

... Frank Lovell's chestnut rising at the weakest place, the rider sitting well back, his spurs in his stirrups, his hands in the reins, his square Haycock's square seat on his back, as he diverges to a well-known corner for some friendly egrets, I hear Cousin John's voice shouting, 'Give him his head, Kate!' As White Stockings and I rapidly approach the leap, my horse releases of his own accord into a trot, points his small ears, cringes into the very middle of the fence, and just as I give myself up for lost, makes a second bound that settles me once more in the saddle, and lands gallantly in the adjoining field, Frank looking back over his shoulder in evident anxiety and admiration, whilst John's cherry voice, with its ' Bravo, Kate! rings in my delighted ears. We three are now in arrest the hounds, a long strip of rusky meadow-land before us, the pack streaming along the side of a high thick hedge that bounds it on our left, the south wind tans my face and lifts my hair, as I slacken my horse's rein and urge him to hie speed. I am alongside of Frank. I could ride anywhere now, or do anything. I pass him with a smile and a jest. I am the foremost with the chase. What is ten years of common life, one's feet upon the tender, compared to five such golden minutes as these? The hounds stop suddenly, and after scattering and spreading themselves out the kennel, I see an open fat, look up into my face with an air of mute bewilderment. The huntsman and the field came up, the gentlemen in a high state of delight and confusion, but Mr. Tippler in the vest of hounds, and muttering a Latin motto to a corner of the meadow with the pack about his horse's neck.

'Kod' 'em slap of the scent - drove 'em to a check, was she was at home and a bed and asleep, and be d—d to her!'

A grim old lady who has but one eye, and answers to the name of 'Jezebel,' has threaded the fence, and proclaims in a sweet voice to her comrades, and she has discovered the line of our fox. They join her in an instant, down go their heads in concert, and away we all speed again, through an open gate, across a wide common, into a strip of plantation, over a stile and foot-boards that lead us to it, and I find myself once more following Captain Lovell with Cousin John alongside of me, and all the rest far, far behind. This is indeed glorious. I should like to go on till dinner-time. How I hope we shall kill the fox.

'Take hold of his head, Kate,' says my cousin, whose horse has just blundered on to his nose, through a gay; 'even White Stockings won't last for ever, and this is going to be something out of the common.'

'Forward!' is my reply, as I point with my whip towards the lessening pack, now a whole field ahead of us; 'Forward!' If we hadn't been going such a pace I could have sung for joy.

There is a line of pollarded willow-trees down in that hollow, and the hounds have already left these behind them: they are rising the opposite ground. Again Frank Lovell looks anxiously back at me, but makes no sign.

'We must have it, Kate!' says John, 'there's your best place, under the tree; send him at it as hard as he can lay legs to the ground.'

I ply my whip and loosen my reins in vain. White Stockings stops dead short, and I see the water, as it be waltz on the bank; all of a sudden the stream is full of water, and with a sounder and a struggle we are safe over the brook. Not so Cousin John, I see him on his legs on the bank, with his horse's head lying helplessly between his feet, the rest of that valuable animal being completely submerged.

'Go along, Kate!' he shouts encouragingly, and again I repeat after Frank Lovell, who is by this time a very a quarter of a mile ahead of me, and at last that distance

good. At last he got better, and I got on again (all my life I've been used to mounting and dismounting without assistance). Thinking down-hill must be the way home, down-hill I turned him, and proceeded slowly on, now running over in my own mind the glorious hour I have just spent, now wondering whether I should be lost and have to sleep amongst the Downs, and anon coming back to the old subject, and resolving that hunting was the only thing to live for, and that for the future I would devote my whole time and energies to that pursuit. At last I got into a steep chalky lane, and at a turn a little further on espied, to my great relief, a red-coated back joggling leisurely home. White Stockings pricked his ears and mended his pace, so I soon overtook the returning sportsman, who proved to be no other than Squire Haycock, thrown out like the rest of the heavy-top gentlemen, and only too happy to take care of me, and show me the shortest way (eleven miles as the crow flies) back to Dangerfield Hall.

