

... sent willingly, and Bill's face glowed with pleasure.

"Don't be late," said he. "Nine o'clock train from Euston. Mind you get into the drop-carriage, or they'll take you on to the shores. I'll join you at Willesden. And if we don't have a real clunker, I'll make a vow never to go hunting again."

Then he departed on certain errands of his own connected with the pugilistic art, and the General reflected sadly how it was a quarter of a century since he used to feel as keen as that reckless light-hearted boy.

He went down high authorities at the War-office, and with the field marshal, and, through a restless night, dreamed of Satanella for the first time since her disappearance.

A foggy November morning, and a lame horse in the cab that took him to Euston Station did not serve to raise his spirits. But for Bill's anticipations of "a clunker," and the disappointment he knew it would cause that enthusiasm, the General might have turned back to spend one more day in vain brooding and regret. Arrived on the platform, however, he got into a large saloon carriage, according to directions, and found himself at once in the midst of so cheerful a party that he felt it impossible to resist the fun and merriment of the hour.

St. Joseph was too well known in general society not to find acquaintances even here, though he was hardly prepared to meet representatives of so many pursuits and professions, hooded and spurred for the chase, and judging by the ceaseless banter they interchanged,

"All determined to ride, each resolved to be first."

Soldiers, sailors, diplomatists, bankers, lawyers, artists, authors, men of pleasure, and men of business, holding daily papers they never looked at, were all talking across each other, and laughing incessantly, while enthroned at one end of the carriage sat the best sportsman and most popular member of the assemblage, whose opinions, like his horse, carried great weight, and were of as unflinching a nature as his riding, so that he was esteemed a sort of president in jack-boots. Opposite him was placed pretty Irish Norah, now Mrs. Walters, intensely excited by her first appearance at what she called "an English Hunt," while she imparted to Daisy, in a mellower brogue than usual, very original ideas on things in general, and especially on the country through which they were now flying at the rate of forty miles an hour.

"It's like a garden where it's in tillage, and a croquet-lawn where it's in pasture," said Norah, after a gracious recognition of the General, and cordial greeting to Bill, who was bundled in at Willesden, panting, with his spurs in his hand. "Ah! now, Daisy, it's a little of the whip-poor-Boneen will be wanting for easy leaps like them."

"What till you get into the vale," said Daisy; "and whatever you do let his head alone. Follow me close, and if I'm down, ride over me. It's the custom of the country."

The General smiled. "I haven't been there for twenty years," said he; "but I can remember in my time we were not very particular. I shall follow my old friend," he added, nodding to the president, whose nether garments were of the strongest and most workmanlike materials: when a man has no regular hunting things, he wants a leader to turn the thorns, and from all I hear, if I can only stick to mine, I shall be in a very good place."

Everybody agreed to this, scanning the speaker with approving glances, the while, St. Joseph, though wearing trousers and a common morning coat, had something in his appearance that denoted the practised horseman; and when he talked of "twenty years ago," his listeners gave him credit for those successes, which in all times, are attributed to the men of the past.

"Mrs. Walters must be a little careful at the doubles," hazarded a quiet good-looking man who had not yet spoken, but whose nature it was to be exceedingly courteous,

and that gleamed here and there under the willows with which its banks were fringed. Enclosures varying from fifty to a hundred acres, gave promise of as much galloping as the heart of man, or even woman could desire. And scanning those fences the Irish lady admitted to herself, though not to her companions, that from a distance they looked as formidable obstacles as any she had confronted in Kildare.

"It's beautiful," said Norah. "It's made on purpose for a hunt. Look, Daisy, there's the hounds! Oh, the darlings! And little Boneen, he sees them, too!"

Gathered round their huntsman, a wiry, sporting-looking man on thoroughbred bay horse, they were moving into sight from behind a hay-stack that stood in a corner of the neighboring field. Rich in color, beautiful in shape, and with a family likeness pervading the lot as if they were all one litter, a fox hunter would have grudged them for the game they were about to pursue—a noble red deer, in so far tame, that he was fed in the paddock, and brought to a condition that could tax the speed and endurance even of this famous pack. The animal had already arrived in a large van on wheels, drawn by pair of horses, and surrounded by a levee of gaping rustics, whose eagerness and love for the sport reminded Norah of her countrymen on the other side of the Channel.

