

## WON IN A CANTER.

[CONTINUED.]

"I can't say, Mr. Martingall, we must wait and see," said the medical man, pointing to a deep gash over his temple, from which the blood was still slowly oozing: "he's lost blood enough to kill a bullock; he's not dead yet though," he said, removing his hand from over the region of his heart, "and he's breathing yet," pointing to the ghastly blood-stained features of his master. "I see how it is, then, cursed poachers again; his Lordship caught 'em and tackled 'em alone. Send some one for a doctor, Martingall, quick, on horseback; and one of you run up to the house and tell them to have all ready. There wasn't a better master, or such a gentleman in the whole of Yorkshire," continued the man, rubbing his eyes with his large horny hand. "Now, lads, make haste with them things," as he heard them approaching, "look sharp, and put that mattress on the hurdle," and lifting the inanimate body they placed it on the bed, and raising it up wended their way slowly through the wood.

It took them nearly three-quarters of an hour to get to the house, and when they arrived there, found everything in confusion, the women sobbing and crying, and the men servants with their faces as white as their neck-cloths. The poor old butler, who had been in the family upwards of fifty years, was unable to utter a word, and silently pointed the way to his master's room.

"Give us a little brandy, quick," said the keeper, as the body was laid on the bed, "and a spoon," but what he put into the mouth was not swallowed. "He ain't dead though," remarked the man, "his heart is fluttering like, he's still breathing, just take off all his things," but before they had finished doing so, the village doctor, Wilson, who had been called in for Charlie Thornhill arrived.

Without uttering a word he walked straight up to the bed, looked intently for an instant on the blood-bedaubed face of the nobleman, and placed his hand on his wrist.

"Warm water," he uttered, after a short pause, as all stood round with eager faces to hear his verdict, "warm water quick, a pair of scissors, and send a telegram for Sir William. This is a bad case, a very bad case, a very bad case indeed," he remarked, as with the scissors he cut the hair all over the temple, and proceeded skillfully to dress it; "if brain fever does not interfere there are hopes, but all depends on the next few days."

Though still breathing, the unfortunate nobleman was presently unconscious, and looked a ghastly object as he lay on his bed. "Let his relations and friends be immediately telegraphed to, and those who live within a short distance sent for at once," said the Doctor to the old butler. "I suppose there is plenty of clean ice in the ice-house? if not, it must be got at once, for it will be wanted. What's come to the neighborhood, lately?" he added; "there is poor young Thornhill nearly shot to death through thorough carelessness; Sir Turbit struck down by the hand of death; and now Lord Verriest by some cowardly poaching scoundrel."

A little brandy was forced down the throat of the nobleman who sighed faintly as he swallowed it, and there was a perceptible quivering of the eyelids.

"Must keep him up by stimulants," murmured the Doctor, as he watched the effects of the spirit; "it is the only chance."

He was seated watching every breath of the patient, when one of the men-servants stole in and whispered something to the old butler, who was seated at the other side of the bed.

The old man got up and came round to the Doctor. "Lord Lavender and Captain Slyfox are below, sir," he said, "may they come up?"

"By all means," replied the medical man. "I should like them to see that everything is being done that can be."

"Good God! Wilson, what's all this?" exclaimed Lord Lavender, as he entered the room with his friend; "is there any hope?"

"Whilst there is life there is hope, my lord," replied the Doctor, "but it is a fearful case, and I have already telegraphed for Sir William, who, you know, only lives six miles away, so there is every probability of his being seen here; he is sure to come by special train, and a close carriage is now at the station waiting."

"Quite right, Wilson, quite right," said Lord Lavender, "and all his friends and relations of course, have been summoned?"

"And poor Miss Sprightly?" asked Captain Slyfox, "has she been written or sent for?"

"If not she must be," replied the Doctor, "but all the men here are so nervous and in confusion that I don't think it was forgotten up

and everything that can be done, you may depend will be done."

