

WON IN A CANTER.

(CONTINUED)

The crowd, scared man left the house with-
out answering.

"Was anything so nice?" "Think of that dear Mr. Gammone giving an afternoon party" such were the exclamations running through the mind of the pet curate's parish. "So kind and considerate of him." "So friendly." "So charming." All the parish was asked; at least, all who were invitables. There was a first rate lunch in his greenhouse, which was large, and had been beautifully fitted up and warmed; it was yet too cold for a garden party outside—ices, champagne, claret cup, in fact it was as well done as it could be.

The curate was here, there, and everywhere, in the greatest spirits; bowing to one, getting cold chicken for another, and sherry and lemonade for a third.

Miss Smithers had made up her mind for conquest on this day. She was arrayed in the very palest of sea-green silks beautifully made. But Miss Brown was not to be outdone. Miss Smithers' maid had split as to the color, so Miss Brown went up town and ordered a beautiful pink one from Marshall and Snellgrove, and a magnificent bouquet from Solomon's. Miss Jenkins invested in a bright blue; and Miss Robinson, who was getting somewhat past mark of mouth, appeared in virgin white. Each young lady, who fancied she made the least impression or had a chance, had fully made up her mind to do or die.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the pompous Mr. Broadmead, a wealthy and retired grazier, who always would speechify, getting on his legs, "unaccustomed as I am—"

"To public speaking," put in an indiscreet young gentleman, who had taken more champagne and claret cup than was good for him.

"No, sir," said the grazier, glaring round with his gold eye-glasses, to detect the offender, which he failed in doing. "I am not unaccustomed to public speaking. I was going to observe, when I was so unseemingly interrupted, unaccustomed as I am to afternoon parties"—he had never been to one before—"given on this unusual scale—of—of—of—liberality and magnificence—"

"Cock-a-doodle-do!" crowed the young gentleman, who was highly delighted at his success at not being discovered and seeing there was a general titter, for Mr. Broadmead was not popular.

"You may cock-a-doodle-do me, sir, as much as you like, whoever you are," returned the grazier, "but you shall not put me down. I repeat, liberality and magnificence of our worthy host and entertainer, for he is—"

"A jolly good fellow," bawled out another, emboldened by his friend's success.

"Very well, sir," said the irate speaker, "by all means, let it be a jolly good fellow, if you choose, but that is not what I was going to say. I therefore beg without trespassing on your time any further to propose his health with—"

"Three times three, and the musical honors," shouted out the first.

"Sir!" exclaimed the orator, with great emphasis and grandeur, "allow me to remind you this is not a tavern but the—the—" he was going to say "the Hall," but as they were in a greenhouse, substituted "the domain of a much respected and valuable gentleman."

"One of the olden school," put in another, amidst the laughter of all.

"Oh, Mr. Gammone, dear Mr. Gammone," said Miss Smithers, who was seated next to him, "I am quite too awfully terrified and alarmed. There is not—oh, say there is not going to be—to be—a fight, is there?"

"Dearest Mr. Gammone," uttered Miss Jenkins, who was determined not to be outdone, "they will not hurt you, will they—tell me you are safe?"

"Mr. Broadmead, ladies and gentlemen," said the host, getting on his legs, and throwing his hair back with his white hand, "I cannot sufficiently express myself for your kindness, and the great honor you have done me;" here he passed his scented handkerchief across his eyes. "Yes," he continued, "it has come on me quite unprepared, and I really am at a loss what to say." (No! no!) "I must throw myself on your indulgence, and generosity, if I inadequately express myself. You know not the pleasure it gives me to see the old and young, rich and poor, happy. I cannot bear discussions or discord, it need not be, for a soft answer turneth

me—Why has Mr. Gammone concealed his marriage? Why has our curate not brought her amongst us? He has been here three years, and we never heard of his being a Benedict before. My friends, I will tell you why; no man has been free from blame. I ran away with my wife; she had a poor old and infirm father, on his forgiving us, which he immediately did, I promised him—a promise which I have rigidly and faithfully kept—that I would leave her with him, never take her away, or mention my marriage till his death. He is dead. It was an old man's whim—folly I may say, let it be so, but I am happy in knowing I kept faith." ("Noble young man," from an elderly lady.) "My beloved wife, the cherished one of my heart, will be amongst you soon; to-morrow I go to fetch her. I feel you will accord her the same kind reception you have given me; you find her gentle, affectionate and amiable; she will enter fully into all your feelings; she is generous to the poor, and rich in virtue; if anything had happened to her during the three years I have been away, I should have broken my heart." (Here he was much overcome.) "My dear friends, let us drink the health of her I love and value, and who will ever be a friend to those who need one, or are in distress." (Vociferous applause.)