"Will they let him out here, Daisy?" said she, in accents of trembling excitement. "I wish they'd begin. What are we waiting for?"

"Your patience will not be tried much longer," said the General, lighting a cigar. "Here comes the master, at a pace as if the mare that landed him the Thousand Guineas, the Oaks, and the St. Leger, had been made a cover-back for the occasion!" "With the Derby-winner of the same year, for second horse!" added her husband. "If you want a pilot, Norah, you couldn't do better than stick to him, heavy as he is!"

"I mean to follow you, sir," was the rejoinder. "If you don't mind Daisy, maybe I'll be before ye."

Even while she spoke a stir throughout the whole cavalcade, and a smothered shout from the foot-people announced that the deer had been enlarged.

With a wild leap in the air, as though rejoicing in its recovered liberty, the animal started off at speed, but in the least favorable direction it could have taken, heading towards the ascent on the side of which the horsemen and a few carriages were drawn up. Then slackening its pace to a jerking, springing trot—paused—changed its mind—lowered its head—dashed wildly down the hill to disappear through a high bull-finch, and after a few seconds came again into view, travelling swift and straight across the vale.

The General smoked quietly, but his eye brightened, and he seemed ten years younger for the sight.

"It's all right now," said he; "the sooner they lay them on the better."

Soldier Bill drawing his girths, looked up with a beaming smile.

"They say there's a lady, a mysterious unknown, in a thick veil who beats everybody with these hounds," he observed. "I wonder why she's not out to-day."

"I think she is," replied Daisy, shooting a mischievous glance at his wife. "I fancied I caught the flutter of a habit just now behind the hay-stack. I suppose she's determined to get a good start and cut Norah down!"

Ere the latter could reply, the hounds dashed across the line of the deer. Throwing the tongues in full muscular notes, they spread like a fan, with noses in the air; then, stopping to the scent, converged, in one melodious crash and chorus, ere they took to running with a grim, silent determination that denoted the extremity of pace. Every man set his horse going at speed. Nearly a dozen selected their places in the first fence—a formidable bull-finch. The rest, turning rather away from the hounds, thundered wildly down to an open gate.

Amongst those who meant riding straight, it is needless to say, were Mrs. Walters and her three cavaliers. These landed in the second field almost together. Daisy, closely pursued by his wife, stealing through a weak

steadiness. Like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, "he blessed them unaware." Bill, I fear, did the other thing, for the fence was so high he never saw them turn, and jumped well into their midst, happily without doing any damage.

This slight delay, however, had the effect of bringing Daisy, his wife, Soldier Bill, and the General into the same field with Miss Douglas. She heard the footfall of their horses, looked round, and set the black mare going faster than before. If, as indeed seemed probable, she was resolved not to be overtaken, the pack, straining away at speed once more, served her purpose admirably. No horse alive could catch them; and Satanella herself seemed doing her best to keep on tolerable terms at that terrific pace. The majority of the field had already been hopelessly distanced. The General found even the superior animal he rode fail somewhat in the deep-holding meadows. Bill was in difficulties, although he had religiously adhered to the shortest way. Even Daisy began to wish for a pull, and only little Boneen, quite thorough-bred, and as good as he was sluggish, seemed to keep galloping on, strong and full of running as at the start. For more than a mile our friends proceeded with but a slight alteration in their relative positions—Satanella, perhaps, gradually leaving her followers, and the hounds drawing away from all five. In this order two or three flying fences were negotiated, and a fair brook cleared. Daisy, looking back in some anxiety, could not but admire the form in which Norah roused and handled Boneen. That good little horse, bred and trained in Ireland, seemed to combine the activity of a cat with the sagacious instincts of a dog. Like all his blood, he only left off being lazy when his companions began to feel tired; and Mrs. Walters, coming up with her husband, as they rose the hill from the waterside, declared, though he did not hear her, "I could lead the hunt now, Daisy, if you'd let me. Little Boneen's as plused as Punch! He'd like to pull hard, only he's such a good boy he doesn't know how!"

