would have preferred an elder, or as he termed it, "a more accomplished hunter;" but he never dreamed of disputing the master's word, and was leaving the room in haste to further all necessary arrangements, when St. Josephs stopped him on the threshold.

"You'll think me very slow," said he graciously. "But the truth is, I'm getting old and rheumatic, and altogether I feel hardly fit for the saddle to-day. Don't let me interfere with anybody's arrangements. I'll write my letters in the library, and then, perhaps take a turn in the garden with the ladies."

Mick screwed up his droll Irish mouth into a meaning but inaudible whistle. Satisfied by the courtesy of his manner that the General was what he called "a real gentleman," it seemed impossible such a man could resist the temptations of a pigeon match, a salmon river, above all, an impromptu hunt, unless he had nobler game in view. Till the old soldier talked of "a turn in the garden with the ladies," Mr. Murphy himself he was "bothered entirely," but now, failing any signs of disapproval on the master's face, felt he could agree, as was his custom, with the last speaker.

... and blaming herself severely for thus tempting a helpless London girl into an expedition beyond her strength,—anticipating, at the same time, her mother's displeasure for that which good Lady Mary would consider a breach of the laws of hospitality,—"Sure ye're tired," said she, offering to carry the other's parasol, which might have weighed a pound. "It's myself I blame, to have brought you such a walk as this, and you not used to it, may be, like us that live up here amongst the hills."

But Blanche clung to her parasol, and repudiated the notion of fatigue. "She had never enjoyed a walk so much. It was lovely scenery, and a magnificent waterfall. She had no idea there was anything so fine in Ireland. She would have gone twice the distance to see it. Tired! she wasn't a bit tired, and believed she might be quite as good a walker as Miss Macormac."

There were times when Miss Douglas felt her nick-name not altogether undeserved. She became Satanella now to the core.

Luncheon was on the table when the young ladies got back to the castle, although several of the guests had absented themselves, the General took his place with those who remained. St. Josephs was not in the best of humor, for a solitary walk in a strange district which had failed in its object. He sat, as it would seem, purposely a long way from Miss Douglas, and the servants were already clearing away before he tried to catch her eye. What he saw, or how he gathered from an instantaneous glance that his company was more welcome now than it had been at breakfast, is one of those mysteries on which it seems useless to speculate; but he never left her side again during the afternoon.

The General was true to his colors, and seldom ventured on the slightest act of disloyalty. When he returned, as in the present instance, to his allegiance, he always found himself under more authority than ever for his weak attempt at insubordination.

CHAPTER XIII.
PUNCHSTOWN.

"I tell ye, I bred her myself, and it's every hair in her skin I know, when I kept her on the farm till she was better than three year old. Will ye not step in here, and take a dandy o' punch, Mr. Sullivan?"

The invitation was promptly accepted, and its originator, none other than the breeder of Satanella, dressed in his best clothes, with an alarming waistcoat, and an exceedingly tall hat, conducted his friend into a crowded canvas booth, on the outside of which heavy rain was beating, while its interior steamed with wet garments and hot whiskey punch.

Mr. Sullivan was one of those gentlemen who are never met with but in places where there is money to be made, by the laying against, backing, buying, or selling of horses. From his exterior the uninitiated might have supposed him a land-steward, a watch-maker, or a school-master in reduced circumstances; but to those versed in such matters there was something indisputably horsey about the tie of his neck-cloth, the sit of his well-brushed hat, and the shape of his clean, weather-beaten hands. He looked like a man who could give you full particulars of the noble animal, tell you its price, its pedigree, its defects, its performances, and buy it from you on commission cheaper than you could yourself. While his friend drank in gulps that denoted considerable enjoyment, Mr. Sullivan seemed to absorb his punch insensibly and as a matter of course.

"There's be'n good beasts bred in Roscommon beside your black mare, Denis," observed this worthy; "and it's the pick of the world for horses comes into Kildare this very day. Whisper now. Old Sir Giles offered four hundred pounds, ready money for Shaneen in Dublin last night. I seen him meself."

"Is it Shaneen?" returned Denis, with another pull at the punch. "I'll not deny he's a nate little horse, and an illegit lepper, but he wouldn't be in such a race as this. He'll niver see it wan, Mr. Sullivan, no more nor a Quaker'll niver see glory! Mat should have taken the four hundred!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]