Not one inmate of the Moat went to bed that night: the servants sat in the second hall, dozing uneasily in their chairs, and started at the slightest sound only to doze off again; but every hour they were aroused by the old butler coming softly in, and saying, "Just the same, no better and no worse."

As the rays of early morn found their way into the room through the crevices of the shutters, making the dim lamps look still more sickly, they began to bestir themselves, and to turn their hands to their different vocations.

The letter was now sent to Linden Hall for Nurse Grimes, and the forgotten messenger despatched to Mrs. Sprightly's cottage, and who blundered in it by saying his lordship was murdered instead of nearly murdered.

About eight o'clock Charlie Thornhill's faithful old nurse made her appearance, and took up her place silently, as was her wont, by the side of the sick couch. An hour later old Mr. Thornhill cantered up on his hack, and by ten o'clock messages and visitors from the surrounding neighborhood made anxious inquiries.

The rural police, headed by Sparkes, were working in their own way to bring the offenders to justice, but at every point they were baffled. Several well-known poachers had been arrested on suspicion, and were as quickly dismissed, from want of evidence.

A messenger had arrived in hot haste at the Moat, requiring the immediate presence of Doctor Wilson at Mrs. Sprightly's cottage; but he had returned again almost immediately, and after a short consultation with Sir William, both gentlemen had left for the widow's in one of the Moat carriages.

Every lad that could ride, and every farmer's horse that could be procured, had been sent by Mr. Conyers to the different subscribers of Wareheel Hunt, stating that in consequence of the melancholy occurrence the hounds would not meet until further notice.

When Sir William and Doctor Wilson made their appearance in Bessy's neat little bedroom, she was lying perfectly quiet, white as the sheets that surrounded her, and eyes bright and meaningless as the diamond ring (the gift of Lord Verriest) on her finger.

"Well, young lady," said Sir William, as he took her hand, "what can we do for you?" but continued gazing vacantly at the ceiling. "Bessie, my darling," said her mother, "don't you see the doctors? they have come to tell you Lord Verriest is quite safe. She has been in this way," she added, "ever since Alice gave her the news three hours ago."

"Oh! miss, do speak to the gentleman," said her sobbing maid, "there is nothing the matter."

"Do you feel any pain, Miss Sprightly?" asked Mr. Wilson, "any pain in the head or chest?"

Still the same vacant listless look, and the question was unheeded.

"A serious case," said Sir William, "no fever and her pulse as regular as clockwork. We may speak freely, she does not heed or hear us; her system has received a fearful shock, and I fear she will ever remain in this state of apathy, unless she can be moved by some strong emotion."

"Oh, don't say so, Sir William?" cried the mother, falling down by the bedside, and burying her face in the clothes.

"Has she any friends or companions she is particularly fond of?" asked Sir William, of the maid. "Any lady friends, I mean."

"There is only one she knows here, sir," replied the weeping girl, "Miss Thornhill."

"Then let her be sent for at once. Medicine is no good here, this is a case for time, and time only. She is a girl of strong feelings and emotions, and will only be moved out of this state of coma by some sudden excitement. You must not be cast down, Miss Sprightly," said Sir William, kindly taking her hand, and assisting her to rise, "there is nothing to fear but her mind: let her be kept quiet, but not alone, be moving constantly about in her room, and indulge her in every desire should she express any—I will call again in the afternoon," and bowing to the heart-broken mother left the room.

"Bessy, my darling Bessy," said Mary Thornhill, seating herself down by her friend's bedside, "don't you know me? what is the matter with you?" Tears were trickling down the tender-hearted girl's cheeks as she asked this question, for she was utterly shocked at the vague expression of her friend's face, but still there was no response.

"Bessy," persisted her enquirer, "will you lend me your horses? or would you like to go for a ride and see how Lord Verriest is?" but receiving no answer or look of recognition poor Mary fairly broke down and sobbed aloud.

