BLACK

A Story of Punchestown Races.

CHAPTER XXIX.

UNDIVIDED.

(Continued.)

" About to-morrow, now," said Bill. "I'vo got Martingale to do my orderly. Are you game for a day with the stag?'

"Will a duck swim i" was the answer.
"North is coming too. I shall mount her on Boneen ; he's own brother to the little horse that bent our mare at Punches-

"Couldn't do better in that country, asserted his friend. "Ho'll carry her like a bird, if she'll wake him up a bit, and it's simply impossible to get him down. By Jove, Hatsy, there's St. Josephs going into the Club. How seedy he looks, and how old I Hang me, if I won't offer him a mount tomorrow. I wonder if he'll come?"

So this kind-hearted young sportsman, in

whose opinion a day's hunting was the pan-acea for all ills, mental or bodily, followed his senior into the morning-room, and proffered his best horse, with the wining Treakness of manner that his friends found it impossible to resist.

"Ho's good enough to carry the Commander-in Chief," said Bill. "I've more than I can ride till I get my long leave. I should be so proud if you'd have a day on him; and if he makes a mistake, I'll give him to you. There I'

St. Josephs was now on the eve of departure for the employment he had solicited. While his outlit was preparing, the time hung heavy on his hands, and he had done co many kindnesses by this young subaltern that he felt it would be only graceful and friendly to accept a favor in return, so he assented willingly, and Bill's face glowed

"Don't be late, said he. "Nine o'clock train from Euston. Mind you get into the drop-carringe, or they il take you on to the Shiros. I'll join you at Willesden. And if we don't have a real clinker, I'll makea vow never to go hunting again."

Then he departed on certain errands of his own connected with the pugilistic art, and the General reflected sadly how it was a quarter of a century since he used to feel as keen as that rockless light hearted

He waited on high authorities at the War office, dined with the field-marshal, and, through a restless inglit, dreamed of Satanella, for the first time since her disappear-

A foggy November morning, and a lame horse in the cab that took him to Euston Station did not serve to raise his spirits. But for Bills authorations of "a clinker," and the disappointment he knew it would cause that enthusiast, the General might have turned back to spend one more day in vam broading and regret. Arrived on the platform, however, he got into a large saloon earriage, according to directions, and found himself at once in the midst of so checiful a party that he felt it impossible to resist the fan and merriment of the hour.

St. Josephs was too well known in general society not to find acquaintances even here. though he was hardly prepared to meet representatives of so many pursuits and professions, booted and spurred for the chase, and judging by the ceaseless banter they interchanged,

" All determined to ride, each resolved to be

Soldiers, sailors, diplomatists, bankers, lawyers, artists, authors, men of pleasure, and men of business, holding daily papers they nover looked at, wore all talking across each other, and laughing incessantly, while en- joinder. "If you through at one end of the carriage sat the I'll be before ye." hest sportsman and most popular momber of the assemblage, whose opinions, like his horses, carried great weight, and were of as unflinching a nature as his riding, so that he was esteemed a sort of president in jackunflinching a nature as his riding, so that he had been enlarged.

was esteemed a sort of president in jack.

With a wild leap in the air, as though reboots. Opposite him was placed pretty Irish joicing in its recovered liberty, the animal
Norah, now Mrs. Walters, intersely excited started off at speed, but in the least favorable y her first appearance at what she called "an English Bunt," while she imparted to Daisy, in a mellower brogue than usual, very original ideas on things in general, and especially on the country through which they were now flying at the rate of forty miles an

"It's like a garden where it's in tillage, and a croquet-lawn where it's in pasture," and Norah after a gracious recognition of the General, and cordial greeting to Bill, who was bundled in at Willesden, panting, with his spurs in his hand. "Ah! now, Paisy. at the whin noor Romen will be

horse that knows its rider is everything in the Vale."

Norah looked into the speaker's dark eyes with a quaint smile.

"Ah, then I if the horse wasn't wiser than the rider," said she, " it's not many leaps any of us would take without a fall !" and in the laughter provoked by this incontestable assertion, a slight jerk announced that their carriage was detached from the train, and they had arrived.

Though it requires a long time to settle a lady in the saddle for hunting, even when in the regular swing of twice or thrice a week, and though Norah was about to enjoy her first galloy of the season in a new habit, on a little bewildered by the pace. Taking in new horse, she and Daisy had ample leisure for a sober ride to the place of meeting, arriving cool and calm, pleased with the weather, the scenery, the company, and, above all delighted with Boncon.