Bill's horse dropped its hind legs in the brook, and fell, but was soon up again with its rider. The General got over successfully; nevertheless, his weight was beginning to tell, and the ground being now on the ascent, he found himself the last of the five people with the hounds.

At the crest of the hill frowned a black, forbidding-looking bull-finch: on this side a strong rail; on the other, if a horse ever got there, the uncertainty, which might or might not, culminate in a rattling fall. Daisy glanced anxiously to right and left, on his wife's behalf, but there was no forgiveness. They must have it, or go home! Then he watched how the famous black mare would acquit herself a hundred yards ahead of him, and felt little reassured to detect such a struggle in the air while she topped the fence, as by no means inferred a pleasant landing where she disappeared on its far side.

He wavered, he hesitated, and pulled his horse off for a stride; but Norah's impatient—"Ah, Daisy! go on now!" urged him to the attempt, and he chanced it, with his heart in his mouth, for her sake, not his own.

Taking fast hold of his horse's head, he got over with a scramble, turning afterwards in the saddle to watch how it fared with his wife and little Boneen. Her subsequent account described the performance better than could any words of mine.

"When I loosed him off at it," said she, "I just touched him on the shoulder with the whip, to let him know he wasn't in Kildare. He understood well enough, the little darling! for he pricked his ears, and came back to a slow canter; but I'd like ye to have felt the bound he made when he rose to it! Such a place beyond! 'Twas as thick as a cabbage-garden—dog-roses, honey-suckles, I'm not sure there wasn't cauliflowers, and all twisted up together to conceal a deep, wide, black-looking hole, like a boreen.* Well, I just felt him give a sort of a little kick, while he left the entire perplexity ten feet behind him, and when he landed, as

* "Boreen," Irish for a deep, stone-paved lane.

moment entered the hole together. "I trust in heaven not!" he replied aloud; and, below his breath, even while his heart smote him for the thought, "It might have been worse. My darling, it might have been you!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BITTER END.

It was indeed a sad sight for those joyous riders, exulting but a moment before, in all the triumph and excitement of their gallop. Saddest and most pitiable for the General, thus to find and recognise the woman he had loved and lost. While they took her gently out from under the dead mare's carcass, she groaned feebly, and they said, "Thank God!" for at least there seemed left a faint spark of life. Assistance, too, was near at hand. As Norah observed, "Twasn't like Kildare, where ye wouldn't have seen a shealing or may be so much as a potato-garden for miles! But every farm here was kept like a domain, and they'd built a dwelling-house almost in every field!" Within a short distance stood the comfortable mansion, surrounded by its well-stocked fold-yards, of a substantial yeoman; and Bill, with two falls, was there in two minutes! A few of the second flight also, persevering resolutely on the line the hounds had gone, straggled up and did good service. What became of the field, and where the deer was taken, none of these had opportunity to ascertain. All their energies, all their sympathies, were engrossed by that helpless, motionless form, that beautiful rigid face, so wan and white, beneath its folds of glossy raven hair.

Carrying her softly and carefully on a gait to her place of shelter, it looked as if they formed a funeral procession, of which the General seemed chief-mourner.

His bearing was stern and composed, his step never faltered, nor did his hand shake; but he who wrestled with the angel of old, and prevailed against him, could scarcely have out-done this loving, longing heart in earnestness of purpose and passionate pleading of prayer.

"But once more!" was his petition. "Only that she may know me, and look on me once more!" And it was granted.

For two days Blanche Douglas never spoke nor stirred. Mrs. Walters constituted herself head nurse, and never left her pillow. The General remained the whole time at the threshold of her chamber.

The surgeon, a country practitioner of high repute, who saw her within an hour of her accident, committed himself to no opinion by word or sign, but shook his head despondingly the moment he found himself alone. The famous London doctor, telegraphed for at once, preserved an ominous silence. He, too, getting into the fly that took him back to the station, looked grave and shook his head. The hospitable yeoman, who placed his house and all he had freely at the sufferer's disposal, packing off the very children to their aunt's at the next farm, felt, as he described it, "Down-hearted—uncommon." His kindly wife went about softly and in tears. Daisy and Bill hurried to and fro, in every direction, as required, by night and day; while Norah, watching in the darkened room, tried to hope against hope, and pray for that which she dared not even think it possible could be granted.