Here the old lady filled her tumbler by mistake, and the "Jolly-good-fellow" man returned his compliment on his "Cock-a-doodle" friend, by taking him a tremendous rap on the mouth with a stewed pear, which suddenly stopped his cheering.

The party broke up an hour after; many were the handshakings and protestations of undying friendship, but the Reverend Butcher Gammone could not fail to see that the young ladies, one and all, were not so friendly or cordial as before.

How the reverend gentleman managed to make his peace with his long and cruelly deserted wife, is not known, but he did; for in due time she appeared amongst them, tall, pale, and calm, beautifully dressed, which set off her elegant figure to perfection.

She certainly was a very fine and charming woman, and greatly admired; but from the hour she entered her husband's house he got no more worked slippers or braces, and his presents of game fell off considerably.

Still he was the pet curate, and people came far and wide to hear him; but there was one in his parish which he feared above all others, who never entered his church again, and that was Alice; she used to drive to another three miles off in her little pony-chaise.

Her non-attendance at the parish church was generally remarked, and people set it down that, being so friendly with the curate as she had been, she was indignant and jealous at not being invited to his afternoon party; but he knew better, and was ever most polite in raising his hat when they met, and his wife constantly called at Thorley Farm—in fact, Mrs. Gammone took more notice of Alice Lee than anyone else in the parish, much to the disgust of the upper ten; but she was so gentle and unassuming that nothing could be said, and the curate's wife was as popular as ever, as well as her husband.

But matters were not to go on so smoothly; there came to reside in the neighborhood a small family that had lived at St. Servan, and it gradually came out that Mr. Gammone had deserted his wife there; but as this family did not move in the first circles, it did not much matter.

But as time went on the reverend gentleman, finding that his callers were gradually falling off, went boldly to work, took the bull by the horns, and told every one that he knew what had been said about him, and also the people who had spread the wicked and malicious reports, and that they themselves had run away from France without paying their debts which was a fact.

By this judicious stroke he not only cleared himself, but put the others in for it. The tradesmen got shy and suspicious, would only give short credit, and pressed for payment, this, coupled with a hint from the curate that they were a bad lot who never paid any one, settled them in the parish, and one day they were *non est*, and the curate had it all to himself again.

But he was in too populous a neighborhood to be safe, people were constantly going and coming, and once or twice he very narrowly escaped being recognized—so thinking discretion the better part of valour, managed an exchange, with fifty pounds a year to the good, and wended his way down into Cornwall with all his belongings, close to the place where the Brutons were settled.

There he felt comparatively safe, and as

separating, they would have a stirrup-cup in the shape of egg-flip, which the house was famous for. The landlord of the "Hand and Spear" was a horsey man himself, he had been the Honorable Hugh Welcher's stud-groom, but though the Honorable Hugh managed to do a pretty good thing in the way of betting, yet with his own horses he hardly ever managed to land a stake.

He, therefore, under the circumstances, thought it advisable to get rid in a quiet way of his *charge d'affaires*, which he did, but not before that worthy had filled his pockets at his master's expense. The "Hand and Spear" being at that time to let, Mr. Nobbleall took the business, good-will, and fixtures, and a capital thing he made of it. He bought and sold horses, lent money when it was safe and the security undeniable, attended race meetings, and made a book. Many and many a flyer came out of the pockets of his customers, for the landlord knew the latest state of the odds, and therefore had the pull of the farmers and yeomen who frequented his house.

On a Saturday night they generally mustered in great force, Pastern was one of the few Mr. Nobbleall did not attempt to bleed; he was not so easily caught. A very wary customer was Mr. Pastern; if it had not been for his indomitable laziness and fondness of liquor, he was by no means a bad servant in his particular walk; he knew when a horse was in condition, and he knew how to make him and how to keep him so.

"It's a pity, Pastern," remarked the landlord, as he and about twenty others sat in the blue parlour, each puffing at his "yard of clay," which filled the room with a dense cloud of smoke, so thick as to render the figures on the other side of the room hardly distinguishable, and made one imagine that they were in a London November fog—"it's a pity you have not a horse to prepare for these steeple-chases; suit you a deal better than driving the Colonel and his missis about,—more your form, eh?"