They were accompanied by the General on a first-class hunter belonging to Bill, and soon overtaken by its owner, who, having lingered behind to jump a four-year-old over a tempt-up, as shoulted in it is ear, "Norah, that's ing stile for educational purposes, had Miss Douglas !"
crushed a new hat, besides daubing his coat Whether she

in the process.
"Down already?" said St. Josephs. "What happened to him? What did he fresher with the whip.

"Rapped very hard," answered Bill; "found his friend at home, and went in without waiting to be announced;" but he patted the young pupil on its neck, and promised to teach it the trade before Christmas, nevertheless. Certainly, if practice makes perfect, no man should have possessed a stud of cloverer fenc is than Soldier Bill.

And now, as she reached the summit of a grassy ascent, there broke on Norah's vision so extensive and beautiful a landscape as elicited an exclamation of amazement and delight.

Mile after mile, to the dim grey horizon stretched a sweep of smooth wide pastures, intersected by massive hedges, not yet bare of their summer luxuriance, dotted by lofty standard trees, rich in the gaudy hues of autumn, lit up by flashes of a winding stream that gleamed here and there under the willows with which its banks were fringed. Enclosures varying from fifty to a hundred acres, gave promise of as much galloping as the heart of man, or even woman could sire. And scanning those fouces the Irish lady admitted to herself, though not to her companions, that from a distance they looked as formidable obstacles as any she had

confronted in Kildare. "It's beautiful," said Norah. "It's made on purpose for a hunt. Look, Daisy, there's the hounds! Oh, the darlings! And little Boncen, he sees them, too!"

Gathered round their huntsman, a wiry, sporting looking man on thoroughbred bay horse, they were moving into sight from behind a hay-stack that stood in a corner of the neighboring field. Rich in color, beautiful in shape, and with a family likeness pervading the lot as if they were all one litter, a fox-hunter would have gradged them for the game they were about to pursue—a noble red deer, in so far tame, that he was fed in the paddock, and brought to a condition that the sport reminded North of her country-

longer," said the General, lighting a cigar. handled Boneen. That good little horse, "Here comes the master, at a pace as if bred and trained in Ireland, seemed to comthe mare that landed him the Thousand limits to activity of a cat with the sagacious Guineas, the Oaks, and the St. Leger, had been made a cover-hack for the occasion !"

"With the Derby-winner of the same year, for second horse!" added her husband. "If you want a pilot, Norah, you couldn't do

Even while she spoke a stir throughout the whole cavalcade, and a smothered shout from the foot-people announced that the decr

direction it could have taken, heading towards the ascent on the side of which the horsemen and a few carriages were drawn up. Then slackening its pace to a jerking, springing trot-paused-changed its mindlowered its head—dashed wildly down the hill to disappear through a high bull-finch, and after a few seconds came again into view, travelling swift and straight across the vale.

The General smoked quietly, but his eye brightened, and he seemed ten years younger for the sight.

"It's all right now", said he; " the sooner they lay them on the better."

where ladies were concerned. "A wise place under a tree, the General sailing fairly over all, and Bill, unable to resist the templation of a gap, made up with four strong rails, getting to the right side with a scramble, that wanted very little of a nasty

> The hounds were already a quarter of v mile ahead with nobody near them but a lady on a black hunter, who was well alongside, going, to all appearance, perfectly at her ease; while her groom, on a chestnut horse, left hopelessly behind, rode in the wake of

the General, and wished he was at home. overything at a glance, he observed the black hunter in front sail easily over a fonce that few horces would have looked at. There was no mistaking the style and form of the animal. "Of course it is!" he muttered. "Satanella, by all that's inexplicable! Wo

Whether she heard him or not, the only answer Mrs. Walters youchsafed was to lean back in her saddle and give Boncen a re-

Unlike a fox, whose reasons are logical and well-considered, a deer will sometimes turn at right angles for no conceivable cause, pursuing the new line with as much speed and decision as the old.

In the present instance the animal, after leaping a high thorn fence with two ditches, broke short off in a lateral direction, under the very shadow of the hedge it had just cleared, and, at the pace they were going, the hounds, as a natural consequence, overran the scent.

minute. The President, two fields off, struggling hard to get nearer, was perhaps the only man who suffice ntly appreciated their steadiness. Like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, " he blessed them unaware." Bill. I fear, did the other thing, for the fence was so high he never saw them turn, and jumped well into their midst, happily without doing any damage.