The General looked the quietest and most composed of all. Calm and still, he seemed less to watch than to wait. Perhaps some subtler instinct than theirs taught him the disastrous certainty, revealed to him the inevitable truth.

Towards evening of the second day Norah came into the passage and laid her hand on his shoulder, as he sat gazing vacantly from the window, over the fields and orchards about the farm. They loomed hazy and indistinct in the early winter twilight, but the scene on which he looked was clear enough—a bright sunny slope, a golden gleam in the sky above, and on earth a dark heap, with a trailing habit, and a slender riding-whip clenched in a small gloved hand.

place where she had gone before. None should come between them there, he thought, and they need never part again.

Soldier Bill and Daisy saw the last of him when he left England; the former rather envied every one who was bound for a sphere in which there seemed a possibility of seeing real service, the latter comparing his senior's lonely life and blighted hopes with his own happy lot, felt a humbler, a wiser, and a better man for the contrast.

Mrs. Walters, though losing none of her good nature and genial Irish humor, became more staid in manner, altogether more matronly; and through she went out hunting on occasions, certainly rode less boldly than before the catastrophe. Her sister Mary, however came over to stay with her about this time, kept up the family credit for daring, and would have taken Bill's heart by storm if she had not won it already with the fearlessness she displayed in following him over the most formidable obstacles. After a famous day on Boneen, when she hustled that lazy little gentleman along in a manner that perfectly electrified him, Bill could hold out no longer, but placed himself, his fortunes, Catamount, and Benjamin, at her disposal. All these she was good enough to accept but the badger; and that odorous animal was compelled to evacuate his quarters in the wardrobe for a more suitable residence out of barracks, at a livery-stable. So they were married in London, and inaugurated the first day of their honeymoon by a quick thing with the Windsor drag-hounds.

Of Mrs. Lushington there is little more to be said. The sad fate of her former friend she accepted with the resignation usually displayed by those of her particular set in the face of such afflictions as do not immediately affect themselves and their pleasures. She vowed it was very sad, talked of wearing black—but didn't! and went out to dinner much as usual. Even Bessie Gordon showed more feeling, for she did cry when she heard the news, and appeared that night at a ball with swollen eyelids and a red place under her nose. Many people asked what had become of Miss Douglas? The answer was usually something to this effect—

"Don't you remember? Painful business; shocking accident. Killed out hunting. Odd story; odd girl. Yes, handsome, but peculiar style!"

They buried the good black mare where she fell. Long before the grass was green over her grave, rider and horse had been very generally forgotten. Yet in their own circle both had created no small sensation in their time. But life is so far like the chase, that it admits of but little leisure for hesitation; none whatever forget. How should we ever get to the finish if we must needs stop to pick up the fallen, or to mourn for the dead?

In certain kind and faithful hearts, however, it is but justice to say the memory of that hapless pair remains fresh and vivid as on the day of their fatal downfall.

There is a stern, grey-headed soldier in the East who sees Blanche Douglas nightly in his dreams; and Daisy Walters, in his highest state of exultation, when he has been well-carried, as often happens, through a run, heaves a sigh, and feels something aching at his heart, that recalls the black mare and her lovely wayward rider, while it reminds him in a ghostly whisper that "there never was one yet like Satanella!"

THE END.

The annual gathering of the fire brigades of the Easter section of the Province will be held this year at Napanee. The Express says: "We understand arrangements are now being made by the firemen to have their celebration here on Thursday, August 3rd. Invitations will at once be sent out to all fire companies between Strathroy on the west to Prescott on the east—a much larger invitation than has ever been given by the firemen in the different places where demonstrations have been made in former years. In addition to our Canadian guests some American companies will likely be present, making, in all, perhaps, an assembly of about 8,000 firemen."