

## KATERFELTO,

A STORY OF EXMOOR.

CHAPTER XX.

THE COLD SHOULDER.

The only thief-taker in the game who has a thief when he sees one, or how to take him, or can be persuaded to try, was with the minister more than two hours yesterday. The other side will put up somebody to ask a question directly Parliament meets. The House is very ticklish about trenchery. There's no saying how things might go, and he dare not—no, he dare not risk a general election. The 'man in the street' says it's all your doing. Fred, mind I know nothing for certain."

Lord Bellinger pondered. "Has anybody confessed anything?" he asked, after some consideration.

"Nobody who had anything to confess!" answered his friend with a smile. "The only man who could have told them what they wanted to know wisely took himself out of the way. That idiotic newspaper which Sir Alexander has been flourishing over his empty head made a better shot than usual. There has been a spy among us, no doubt, and rumor mentions one or two names, I dare not. The fortune-teller, I can well believe, had a finger in the pie, and people go so far as to say that meetings were held in his house between staunch Hanoverian friends of yours and mine, and other friends of ours who are supposed to be over the water and unable to come back. Also, that arms were found in his cellar, and gunpowder under his bed! All this goes in at one ear and out at the other, but there's an ugly story about some royal warrants that were never served, and I can tell you for certain, a very great man holds your lordship to blame.

"Because my cowardly servants wouldn't back me up, and I couldn't fight a score of men single-handed!" exclaimed Lord Bellinger indignantly. "Those were the very warrants that got-bird took out of my coach. I see the whole thing now, and how cleverly it was done! I'm in a false position, Harry, to say the least of it. The treason I don't so much mind; but I cannot bear to think I should have been so 'bit.' Harry! Harry! I shall be the laugh of the town!"

"Faith, when the town comes to learn it, I think you will!" replied his friend. "But, in the meantime, 'tis as much a secret as anything can be that is known to half-a-dozen people. I'm the only man in this room who has heard a word of it, you may see that for yourself. The conjurer, or whatever he is, has departed without beat or drum. I need hardly observe, that when they sent to arrest him he had eight-and-forty hours' start. The house was shut up, and they were forced to break in the door. I am told, when they did search it, they found an empty bottle on the table, an empty chair at the chimney-piece. There were no directions left where the owner was to be found, but I understand many very respectable people want him sadly low he's gone!"

"That's another difficulty," mused Lord Bellinger. "We shall never get money at such short notice from anybody else. If you paid enough for it, you could take it way with you then and there. He was a most useful person, and I shall miss him prodigiously for one. However, that is not the question. Harry, you have a head on your shoulders, what would you do in my place?"

"Get into my chair, and wait on the minister at once," answered his friend. "When a man knows he is in the wrong, he should always take a bull by the horns. The Scotchman believes you have been tampering with other side, and thinking it more formidable than it is, will scarce venture to break with your lordship, once for all. It is but a game of brag, Fred, and the boldest player wins. We will sup here together at nine o'clock, and you shall tell me how you came off."

So Lord Bellinger, taking his friend's advice, mounted gravely into his chair, and crossed himself to be set down without delay at the minister's official residence, where he found the great man holding a levee, composed of the many who came to ask for something, and the few who returned to give thanks.

He seated his lordship in no slight degree to be kept waiting in the ante-room, while the great man, not half so well-dressed, were seated in the presence of the minister. His own equis in rank and position needed no words to be set in and out, but their

displeasure, and they believed the interest of the scene was past. But, as they told each other afterwards, "Billinger was a very awkward fellow to set down."

"My lord," said he, "I have waited on your lordship in self-defence."

"My lord," was the answer, "your lordship's explanations must be made in public, and reserved for another place."

Then the minister turned on him a broad ungainly back; and he knew that in the game of brag, concerning which Harry St. Leger spoke so hopefully, he had come off second best.

But he did not fail to keep his appointment at the Cocoa Tree, arriving there, indeed, somewhat earlier than the hour agreed on, and with an appetite no whit impaired by the contrarities he had experienced. "It's the country air, I suppose," he observed lightly to his friend. "Faith, Harry should, I be forced to retire into the country altogether, it won't break my heart, if I'm always to be as hungry as now. Waiter! what can we have for supper?"

"Aitch-bone of beef, my lord," was the answer. "Beg pardon, my lord, his grace has finished the aitch-bone; his grace never eats anything else. Cold game-pie, cold chicken and tongue, cold partridges, wild duck and teal, cold shoulder of mutton."

"Anything but that, you knave!" replied his lordship, with a laugh. "No, no, Harry, I've had enough cold shoulder to-day to last me the rest of my life!"

CHAPTER XXI.

DULVERTON REVEL.