"Oh! Miss Bessy, do take some breakfast!" said her maid, as she placed a neat-laid little tray on the bed before her; but the

have taken my advice, and remained, as I did, at home."

"I tell you what, I shall do," said Shirkington, savagely, "I shall leave this damned country; I hate it, and all their idiotical goings on."

"It will be the same thing; wherever you go: it was so when you were in the army, it was so when—"

"What do you mean, Bluster?" said Shirkington, reddening up.

"I mean what I say," replied the other, calmly, "you were detested in your regiment, and disliked wherever you have been. Do you suppose Rasper and Downey have not talked about you? You bragged of having beaten the Major four miles across country in a steep chase; and you never rode the against him or any one else, or even had a horse of your own till you bought those at Brighton. Do you think I have not heard anything? You carried on with Bessy Sprightly, poor girl, and then threw her up."

At last she found some one else she liked better than you, and some one who knows her true value, and who, I hope to God, will soon be about again. Well, because the girl refuses you, you let that infernal tongue of yours wag to such a degree that you will either be horse-whipped or hooted out of the county. I speak as your friend. I am utterly ashamed of you. I don't pretend to be a swell, or a man of family, but by George! my heart was in the right place, and I can feel for the misfortunes of other;" and poor Bluster, who was flushed and excited at this unwonted flow of eloquence, drank a glass of water at a drain.

Shirkington was utterly confounded at his friend's audacity.

"So that d—d Rasper and Downey have been talking, have they?" said Shirkington, when he found his voice; "well, I'll walk into them the first time I meet them."

"So I would," returned his friend, "but I'll bet you a trifle you will not dare to say to either half of what you have just told me."

"As for you, Bluster, after what has passed, we can no longer live together; our month is up next week, and I shall not remain here after that time."

"Just exactly my intention," returned the other. "I have already arranged with Downey and Rasper to lodge with them. There is plenty of stabling, and we shall get on capitally."

"Oh! that's your game is it?" replied Shirkington, "so much the better; then I shall have the cottage all to myself."

"That is the best thing you can do, Shirkington, for you will never find any one to live with you whilst you talk in the way you do, and give utterance to such sentiments; now we will drop the subject." Lighting a cigar and filling himself up a glass of brandy and water, he took up the paper, and sat down by the fire in his arm-chair.

Perhaps the quiet part of Yorkshire, of which we have been speaking, had never been in such a state before; a popular nobleman was lying at death's door; a rich old city knight struck suddenly down by apoplexy; a beautiful girl's young hopes and mind destroyed; the favorite man of the county slowly recovering from a gun-shot wound, had all combined to make the place dull and lifeless. Dinner parties had been postponed, balls given up, and the meet of the hounds put off *sine die*.

"Do you not think, Thornhill," said Sir John Forest to the old Squire, as they met at the Moat, where both had gone to inquire after Lord Verriest, "it would be better for Charlie to come back to me a bit? He is strong enough to be moved now, for he has been out in the carriage two or three times already; it will be a change for him. Your daughter's time will be nearly all taken up with poor Miss Sprightly; but I forgot to ask what time this frightful accident to poor Verriest took place last night."

"His body was found about nine o'clock," returned the old Squire; "but as to Charlie's leaving me, pray don't ask it. I know how good, how kind, how generous, and what a friend you have been to him all through, but you must let him stop with me until he is quite recovered."

"Of course, Thornhill, anything you like. This, unfortunately, is not the only house of grief; poor Lady Turbit, they say, is terribly cut up; and Mrs. Sprightly prostrated with misery at her daughter's sad state."

"Ah! poor girl," replied the old Squire; "I quite loved her, Forest, though she was only at my house once—a bright ingenious creature, full of life and hopes; she was simply charming—and Mary was exceedingly fond of her; the friendship of an hour, for it is extraordinary how soon girls take to one another. The Sprightly's means are evidently small, but still she and her mother have doubtless seen better days; in fact, Mary told me that her friend had opened her heart to her—how she had come into Yorkshire with the idea of marrying that young man, Duffer, as it appeared he had shown her great attention at Brighton, and all but

The medical men were unwearying in their attentions on the sufferer, who, on the fourth day regained his senses. He was too weak and feeble to say much, but they managed to get from him who the band of poachers were composed of.