This slight delay, however, had the effect of bringing Daisy, his wife, Soldier Bill, and the General auto the same field with Miss Douglas. She heard the footfall of their horses, looked round, and set the black mare going faster than before, If, as indeed seemed probable, she was resolved not to be overtaken, the pack, streaming away at sp ed once more, served her purpsse admirably. No horse alive could catch them; and Satanella herself seemed doing her best to keep on tolerable terms at that terrific pace. The majority of the field had already been hopelessly distanced. The General found even the superior animal he rode fail somewhat in the deep-holding meadows. Bill was in difficulties, although he had religiously adhered to the shortest way. Even Daisy began to wish for a pull, and only could tax the speed and endurance even of little Boneen, quite thorough-bred, and as this famous pack. The animal had already good as he was sluggish, seemed to keep galloping on, strong and full of running as at arrived in a large van on wheels, drawn by galloping on, strong and full of running as at pair of horses, and surrounded by a levee of the start. For more than a mile our friends gaping rustics, whose cagerness and love for proceeded with but a slight alteration in their relative positions—Satanella, perhaps, gradually leaving her followers, and the men on the other side of the Channel.

"Will they let him out here, Daisy?" hounds drawing away from all nye. In the said she, in accents of trembling exception that day was wait trated, and a fair brook cleared. Daisy, look-trated, and a fair brook cleared. ing back in some anxiety, could not but ad-"Your patience will not be tried much mire the form in which Norah roused and instincts of a dog. Like all his blood, he only left off being lazy when his companions began to feel tired; and Mrs. Walters, coming up with her husband, as they rose the hill from the waterside, declared, though he better than stick to him, heavy as he is !"

"I mean to follow you, sir," was the rejoinder. "I you don't mind Daisy, maybe as Punch! He'd like to pull like hefore re" hard, only ho's such a good boy he dosen't know how !"

Bill's horse dropped its hind legs in the brook, and fell, but was soon up again with its rider. The General got over successfully; nevertheless, his weight was beginning to tell, and the ground being now on the ascent. he found himself the last of the five people with the hounds.

At the crest of the hill frowned a black, forbidding-looking bull-finch: on this side a strong rail; on the other, if a horse ever got there, the uncertainty, which might or might not, culminate in a rattling fall. Daisy glanced auxiously to right and laft, on his wife's behalf, but there was no forgiveness. They must have it, or go home! Then he watched how the famous black mare would acquit hersef a hundred yards ahead of him, and felt little reassured to detect such a struggle in the air while she topped the fence, as by no means inferred a pleasant landing

light as a fairy, Daisy, I'm sure I heard him augh !"

Mrs. Walters, like most of her nation, abounded in enthusiasm. She could not forbear a little cry of delight at the panorama that opened before her, when she had effected the above-mentioned feat. To the very horizon lay stretched a magnificent vale of pasture, brightened by the slanting rays of November sun. Far ahead, fleeting across the level below, sped a dark object, she recognised for the deer; a field nearer were the hounds, running their hardest, in astring that showed they too had caught sight of their game. Half-way down the hill she was herself descending, the other lady was urging the black mare to head-long speed, very dangerous on such a steep incline. Filty yards behind Satanella, came Daisy, and close on his heels, Norah, wild with delight, feeling a strong inclination to give Boneen his head, and go by them all. The little horse, however, watched his stable companion narrowly, while his rider's eyes were riveted on the hounds. Suddenly she felt him shorten his stride and stop, with a jerk, that nearly shot her out of the saddle. Glancing at Daisy, for an explanation, she screamed aloud, and covered her face with her hands.

When she looked again, she was aware of her husband's horse staring wildly about with the bridle over its head; of Daisy himself on foot, and, a few yards off, the good black mare prostrate, motionless, rolled up in a confused and hideous mass with her hapless rider.

Down hill, at racing pace, Satanella had put her fore-feet through a covered drain, with the inevitable result—the surface gave way, letting her in to the shoulders, and a he hounds, as a natural consequence, over-an the scent.

Miss Douglas pulled up her horse, and did

those strong, fleet limbs again.

crushed it sorely, shouted for assistance to Soldier Bill and the General, who at that moment entered the field together.

I trust in beaven not !"he replied aloud; and, below his breath, even while his heart smote him for the thought, "It might have been worse. My darling, it might have been you!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BITTER END.