"There be'est a drunken old toad!" exclaimed a buxom country-woman, apple-faced and dark-haired, to her laughing mate not the least in tones of conjugal reproof, but rather as a delighted damsel of the present time might say to her degenerate admirer. "How can you be so silly!" while the strapping fellow's sides shook, and his honest face grinned from ear to ear at such homely jests and simple sights as both had trudged half-a-score of miles into Dulverton to enjoy. It was an hour or so after noon, and the Revel seemed at its height. Two or three booths offered the indispensable refreshment of cheese, cold meat, and cider. On the floor of a wagon, which formed his primitive stage, a jack-pudding, as he was called, performed certain antics, affording inexhaustible amusement to the spectators, who were never tired of watching him inflate his cheeks, loll out his tongue, eat lighted candle ends, or feign to pull straws out of his eye. A fat lady, a giant, and a dwarf were respectively portrayed on the sides of a van, in which all three are supposed to be domiciled; while a drum, fiddle, and brass instrument played appropriate airs without ceasing and cruelly out of time. The rustics, many of them stout moorland men from the wilds of Brandon and Dunkerry, or borderers of North Devon and West Somerset, with here and there a swarthy, broad-shouldered visitor all the way from Cornwall, strolled about, gaping, grinning, and drinking, in a high state of contentment and delight, each with a ruddy-faced damsel at his elbow, to whom, as occasion served, he offered his boisterous jest or rude and hearty salate. These gallants were mostly fine specimens of manhood, tall, straight, and well-limbed, with a frank, fearless air about them, as though equally ready for a feast and a fray. The women, while of lower stature in proportion, were exceedingly comely, some even beautiful, dark-haired, dark-eyed, delicate of features, and with the bloom of health mantling in their cheeks. One and all wore garments of bright colors and daring contrasts. One and all drank freely of cider and other liquors. One and all seemed resolved thoroughly to enjoy the present, and make the most of Dulverton Revel, seeing that it came but once a year.

The band had just concluded a flourish of more than ordinary discord, when a new arrival enhanced the excitement of the scene, causing a rush from all quarters to encircle the strange vehicle, partly van, partly cart, from which a pair of piebald horses, adorned with bells, were unharnessed and turned loose to graze. With a dexterity that supplied the want of screws, bolts, and such mechanical appliances, its occupant quickly converted his carriage into a stage, on which articles of dress, perfumery, and domestic use were exposed for sale; while he moved nimbly about, flourishing over his head and displaying in turn laces, threads, scissors, thumbies, a mousetrap, a gridiron, and a warming-pan, to the intense delight of the bystanders. He was a meagre, active-looking man, who might have been any age above fifty, wearing large green spectacles to

for sale, and making appropriate remarks on each. An ointment for sore eyes, that would enable the purchaser to see through a brick wall; a salve for sore lips, that would cause the opposite sex to imprint kisses whenever they came in reach; a pocket mirror that, looked into by sunshine on May-day, would reflect the future sweetheart's face; a mousetrap that rid the house of vermin from the moment it was set on the kitchen floor; a warming-pan, that retained conjugal love and discovered conjugal infidelity; lastly, a pair of female garters, the only pair left in stock, manufactured expressly for the Queen of Egypt, and possessing the miraculous power of rendering their wearer invisible in the dark!

After brisk competition these desirable appendages were knocked down to a demure and blushing damsel, who was forthwith requested, in a stentorian voice, to "try them on at once, and see how they fit."

Ere the laugh, elicited by this audacious suggestion, could die out, the vendor's eye, travelling round that circle of grinning faces, had recognized two acquaintances in the crowd. Also, and this seemed of greater moment, he suspected they recognized him in return. Of these the first was a square, thick-set man, in clerical attire, being indeed none other than Parson Gale. The second, tall, slender, swathy, supple of limb, and graceful of gesture, was Fin Cooper the gypsy. Each attended Dulverton Revel less for pleasure than business. The Parson, sore at heart, and brooding over his wrongs, was yet so far hampered by the necessities of domestic life that he had been obliged to ride down from the moor to this festivity for the purpose of engaging a kitchen wench, and his establishment bearing no high character for regularity and decorum, there appeared some difficulty in filling the situation.

In those convivial times, no affair, even of the most private nature, could be conducted without a great deal to drink, and the Parson, pledging one honest farmer after another in hard cider, dashed with villanous brandy, had arrived at a very morose and uncomfortable state, sober enough in head, but fierce, bitter, and sullenly dependant at heart.