"I do not like Verriest's appearance at all," remarked Sir William to his conferees: "there is an indication even now of brain fever—his pulse, his whole look, betokens it. The feverish symptoms have been rapidly increasing; ice now is our only chance."

The Doctor's prognostications were fulfilled, for the patient became quickly delirious and violent, and force had to be resorted to, to keep him in his bed.

A week had nearly passed with him in this way; sometimes he would lie for hours and hours together scarcely breathing; then he would start up, and it would require the united strength of two powerful men to keep him down.

Poor old Sir Turbit Turbit had been carried to his last home with great pomp and ostentation. An immense hatchment with the Turbit arms decorated the front of Carrie Hall, a ghastly and useless symbol of death.

Mr. John Turbit, though much better off than he was before, was not pleased with his father's will. He had been left two thousand a year, but the money was so invested and tied up that he could not touch the principal; the old knight knew that his son was a fool, and was resolved the money that had taken him a life-time to accumulate should not be made ducks and drakes of.

To his widow he bequeathed the Hall and all therein, with the remainder of his large fortune, for the term of her natural life, and at her death to revert to his son under certain restrictions.

A couple of days after the interment of his father, John Turbit thought it would only be polite to ride over to the Moat and enquire after his own health. On arriving there, he found Sir William walking backwards and forwards on the terrace, inhaling a little fresh air.

"The crisis, Mr. Turbit," replied Sir William to the question put to him, "is not far off; this evening, I apprehend, will decide it one way or the other."

As they were conversing, another poor invalid appeared on the scene: Charles Thornhill had driven over in a low pony-chaise with Sir John Forest, to make his inquiries. Charlie, though looking sick and delicate, was mending fast.

"Well, Thornhill," said Turbit, "I am glad to see you out again."

Charlie, who was quite unaware of the proposal that his cousin had been honored with, shook hands with him cordially, and talked over various matters whilst the two elder gentlemen were conversing apart.

"I hardly expected you to shake hands with me, Thornhill," said the other, "especially after what has passed."

"My good fellow," replied Charlie, "you cannot suppose that I harbor any malice; your shooting me was quite accidental. No one, I am certain, would have been more sorry than you were."

"It is not that exactly," answered Turbit, slightly confused, "it was your cousin, Miss Thornhill's rejection of me, that I allude to."

"Why, you do not mean to say, Turbit," exclaimed the other, reddening up, and his eyes gleaming strangely, "that you proposed to Mary?"

"Yes, I did, Thornhill, coming home from hunting. I was a little elevated at the time, I admit, but if I had not popped then, I should have done so another day."

"You proposed—you dared to propose to my cousin, Turbit?"

"Yes, I did dare, and why not?"

"Why not?" said Thornhill grasping him tightly by the arm, and drawing him towards him; "why not—because?" and he whispered something in his ear.

"Good God! Thornhill!" cried the young man falling back a pace or two, with face of ashy paleness, and trembling from head to foot as if stricken with sudden ague, "how on earth did you know this?"

"No matter, I know it."

"But how, Thornhill," asked the trembling, guilty-looking wretch, "how could you know it?"

"Come to me, Turbit, this evening at eight, and I will show you—and come privately, too—what a consummate scoundrel you are. Never dare to presume to address or annoy my cousin again in any way, or, by God! I'll not leave a whole bone in your skin. If you ever wish life to speak to you again you'll do what is right—it is not too late, and saying this he turned on his heel and left him.