We joggled on amicably enough, the Squire complimenting me much on my prowess, and not half so shy as usual—very often the case with a diffident man when on horseback. We were forced to go very slow, both our horses being pretty well tired; and to make matters better, we were caught in a tremendous hail-storm about two miles from home, just as it was getting dark, and close to the spot where our respective roads diverged. I could not possibly miss mine, as it was perfectly straight. Ah! that hail-storm has a deal to answer for. We were forced to turn through a hand gate, and take shelter in a friendly wood. What a ridiculous position, pitch dark, pelting with rain, an elderly gentleman and a young lady on horseback under a fir-tree! The Squire had been getting more incoherent for some time, I couldn't think what he was driving at.

'You like our country, Miss Coventry?' fine climate, excellent soil, nice and dry for ladies.'

I willingly subscribed to all these advantages. 'Good neighborhood,' added the Squire; 'capital hunting, charming rills, wonderful scenery for sketching. Do you think you could live in this part of the world?'

I thought I could if I was to try.

'You expressed your approbation of my house, Miss Coventry,' the Squire proceeded, with his hand on my horse's neck, 'do you think—I mean—should you consider—or rather I should say, is there any alteration you would suggest—anything in my power, if you would condescend to ride over any afternoon; may I consider you will so far favor me?'

I said I should be delighted, but that it had left off raining, and it was time for us to get home.

'One word, Miss Coventry,' pleaded the Squire, with a shaking voice; 'have I your permission to call upon Lady Horsingham to-morrow?'

I said I thought my aunt would be at home, and expressed my conviction that she would be delighted to see him, and I wished him good-bye.

'Good bye, Miss Coventry, good-bye,' said the Squire, shaking hands with a squeeze that crushed my favorite ring into my prettiest finger; 'you have made me the happiest of men—good-bye!'

I saw it all in an instant, just as I see it now. The Squire means to propose for me to-morrow, and he thinks I have accepted him. What shall I do? Mrs. Haycock—Kate Haycock—Catherine Haycock! No, I can't make it look well, writ it how I will; and then to vow never to think of any one else; I suppose I mightn't even speak to Frank. Never, no, never; but what a scrape I have got into! and how I wish to-morrow

strapped, and clamped and hob-nailed, completing a *tout ensemble* that almost upset my aunt's gravity, and made me, nervous as I felt, stuff my pocket handkerchief into my mouth, that I might not laugh outright. 'Fine morning, Lady Horsingham,' observed the Squire, as if he had come all that distance at this early hour on purpose to impart so valuable a piece of information—'fine morning, but cold,' he repeated, rubbing his hands together, though the perspiration stood on his brow. 'I don't recollect a much finer morning at this time of year,' he resumed, addressing Cousin John after a pause, during which he had ceremoniously shaken hands with each of us in succession.

'Will you have some breakfast?' asked Lady Horsingham, whose cold and formal demeanor contrasted strangely with the nervous excitement of her visitor.

'No, thank you—if you please,' answered the Squire, in a breath. 'I breakfasted before I left home; early hours, Lady Horsingham—I think your ladyship approves of early hours—but I'll ask for a cup of tea, if you please;' so he sat down to a weak cup of lukewarm tea with much assumed gusto and satisfaction.

It was now time for Cousin Amelia to turn her battery on the Squire, so she presently attacked him about his poultry, and his garden, and his farm; the honest gentleman's absent and inconsequent replies causing my aunt and John to regard him with silent astonishment, as one who was rapidly taking leave of his senses; whilst I, who knew, or at least guessed, the cause of his extraordinary behaviour, began heartily to wish myself back in Londres Street, and to wonder how this absurd scene was going to end.

'Your dahlias must have suffered dreadfully from these early frosts,' said Cousin Amelia, staking her ringlets at the poor man in what she fancies her most bewitching style.