Not so Fin Cooper. That worthy, who was indeed a temperate fellow by preference, whose frame has been toughened from childhood by continuous exercise, and who never slept under a roof in his life, possessed a constitution on which no stimulant less powerful than raw spirit seemed to produce the slightest effect. On the present occasion he had reasons of his own for keeping his wits at their brightest. Dulverton Revels, like all other gatherings of the Gorgios, afforded to every true Romany many opportunities for gain and speculation. There was jewellery to be exchanged with ardent suitors and the objects of their admiration. There were games to be played at cards with yokels patient of loss. There were horses to be sold, swapped, or even stolen, when occasion offered. There were a thousand ways and means, all more or less profitable, by which the gypsy could take advantage of his natural prey.

But Fin Cooper had yet another object, causing the dark eye to glance from face to face in restless search, the tawny hand to steal unconsciously under the wide sash that swathed his waist towards the handle of his knife. His suspicions that the girl he loved had set her heart on a rustling Gorgio, confirmed themselves day by day. Dulverton Revels would be a convenient place of meeting, and he had told Thyra that he himself meant to be twenty miles off. If she held an assignation here with her Gentile lover, he might be a witness to their interview, might verify her bitterest fears, and satisfy himself of the worst! Fin Cooper's face was evil to contemplate while he revolved this contingency, and the salesman, delivering the garters to his blushing customer, did not fail to draw his own conclusions from its scowl.

As for Parson Gale, he stood before the cart for several minutes in unto astonishment. Then he rubbed his eyes, stared, and exclaimed, "Katerfelto! as I'm a living sinner!" while he brought his broad hands together with a vigorous smack.

His exclamation was not lost on its object. The latter glanced stealthily round, bowed profoundly to his auditors, made them a little speech, in which, with many jocose allusions he informed them he was about to shut up shop that he might eat his "bit of dinner," with a promise to reopen again at three o'clock, and in a very few minutes the cart had resumed its usual appearance and the proprietor had disappeared.

Half-an-hour later, behind a canvas screen on the outskirts of the Fair, a priest and a gypsy might have been seen in earnest conversation, pacing to and fro, while they glanced about them as if loth to be overheard though a donkey rolling on its back, and a horse tugging at a truss of hay, were the only

My life is in danger, Fin, answered the Charlatan gravely, "so far as it may be threatened by any casualty of this lower world. Worse than that, I might lose my liberty, if I could be identified here, for the sage and philosopher, who always make it his boast that he is the gipsy's friend. Therefore I came to the West in the disguise you saw me wear an hour ago. Therefore I speak to you now, dressed as one of those Jesuit priests whom your people have so often sheltered at their need; therefore I speak to you now, dressed as one of those Jesuit priests whom your people have so often sheltered at their need; therefore will I appeal to them for a refuge till I can steal down to the coast and put the blue sea between the gipsy's friend as those who would do him harm. *Shoon tu, dost thou listen, my son? Said I well?*"

"*Tatchipen si, Meero Dado!* You speak truth, oh! my father," answered the other. "And you will lodge with us to-night on the moor. The fullest platter shall smoke, and the softest blanket be spread for the gipsy's friend."

Katerfelto shook his head. "If I came to your tent and claimed my own, Fin," he asked, "would your welcome be so hearty and free?"

The gipsy's face fell. "I love her," he said. "She was given to me long before you brought her from our people. You told me I should have her back at some future time, father, the morning you took her away. I reminded her of it only yesterday."

The other glanced sharply at him from under his bushy eyebrows. This was scarcely as he expected. Judging from all he knew, he calculated that "Waif" must have accompanied John Garnet into the West, and had vowed from the moment he discovered her flight, that he would be revenged on both while he supposed they were in hiding together. He now saw that she must either have required the assistance of her tribe or found it impossible to elude their observation. He knew quite enough of the girl to be sure that even while with her own people she would find opportunities to meet her lover, and from that lover, lately his own emissary, he was still inclined to exact the penalty, that all paid, sooner or later, who ran counter to the designs of Katerfelto.

"Keep her in your tents, Fin," said he with a smile "and fear no hindrance from me. But remember, though she was of a wandering nature, and comes of a wandering race, a Romany lass may wander too free and too far."

Fin's dark face turned black as night. "I understand you, father," he muttered. "You mean, you mean, that she is a Gorgio lover!"

The veins in his handsome throat swelled while he spoke, and his voice came so thick it was hardly intelligible. "I mean," answered Katerfelto coolly, "that he whom the Gorgios call John Garnet is better out of the way, both for you and for me and for Waif. He knows too much, and he dares too much. Your eyes are as keen as a hawk's, Fin. Can you not see that as he cozened me out of my horse, he would cozen you out of your bride?"

The gipsy's low, smothered laugh seemed the very reverse of mirth.

"There is no better sheath for a Romany's blade," he answered, "than the bowels of a pampered Gorgio."

"My son," replied the other, "wisdom is the child experience. Let King George take the trouble off your hands, and pay you besides a purse of gold for your forbearance. John Garnet's is a hanging matter, and a reward of one hundred guineas is offered for his apprehension. Set the bloodhounds on him at once, and the thing is done. Better by far keep that long knife of yours for cutting your bread and cheese."