"I should think it was," returned Pastern, "but some people don't know when they are well off. Now there's my Lady Verriest, she runs two for the Ladies' Cup. Who was the most likely to put her horses in fettle—I who've 'ad 'em under my 'ands and knows their constitution, or the chap that is a training of 'em; galloping and galloping, a-taking all the steel out of 'em, and making 'em stale? Now let us see how many of 'em are fit. There's two from the Mount. Two Mrs. Allsnob runs, they will be as fit—as fit as attention, good feeding, and proper work can make them—that will be four; one of Lady Mary Slyfox's, five; one of Lady Lavender's, six; Miss Dutehill sends her old elephant, seven; Miss Thornhill's Sultan, eight; Mrs. Conyers's, nine, and four a-coming from the next 'unt—thirteen in all. Well, I can't say anything about the last four, because I knows nothing about 'em. I hear they ain't much, but out of the nine from our 'unt there will be only four fit; and these will be Mrs. Allsnob's two, Miss Thornhill's, and Mrs. Conyers's. He's a rare hand at a horse is Mr. Blake. I don't know what Allsnob would do without him; but there's one quite as good, and a more patient rider of the two, and that is young Mr. Thornhill. It's a pity he is so ill and cannot get up. It would be a treat to see 'im and Mr. Blake at the finish; there will be some good 'ands up; but the match of the meeting will be Duffer's and Bluster's."

"Who do you think will be the best man of the two, Mr. Pastern?" asked a pad-groom, deferentially.

"I think, sir," said Pastern, throwing himself back in his chair, stretching out his legs, and sending out a volume of smoke, "I think, sir, they will both come to grief. If either of the muffs have a pull over the other, I consider Mr. Bluster as the call. What do gentlemen like them know about racing or steeple-chasing? And now I am on the subject and I see a lot of young 'uns about me, I will, with my friend Nobbleall's permission, just tell you in as few words as possible what I think of 'oss racing in general. It's a humbug and robbery."

"No, no," exclaimed several, "not so bad as that, Mr. Pastern."

"I say it is," resumed that individual. "It's just this; many gentlemen are born to large fortunes, or comes into them; nothing will do but they must go into 'oss racing, of which they know nothing more than—Duffer or Bluster; they won't be content with two or three 'unters, and 'ave a day with the 'arriers, or what not, but they must 'ave race 'osses or steeple-chase 'osses, and send 'em to crack 'ands to be trained; 'praps you don't know what trainers' bills are."

There's many of 'em as would sell you for a five pound note. 'Oss racing is a wheel within a wheel, but if you will bet, and my friend Nobbleall will tell you the same, if you will pile the agony on, always follow the money; but chaps with no means puts on their half-crowns, or half quids, loses and gets into trouble—the footman steals the silver plate or pawns it to meet his engagements, and clerks and shopmen's 'ands oftentimes find their way into their master's till. Now with steeple-chasing, and where there are gentlemen riders up, mind ye, gentlemen riders—none of yer half-and-half swells, but the genuine article who are above bribery, buttered gammon, and don't bet, it's all well and good, and that's where the Wareheel steeple-chases will be clippers—no professional are allowed, and every race will be ridden on the square, and from end to end; but talking of the turf—as the turf, it's a bosh and a delusion. There, my boys, now you 'ave my idea on 'oss racing. Give me another four-pennyworth, Nobbleall, I'm as dry as a limekiln."

"Right you are, Pastern," said mine host, "and I agree with all you 'ave said; but you have forgotten to state that some of the swells are just as slippery as their trainers and jocks, and that when a horse is fit to go for his life, he is scratched, the trainer sold, and very often a stable put in the hole, when it could have pulled through and with lots to spare. Pastern has given you the correct tip; Miss Thornhill's Sultan, Mrs. Allsnob's two, and Mrs. Conyers' will be there or thereabout; back them for win or a place and you can't go wrong."

"I'll just tell you a circumstance that happened when I was a stable lad. There was as nice a young gent as ever you see; he was but three or four and twenty, and he lived with an aunt, whilst she was alive, and he could not handle the coin, except what she allowed him; it was all right, and he was as quiet and steady as need be; he was fond of shooting, and a rare good shot he was, he had his couple of hunters, and all he wanted in reason. The old lady dies and leaves him everything, fifteen hundred a year and the estate. Well, Master Jack goes up to London, and presently there comes down a rumor he had gone into racing, which turned out to be correct; he won one or two stakes, then he increased his stud and made a book; that cooked him, for he dropped heavily on his first Two Thousand. Then he made a heavier one for the Derby, which he pulled off, but lost it all again on the Leger, and so he went on from year to year; by-and-by the estate was sold, and then he went ahead again for a time, but at last he was entirely ruined; trainers sold him, jockeys sold him, and men that owned him money sold him. There was imprisonment for debt in those days, but he was too plucky to hide away from 'em, so he invited all his creditors to come to his place one day, to take a receipt in full of all he owed them—well they came over rejoiced to think he was right."

"I'm sure Mr. —," says one of the creditors, "we should never have pressed you, we knew you would be all right one day or other."

"How can you say so?" says the poor fellow. "Why you are the very one who has been hunting me the most. You have a writ out against me."

"That is true, sir, but it has not been put in force."

"But it would have, if I had gone out; the very instant I put my nose out of the door, the sheriff's officers would have me; there they are on the opposite side of the street now."