'Beautifully,' was the bewildered reply, 'particularly the short-horn's.'

'You never sent us over the Alderney calf you promised, Mr. Haycock,' pursued the lady, now adroitly charging her ground; 'I begin to think you are not to be depended on.'

'You do me injustice, Miss Horsingham, indeed you do,' broke out the Squire in a white heat, and with a deprecating glance at me; 'I assure you I sent over a fine cutting, with a pot and everything, directions for matting it in winter and transplanting after a year; if you never got it, I'll discharge my gardener—I will, upon my word.'

'I have got such a Cochin China to show you,' persisted his tormentor, determined to renew the charge; 'when you've finished breakfast, I'll take you to the poultry-yard, if you like.'

'Delighted,' replied the Squire, looking ruefully around him, as if he mediated instant flight; 'delighted, I'm sure; but they haven't flowered well this year. I'll teach you how to bud them, if you like; but you're, Miss Horsingham, that they've no smell.'

John could stand it no longer, and was forced to bolt out of the room. My aunt, too, rose from the table with something approaching a smile; and the Squire, screwing his courage to the sticking-place was following her into the drawing-room, evidently for a private interview, when Cousin Amelia, who seemed to have made up her mind to take bodily possession of him, hurried the visitor off to the billiard-room, there to engage in a match which would probably last till luncheon-time. I never saw anything so hopeless as the expression of the victim's countenance, whilst suffering himself to be thus led into captivity. He did summon courage to entrust Miss Coventry to come and mark—a favor which, notwithstanding my cousin's black looks, I really had not the heart to refuse him.

vigilance. How could my presence have deceived me. Of course there was a note—after all, where was the harm? Captain Lovell had most politely sent me all these worsteds for a cushion I had once talked about working, and very naturally had enclosed a note to say so, and nothing to my mind could be kinder or more welcome than the contents. I am not going to say what they are, of course; though for that matter I easily could, since I have got the note by me at this moment, and have read it over to-day, besides, more than once. After all, there is nothing like a letter.

Who does not remember the first letter received in one's childish days, written in a fair round text for childish eyes, or, perhaps, even printed by the kind and painstaking correspondent for the little dunce of a recipient? Who has not slept with such a letter carefully hoarded away under the pillow, that morning's first light might give positive assurance of the actual existence of our treasure? Nor is the little urchin the only glad supporter of our admirable postal institutions. Manly eyes moisten with tears of joy over those faint delicate lines traced by her hand whose gentle influence has found the one soft place. Woman hides away in her bosom, close to her loving heart, the precious scrap which assures her visibly, tangibly, unerringly, that he is hers, and hers alone. Words may deceive, scenes of bliss pass away like a dream. Though ever present to the mind, it requires an effort to disentangle the realities of memory from the illusions of imagination; but a letter is proof positive; there it is in black and white. You may read it again and again, you may kiss it as often as you please; you may prize it, and study it, and pore over it, and find a new meaning in every fresh perusal, a hidden interpretation for every magic word; nothing can unsay it, nothing can deprive you of it—only don't forget to lock it up carefully, and mind you don't go leaving about your keys.

I had already read my note over a second time, before Cousin Amelia bounced into the room without knocking. I should have locked the door had I known she was coming; as it was, I had only time to pop the note into my dress (the seal made a great scratch just below my neck) before she was upon me, and throwing herself into my arms with a most unusual excess of affection, exclaimed—

'Give me joy, Kate—give me joy—he's gone to mamma—he's in the drawing-room with her now—O Kate! what shall I do?'

'My dear Amelia,' I exclaimed, as the delightful thought flashed across me, that after all, the Squire's visit might have been for my Cousin, though I must say I wondered at his taste, 'am I to congratulate you on being Mrs. Haycock? I do, indeed, from my heart. I am sure he is an excellent, amiable man, and will make you a capital husband.'