"I helped him," said Fin thoughtfully, "helped him, because Thyra bade me, as frankly as if he had really been poor Galloping Jack come down from Tyburn-tree. The bloodhounds might turn round and lay hold of the informer. Counsel me, father. I can right myself so easily with three inches of steel."

The other shook his head. No man alive had fewer scruples of mercy or forbearance, but it was Katerfelto's nature to plot rather than execute. While he would have felt no qualms in concocting or administering a subtle poison, he shrank from the very idea of personal contest and shedding of blood. "A hundred guineas of red gold," he answered, "think of that Fin, and then talk about a hand's breadth of bare steel! You cannot compare them. Be advised by me, my son, and rid yourself of a rival, win a bride, and gain a wedding-portion all in one sentence. That Exmoor Parson. I saw him here to-day. I would venture a wager he is drinking in one of the booths now. Watch for him riding home. He is a miscreant: never fear

"I shall be alone with him on the moor presently," said Fin Cooper, in a tone of meaning. "My father, do you desire that he should tell no tales? Shall I silence him once for all?"

Katerfelto pondered. "Not at present, Fin," he answered, after a pause. "It will be better to make use of him when we want him, and put him on the right scent. If a hound runs counter, the farther he goes the farther he is left behind!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A WARRANTABLE DEER.

Meantime John Garnet, enjoying the golden hours at Porlock with the carelessness of his nature, thought no more of the toils that surrounded him than the wild deer of the forest thought of the many preparations made for its capture; of the good horses stabled, the staunch hounds fed, the distances travelled by lords and ladies, the laced coats tarnished, the bright spurs reddened, the jingling of bit and bridle, the gathering of horsemen and varlets, the energy expended in a chase that must be followed with so much pomp and circumstance for its essential downfall. Large and stately, gliding from field to field, it passed through the twilight, like some majestic ghost, to crop the yet unharvested grain, or tear the juicy turnips from the earth, with appetite unimpaired by misgivings of tomorrow, rejoicing in its pride of strength, trusting implicitly in those fleet, shapely limbs that bore it lightly over its native moor, as the wild-bird's pinions waif her through the air.

How many centuries have elapsed since the fatal morning that saw the Red King mount for his last ride through the stately stems of Bolderwood! How many since that woful hunt in Chevy Chase which began in joyous notes of hound and horn, to end in the battle-cry of the Percy, the sword strokes of the Douglas, and the pouring out like water of the bravest, noblest, gentlest blood two countries could afford! Yet has the pursuit of the wild animal by the instinct of the same continued to be the favorite sport of Englishmen from those rude times to our own, while now, as then, many a bold, adventurous nature, panting for an outlet to its energies, finds engrossing occupation in the pleasures of the chase.

Taken in good sense and moderation, as each man's discretion teaches him to judge, this draught thus offered by a bountiful providence, which provides for our mental health the sweet no less freely than the bitter, is exhilarating in the extreme. It rouses our many qualities of mind and body, excites our intellectual faculties and our muscular powers, braces the nervous system, stimulates to healthy effort the vital force of arm and heart and brain. Many of the most distinguished men in every time have been "fond of hunting." Few men "fond of hunting" but are frank of nature, kindly, generous, unselfish, and good fellows, to say the least!

If such a position be granted, it follows that all hunting, conducted in a spirit of humanity and fair play, is more or less to be esteemed. The stout sexagenerian who halts his steady cob on a hill, and from that point of vantage watches in the valley below his ten couple of beagles unwinding and puzzling out the line of a hare that has just crossed under his pony's nose, without assisting them by so much as a whisper, is a sportsman to the back bone. No music on this lower earth can ravish his ears like the tuneful cry of his little darlings, who are indeed nothing loth to hear their own voices, and refuse to hunt a yard without assuring each other that it is all right. No triumph can afford him greater pleasure than his ride home to dinner with a hare dangling across his saddle, honestly killed by the patience and perseverance of that tedious pursuit which has fairly wearied her to death! and when he lays his head on his pillow, before his closing eyes passes a vision of Challenger opening in the turnips, of Rock-wood and Reveller feathering with scarce a whimper up the stony lane.

Surely his enjoyment is undeniable as that of his converse, the scarlet-coated hero in vigorous manhood, who bestrides three hundred guineas' worth of blood and symmetry, while he watches a gorse covert shaking under the researches of twenty couple of high-bred fox hounds, wild with eagerness to push up their game and dash after him over the sea of grass that lies spread around, like falcons on the wing. A physiognomist might study to advantage the countenance of the rider; an artist would long to portray on canvas the attitude of the horse.

These two friends, loving each other dear-