

SADDLE AND SABRE.

(Continued.)

Young Devereux in a Hussar regiment quartered at York he considered would be decidedly worth cultivating. His far-seeing eye looked forward to a very pleasant billet for the York Races in the ensuing August. There was sure to be plenty of card-playing and billiards, besides the opportunities offered by the Knavesmire, and it was these varied opportunities that the major depended upon in great part for a living.

The Firs also suited Mrs. Kynaston for this winter; not only did it allow her to retain Charlie Devereux within her thrall, for whose devotion she honestly cared but little, but it also offered the best possible chance she knew of seeing something of Gilbert Slade, and in Gilbert Slade, between pique and caprice, Mrs. Kynaston was much interested.

It had been a mere whim in the first instance, but the indifference Slade had showed to her charras, and, latterly, his evident preference for Lettice herself, had aroused a very tornado in this wayward woman's breast. She had dwelt upon it, brooded upon it, what you will, but ended by conceiving herself passionately in love with the good-looking Hussar. Bertie Slade had run down for the day to Lincoln to see Charlie ride Polestar, but he had so far put in no appearance at North Leach; and, now that Charlie had joined the regiment, it was not very likely that he would do so. Mrs. Kynaston had quite enough knowledge of things military to know that it was not very likely young Devereux would get leave for the first few months, until he had passed his novitiate in fact; and it was hardly likely that Bertie would come to North Leach unless he accompanied his friend

Gilbert Slade. indeed, when young Devereux suggested a run home to North Leach for a few days' hunting, laughed as he replied,

"I can tell you what the chief's reply will be before you ask him. He will tell you, 'The York and Ainsty are quite good enough for you to hunt with for the present; and it will be time enough for you to go further a-field when you are through the school, and have learned your drill.' No, no, the chief is a rare good sort for leave, but, as for your wanting it just after you have joined, he will regard that as unmitigated cheek."

Charlie accepted his comrade's dictum; in reality, he had no great desire to go back to North Leach. As far as hunting went, the sport around York would satisfy any man not wedded to the shires, and the new life was full of pleasure and amusement to a young fellow like himself. But then there were Mrs. Kynaston's instructions, that he was to be sure and come back, bring Mr. Slade with him, and have a week in his own country, if he could compass it.

And Lettice, too, as she bade him good-bye, had said,

"It would be awfully jolly, Charlie, if you and Mr. Slade could run down and have a good gallop or two with us before the season closes."

Well, he had done his best; and, as it couldn't be managed, there was no help for it.

During the latter part of her stay in London, Mrs. Kynaston had seen a good deal of Ralph Furzedon. It had been in the first instance because her husband had wished her to do so. Their intimacy had increased because Furzedon eagerly cultivated her acquaintance; and, latterly, because she had seen her way into making use of him. To say that she had easily detected Furzedon's besetting ambition would hardly describe the case. The man had made a confidant of her from the first; she knew how anxious he was to push himself into society—the higher the better; but, at all events, into society of some sort to start with. She had done him more than one good turn in that respect, and Furzedon clung tenaciously to her skirts in consequence. Mrs. Kynaston had of late made up her mind that he should marry Lettice Devereux. Furzedon had thought Lettice a very pretty girl to start with, but it had never entered his mind to make her his wife until Mrs. Kynaston not only planted the idea there, but tendered it and ministered to it as a delicate flower requiring careful cultivation. She was always chanting Lettice's praises

"That girl," she would say, "only requires to be seen to have half London at her feet. She is thrown away amongst that dowdy set of Mrs. Connop's; and she is so dreadfully loyal to her aunt that I can't induce her to come about a little under my chaperonage."

"I should have thought," Furzedon had rejoined, "that her family was hardly good enough to give her much chance in the matrimonial market."

"No chance," replied Mrs. Kynaston, with a shrug of her shoulders. "Much you know about it. The bluest blood in the peerage in these democratic days mates either with beauty or money-bags, if it doesn't do worse, and go to the *couillies* for its countess. If Lettice Devereux only marries a man with a tolerably good fortune, she will speedily be in what society she likes in London."

Now all this, if not strictly true, was so in great part. Lettice Devereux was a very pretty girl, quite likely to make a good match, and her antecedents were little likely to stand in her way should a man fall in love with her. Day by day all this sank deeper and deeper into Mr. Furzedon's mind. Mrs. Kynaston was far too clever ever to suggest that Lettice would suit him, she spoke of the girl always in the abstract, as one whom Nature had so richly endowed that she must have a brilliant future before her, always accompanied by regret that that future was being muddled away by the bad start she had at Mrs. Connop's. Mrs. Kynaston dilated upon Lettice's charms in a manner that her own estimate of them hardly warranted. Lettice Devereux was undoubtedly a pretty girl, but she was not such a striking beauty as it suited her friend to make out. Anyway, the idea that it would be a good thing for him to marry Lettice Devereux was beginning to take a strong hold on Furzedon's mind. He was a considerably wealthier man than people had any idea of. Not only had his father left

him very well off, but recently an uncle had died who had bequeathed to him a considerable business of the same nature as the late lamented Furzedon's. He had turned up his nose at his father's calling, but that was when he was young and foolish. A shrewd, grasping, hard man, devoted to money-making, he had determined to carry on this latter, under an assumed name, of course; but then most usury is conducted on such principles, and the person with whom a loan is contracted is apt to be a man of straw acting for a principal in the background.