'That he will!' exclaimed Cousin Amelia; 'and such a nice place and gardens, and a very good fortune, too. Upon my word, Kate, I begin to think I'm a lucky girl, though to be sure, with my advantages, I might expect to make a good match. He's not so old, Kate, after all; at least, not so old as he looks; and he's very good tempered, I know, because his servants say so. I shall alter that tumble-down house of his, and now furnish the drawing-room. Of course he'll take me to London for two or three months every year in the season. I wonder if he knows about Mr. Johnson, not that I ever cared for him; and, of course, a poor curate, like that, one couldn't think of it. Do you know, Kate, I thought his manner was very odd the other day when he joined here; though he sat next you, he kept looking at me, and I remarked once that he colored up, oh! so red; poor fellow, I see it all now. Kate, you shall be one of my bridesmaids—perhaps it will be your turn to be a bride some of these days—who knows!'

sence then when he was by her side. I, too, was beginning to have a Cousin Edward of my own; Frank Lovell's image was far too often present in my mind. I did not choose to confess to myself how much I liked him; but the more I reflected on Mr. Haycock's proposal, the more I felt how impossible it would be never to think of Frank any more.

'No!' I said inwardly, with my hand on the drawing-room door, 'I will not give him up. I have his note even now in my bosom; he cares for me at any rate. I am happier to-day than I have been for months, and I will not go and destroy it all with my own hand.' I opened the door and found myself in the formidable presence of Aunt Horsingham.

Her ladyship looked colder and more reserved, if possible, than ever. She motioned me stiffly to take a chair, and plunged at once into the subject in her dry, measured tones.

'Before I congratulate you, Kate,' she began, 'on such an unlooked-for piece of good fortune as has just come to my knowledge, I am bound to confess, much to my astonishment—'

'Thank you, aunt,' I put in; 'that's complimentary, at any rate.'

'I should wish to say a few words, proceeded my aunt, without heeding the interruption, 'on the duties which will now devolve upon you, and the line of conduct which I should advise you to pursue in your new sphere. These boyish manners, these ridiculous expeditions, these scampers all over the country, must be renounced forthwith. Unbecoming as they are in a young unmarried female, a much stricter sense of decorum, a vastly different repose and reserve of manner, are absolutely essential in a wife; and it is as a wife, Kate, that I am addressing you.'

'A wife, aunt!' I exclaimed; 'whose, I should like to know?'

'This is an ill-chosen time for jesting, Kate,' said my aunt, with a frown; 'I cannot congratulate you on your good taste in turning so important a subject into ridicule. Mr. Haycock has proposed to you, you have accepted him. Whilst poor Deborah is so ill, I am your natural guardian, and he has with great propriety requested my consent; although, in the agitation very natural to a man so circumstanced, aided my aunt, smothering a smile, 'it was with some difficulty that I made out exactly what he meant.'

'He never proposed to me, I never accepted him,' I broke in, breathless with agitation; 'I never will be his wife, aunt—you had no right to tell him so. Write to him immediately—send a man off on horseback to overtake him—I'll put my bonnet on this instant, and walk every mile of the way myself. He's a true-hearted gentleman, and he won't be made of.'

I walked up and down the room—I looked Aunt Horsingham right in the face; she was quite cowed by my vehemence. I felt my mistress now, while the excitement lasted, and she gave in; she even wrote a note to the Squire in my dictation; she despatched it by a special messenger; she did everything I told her, and never so much as ventured on remonstrance or reproach; but she will never forgive me to her dying hour. There is no victory so complete as that which one obtains over a person who is always accustomed to meet with fear and obedience. Aunt Horsingham rules her household with a rod of iron; nobody ever ventures to disagree with her, or so much as to hint an opinion contrary to those which she is known to hold. Such a person is so astounded at resistance as to be incapable of quelling it, the very harshness of the rebellion insures its success.

(To be Continued.)

The best throw of dice—throw them away.