John Turbit, as he rode towards home, pondered and wondered how Thornhill had become possessed of his fatal secret; and, on arriving at the Hall, buried himself in the seclusion of his room. He tried to read, he

John Turbit sat rummaging by the fire in no pleasant mood; but was presently aroused by the dressing-room door being opened, and there emerged from it a figure totally unlike that which had some minutes before entered it. It was a tall man in long untanned riding boots, with a scarlet cloak thrown somewhat carelessly over his shoulders, beneath which a buff leather suit was visible; a high quait hat surmounted his head, his eyes and nose were concealed by a black velvet mask, and the lower part of his face covered with a long gray beard.

Turbit gazed aghast at the apparition which stood motionless before him.

"By heavens!" he exclaimed at last, "the Man of the Mist."

"Just so," said the figure, in a jeering sarcastic voice.

"Then you are—" commenced Turbit.

"Charles Thornhill," replied the other, "or the Man of the Mist you saw upwards of three years ago," taking off his hat, mask, and beard. "Now you will guess how I became acquainted with your secret; go now, or you may be discovered in the house," and, opening the door, led the other softly out into the passage, and pointing to the direction he was to take, returned to his room and locked the door.

"He is acquainted with my secret," muttered Turbit to himself as he passed down the avenue, got into his cart and drove rapidly away; "but on looking into my hand he has shown his own. Who would imagine that the swell, Charlie Thornhill, so sought for by all—the sporting luminary of the county, the dear and bosom friend of the proud and aristocratic Sir John Forest, the nephew of an Indian millionaire—had been an actor in a third-class theatre! It will rather astonish the good people about here when it becomes known, which it shall, I swear."

Whilst all this was taking place, the unfortunate nobleman at the Moat was lying in a calm sleep; his medical attendants were below at dinner; old nurse Grimes had been relieved at her post, which was now occupied by one of the men-servants, and he seeing that his master slept quietly, stole softly from the room. He had not been gone three minutes before the invalid awoke: his eyes wandered vacantly round the apartment, and he muttered something to himself which was unintelligible; he shifted uneasily in his bed several times, and then sat up, and after a few seconds stepped deliberately to the floor, tottered across the room, and sat himself down by the fire, talking and muttering to himself all the while; and presently reaching out his hand towards a bottle which stood on a small table beside him, gulped down the contents. His eyes now assumed a wild, startling expression, and two hectic spots burned on his cheek; he seemed for a few moments as if listening intently, putting his hand to his wounded head occasionally as if in pain. He then rose from the chair, and walking straight to the door on which hung his gorgeous dressing-gown, and which seemed particularly to have attracted his attention, took it off the hook and mechanically put it on; he then opened the door and passed out into the corridor, down the front staircase, across the hall, and out of the door which happened to be open.

Doctor Wilson's gig, which had only arrived a short time before with his man-servant, bearing a letter for his master, who was requested immediately to attend a poor curate's wife some nine miles off, and who was about to present her lord and master with an elevenfold pledge of conjugal affection, stood temptingly before the delirious and fever-stricken nobleman.

The doctor's man had gone into the servants' hall for a glass of ale, leaving the well-acquainted old horse, who was used to standing alone by the hour together at the doors of the doctor's numerous patients.

Into the gig the nobleman stepped with his slipperless feet, catching hold of the reins, and giving the animal a cut across the flank with a whip, passed down the avenue at a rapid pace, and the lodge-keeper hearing the vehicle approach, without any hesitation flung open the gates, and the trap passed out on the high road. The man wondered that it was one spoke, or even said good-night, but it was too dark, even by the lamps of the gig, to see who the driver was.

Nurse Grimes, entering the sick chamber shortly after his Lordship had left it, was petrified on finding it empty, hastily ringing the bell again and again, the servant who had been left in charge rushed in.

"Where on earth is his Lordship?" she asked with a scared countenance.

"I am sure I don't know, Mrs. Grimes; I left him here two minutes ago sound asleep."

"Oh! John, John, what have you done?" cried the old woman, passing swiftly from the room to the dining-room, where the gentlemen sat at dinner, and informed them of the fact.

A few minutes convinced them that the delirious nobleman had left his room, and