Now one of the first negotiations that had fallen to Furzedon's lot after taking up his uncle's business had tickled that gentleman immensely. It may be remembered that Charlie Devereux, to meet his losses at Newmarket, had been obliged to borrow money from Ralph Furzedon; he had given his acceptance in acknowledgment to three bills of various amounts, but the total of which came to a considerable sum. Worried about this, Charlie, it may be borne in mind, had confided his troubles to Major Kynaston, and that gentleman had promptly found him the money with which to redeem those bills from Furzedon; but to do this the Major had simply raised the money from a professional usurer. His knowledge of the money-lenders in the metropolis was extensive, and amongst others he had been in the habit of doing business with Ralph Furzedon's uncle, who traded, as before said, under an assumed name. It is easy to conceive how Mr. Furzedon chuckled upon discovering that the acceptances that were redeemed had only been rescued for acceptances of the same description, bearing usurious interest, instead of the modest five per cent. with which, as a friend, he had contented himself. In short, poor Charlie's bills had simply been transferred from one pocket to the other. Major Kynaston was in profound ignorance of this; he was aware of the death of the principal, but was informed when he called that the business was carried on as usual, and, having effected the transaction, had troubled himself no more.

XX.

THE TWO THOUSAND.

The race for the Two Thousand draws near, and, though the betting thereon is languid in proportion to what it usually was in those grand old gambling days, still this could not be so much ascribed to the apathy of the sporting public as to the narrow circumscription of the betting. The race was regarded by those conversant in turf matters as a certainty for Glendower. Such a gift, indeed, did it look to him, that it was rumored there would be hardly any opposition, and out of the half-dozen possible runners quoted no one imagined that any of the number had much chance of defeating the favorite, whose two-year-old career had consisted of six or seven unbroken victories. Glendower, like the upas-tree, overshadowed and killed the market. In the teeth of his triumphant career it seemed sheer madness to back any of his opponents. But when there suddenly dawned upon the horizon a dim star like Belisarius, and when men had been given time to collect such facts about him as that he belonged to Bill Smith, the famous North-country jockey, and that he had been backed by one so intimately associated with Bill Smith's former triumphs as Sir Ronald Radcliffe, it was gradually whispered about that the Newmarket crack, Glendower, might meet his master in the dark colt from the "North country."

It was not that Bill Smith and his friends had laid out much money on Belisarius, indeed they were in no position to do so—some eight hundred pounds at long odds had been the sum-total of their collective outlay. True they had also secured various long-shots about the colt for the Derby, but none of them were in a position to risk much money on a race of any kind let them fancy it ever so dearly. Sir Ronald, as bold a plunger as ever was seen, had from such reckless speculation so crippled his resources that a "monkey" was the utmost left to him to venture. Much less contented Bill Smith and Norman Slade, and therefore it was only the money of the people and a few astute turfites that forced Belisarius into a prominent place in the betting.

If there is one thing the speculative public are specially fond of in connection with a horse-race, it is a dark colt in the hands of a well-known man at long odds. And this was just the very year to foment such fancy. It was all very well to say Glendower must win, but to back Glendower meant the taking of a very short price about that noble animal's chance. Amongst the others it was impossible to make out, with any regard to their previous performances, that any of them could have the slightest chance of beating the favorite. There is no telling how good a horse may be that has never run; it is equally true that the converse of the proposition holds good.

"Bill Smith is a clever man," argued the public, "and is a great horse man still, if he chooses to take care of himself; it is quite evident that he fancies this colt of his, and there is no better judge than he; surely he will keep steady to ride his own horse, and if he only does that, old Bill's good enough to tackle the very best of 'em yet."

And thus reasoning, the ever-sanguine army of backers began, with the heroic constancy that ever characterizes them, to stake their money free on Belisarius. In vain did bookmakers ask each other what this might mean. The cry had gone forth that Belisarius "was good goods for the Guinea." And those who went down to the lists and staked—and the number was numerous as those who go down to the sea in ships—with accord invested their money on the dark colt of the north. And thus came to pass, that as the race drew nigh Belisarius was installed a strong second favorite. It was rumored, indeed, that, though quoted at two or three points longer odds in the betting, he for all that carried more money than the hitherto unbeaten Glendower.

Norman Slade and his brother conspirator, Sir Ronald, were in as high a state of excitement as it was possible for two veteran turfites to arrive