

"But, papa——" began the girl.

"Hold your tongue ; if you are too great a coward to ride, say so, and stop at home."

Georgie turned very white, and set her lips hard.

"I am no coward, as you know," she said, below her breath, and then sat down and poured herself out a cup of tea with a trembling hand, and began nibbling a bit of dry toast.

No more was said.

The horses came round to the door.

Standing on the doorstep, ready to mount, Georgie turned round and made one last appeal to her father.

"Let me have the chestnut just for to-day, papa," she said entreatingly.

The Squire buttoned his gloves in silence, with a frown on his brow, before he answered her. The whole thing, he said to himself, was a plant—just a dodge for that good-for-nothing young pauper to set his own daughter against him—if he did not make a stand now at once, there would be no end to this sort of thing.

"Let me have the chestnut," pleaded Georgie once more. He looked at her for one minute, angrily, and then said, shortly, "No !"

Georgie put her hand on the pommel and her foot in Davis's outstretched hand, and vaulted lightly on to the brown mare's back.

"You see she goes quietly enough," said her father, when they had gone for some little way along the road, and the mare had shown no signs of misbehaviour.

"We are not off yet !" answered Georgie, with a smile. And then she made an effort to talk about the weather and the state of the ground, as if nothing untoward had passed between them.

She shook off her vague apprehensions, which, after all, did not amount to nervousness, and with the fresh air and the pleasant exercise her spirits came back, and her vexation wore off.

She was too good a horsewoman to be in reality in the least afraid. If it had not been her lover who had warned her, she would probably have laughed at the warning she had received. After all, thought Georgie, rousing herself from her depression with an effort, with such good nerve, and such a firm seat as she had, and so accustomed as she was to ride every sort of animal, there could

not be much risk for her, whatever bad qualities her horse might have.

By the time they had reached the "King's Head," a wayside public-house where the meet was to be held, she was too busy greeting friends, congratulating everybody on the thaw, discussing the chance of foxes, and the possibilities of a run, to think very much of Wattie's letter and its warning.

Juliet Blair was not out—a fact which Georgie was sorry for, as she had not seen her for some days ; but there were plenty of men to crowd round and talk to her, for her well-known splendid riding secured her many admirers in the hunting-field.

There were no carriages full of ladies and no dawdling at the meet on this occasion—strict business was attended to.

The covert was drawn, a fox soon found, and then—off and away !

The brown mare behaved well during the early part of the day. True, she was somewhat fresh and excitable ; she kicked at starting, refused once or twice, and bucked in a manner which would have unseated a less perfect rider ; but, on the whole, she was not at all unmanageable in Georgie's strong little hands.

The afternoon was drawing in when, just as the Squire was thinking of bringing the day's sport to a close, a fresh fox was started, and the hounds set off at a good pace straight in the direction of Sotherne Court.

The Squire and Sir George Ellison were riding side by side well in front ; only seven of the field were left, following close on the hounds, when straight in front of them, crossing their line at right angles, with her head well down and her tail up, shot the brown mare at a terrible pace, Georgie, with teeth set, sitting like a rock, but having evidently lost all control over her.

"All right !" she shouted back, as she passed, turning her head for one instant in the direction of her father.

"That mare has bolted with your daughter, Travers," said Sir George.

"She's all right—she knows what to do," said the Squire, looking after her a little anxiously, but keeping on his own way after the hounds.

And a momentary wish passed through his mind that Wattie Ellison were there to go and see after her.

A groom with a second horse was following a little way behind. The Squire turned