"Well, sir," says the other, looking red and ashamed, "there is no need of them now you are going to do the proper thing."

"Who told you I was going to do the proper thing?" asked the other, savagely. "I invited you all to come here to take a receipt in full, and here it is." There was a bang and the brains flew up to the ceiling and about the walls; he fell stone dead; they said it was a horrible sight. My governor who was there was terribly cut up—he owned him a pot full of money; but he said he would rather have lost it ten times over than it should have happened. Now these steeple-chases are amongst friends, and quite a different thing. I attend races and bet, because I know how to, but I never go heavily to work. No man ever heard of me laying the odds. I can't afford to do that for the sake of making a foundation for my book. I take the odds when I know it to be safe, long or short, it's all the same to me."

"You think then Miss Thornhill's Sultan has a good chance," asked one.

and the race you'll see will lie between those four I have named, for condition will tell in the country they will have to go over, as well as in any other country. If Mr. Charles puts a good man up on his cousin's horse, which he is certain to do, 'Sultan' will be near about winning it; for he is a splendid fencer, a sticker, a fine turn of speed, and well-bred. I've heard Mr. Blako say over and over again he is the best horse they ever had in their stable, and that is saying a good deal, for a bad one never finds room there. It's a country as will try the metal of men and horses, the jumps are big and some of the going is very heavy, but its nothing more than good hunters ought to be able to do. Then the prize is worth having; a two hundred guinea cup is something to have on one's sideboard. And the second horse will not do so badly either with entrance money, there is no half forfeit, five guineas each, P.P. No, the sixty-five guineas will not go begging, for every horse you may depend will be ridden out—there, I've done."

The following Sunday, as Colonel Downey and his wife had gone to Harrogate for a few days, Pastern resolved to take a round and see what was going on. Saddling his master's celebrated "Jim Crow," he rode leisurely over to Lord Verriest's.

"Ah, there you are, 'ow are you?" he said, as he espied his Lordship's old groom. "I've just ridden over to give the Colonel's 'oss a little exercise, or he will be too much for him, they come 'ome the day after to-morrow; 'ow are the nags?"

"Nicely, Mr. Pastern. Come and have a look at your old friends. The one my Lady first had, not the one my Lord gave her, is as fit as a fiddle; the other one is coming on, but is a little to full in flesh yet."

Pastern had a look at the horses, walked through the stable, walked into some October ale, talked big, and then walked off. He visited Captain Slyfox's and Lord Lavender's, saw the horses, found out what work they were doing, and then rode over to Squire Conyers'; there the men were away and he could hear or see nothing. He then wended his way to Mr. Thornhill's, and found one of the grooms there asleep by his harness-room fire, with "Bell's Life" on the floor beside him.

"Why it's Mr. Pastern," said the man, as he woke up from the slap on the shoulder he received. "Dashed if I've not been asleep I bring a chair near the fire, it's uncommon chilly, there's no one here but myself; the coachman and all of 'em are gone to afternoon church, except Mr. Charles; he is lying down, I believe, for he has not quite so well to-day."

"I can't stop very long," replied Pastern, "I've been round looking at all the 'osses, some of 'em are uncommon fit. I mean those that are going for the Ladies' Cup; 'ow is your going on?"

"Very tidy, Mr. Pastern. Mr. Charles says he is as fit as can be made, he was in prime condition when he came to us; a little loaded about the shoulders, but that is all off, he is fit to run for a man's life."

"Glad to hear it, I'm sure, John; who do you think will be put up?"

"That I can't say; Mr. Charles is very close, but he says there will be a good hand on him."

"Well, I should like to have a look at the horse, John."

"What?" exclaimed the man, "look at our horse—look at Sultan! Why, Mr. Pastern, it would be more than my place is worth, even if I had the power to show you, which I have not. Mr. Charles keeps the key of the box to himself; it is a large stake the horse is going for, and one can't be too particular, you know. I never see a gentleman more anxious than he is about this horse, and bar accidents I think we shall pull it off; but here comes the governor, it must be feeding time, what a thundering long while I must have slept."

"No, Mr. Pastern," said Charlie, in answer to his question, "I am sorry I cannot show you Sultan, I promised Miss Thornhill no one should see him; but this I can tell you, he is well and fit, and if, as you say, you are going to lay out a little money, I do not think you can do better than back him for win or a place."

"Much obliged to you, Mr. Thornhill, I am sure," replied Pastern. "It's all very well backing an undeniable good 'oss, and your 'oss is all that;—but then it's money thrown away if a muff is put up. Now Mrs. Allsnob's brother will ride one of her horses, and Major Rasper the other. Mr. Conyers's nephew, young Mr. Greenway, will ride Mrs. Conyers's, he is a fine horseman is the young