It was indeed a sad sight for those joyous riders, exulting but a moment before, in all the triumph and excitement of their gallop. Saddest and most pitiable for the General. thus to find and recognise the woman he had loved and lost. While they took her gently out from under the dead mare's carcase, she groaned feebly, and they said, "Thank God!" for at least there seemed left a faint spark of life. Assistance, too, was near at hand. As Norah observed, "'Twasn't like Kildare, where ye wouldn't have seen a shealing or may be so much as a petatogarden for miles! But every farm here was kept like a domain, and they'd built a dwelling-house almost in every field !" Within a short distance stood the comfortable mansion, surrounded by its well-stocked fold-vards, of a substantial yeoman; and Bill, with two falls, was there in two minutes! A few of the second flight also, persevering resolutely on the line the bounds had gone, straggled up and did good service. What became of the field, and where the deer was taken, none of these had opportunity to ascertain. All their energies, all their sympathies, were engrossed by that helpless, motionless form, that beautiful rigid face, so wan and white, beneath its folds of glossy raven hair.

Carrying her softly and carefully on a gate to her place of sheater, it looked as if they formed a funeral procession, of which the

General seemed chief-mourner. His bearing was stern and composed, his step never faltered, nor did his hand shake; but he who wrestled with the angel of old, and prevailed against him, could scarcely have out-done this loving, longing heart in earnestness of purpose and passionate plead-

ing of prayer.

"But once more!" was his petition.

"Only that she may know me, and look on me once more!" And it was granted.

For two days Blanche Douglas never spoke

nor stirred. Mrs. Walters constituted herself heed nurse, and never left her pillow. The General remained the whole time at the threshold of her chamber.

The surgeon, a country practitioner of high repute, who saw her within an hour of her aecident, committed himself to no opinion by word or sign, but shook his liead despondingly the moment he found himself alone. The famous London doctor, tolegraphed for at once, preserved an ominous silence. He, too, getting into the fly

"She has just asked for you," whispered Norah. "Go to her—quick! God bless your, General! Try and bear it like a man l'

The room was very dark. Ho stole softly to her bedside, and felt his fingers clasped in the familiar clinging touch once

Her voice came, very weak and low. "The poor mare !" she said; " is she much hurt? It was no fault of hers."

He must have answered, and told her the truth without knowing it; for she proceeded more feebly than before.

Both of us! Then it's no use. I was going to give her to you, dear, and ask you to take care of her for my sake. Have you
—have you forgiven?"
"Forgiven!" His failing accents were

even less stendy than her own.

" I vexed you drendfully," she continued. "I was not good enough for you. I see it all; and if it could come again, I would never leave you—never! But I did it for the best. I took great pains to hide myself away down here; but I'm glad. Yes, I'm very glad you found me out at last. How dark it is! Don't let go my hand. Kiss me, my own! I know now that I did love you dearly-far better than I thought."

The feeble grasp tightened, stronger, stronger yet. The standows fell, the night came down, and a pale moon threwits ghostly light into the chamber. But the face he loved was fixed and gray now, the hand he still clasped was still and cold in death.

The General carried to India a less soro heart, perhaps, than he had expected. There was no room left for the gnawing anxiety, the bitter sense of humiliation, the persistent struggle against self, that distressed and troubled him in his previous relations with her he had loved so dearly, and lost so cruelly even in the hour she became his own. Miss Douglas pulled up her horse, and did not interfere. There being, fortunately, roon to assist them, they flung themselves beautifully, swinging back to the line and taking it up again with scarcely the loss of a minute. The President, two fields off, struging much on its locality, he cherisned an ardent hope that soon he might follow to the place where she had gone before. None hould come between them there, he thought, and they need never part again.

Soldier Bill and Daisy saw the last of him when he left England; the former rather envied every one who was bound for a sphere in which there seemed a possibility of seeing real service, the latter comparing his senior's lonely life and blighted hopes with his own happy lot, felt a humbler, a wiser, and a

better man for the contrast. Mrs. Walters, though losing none of her good nature and genial Irish humor, became more staid in manner, altogether more matronly; and through she went out hunting on occasions, certainly rode less boldly than before the catastrophe. Her sister Mary, however came over to stay with her about this time, kept up the family credit for daring, and would have taken Bill's heart by storm if she had not won it already with the fearlessness she displayed in following him over the most formidable obstacles. After a famous day on Boneen, when she bustled that key little gentleman along in a manner that perfectly electrified him, Bill could hold out no longer, but placed himself, his fortunes, Catamount, and Benjamin, at her disposal. All these she was good enough to accept but the badger; and that odorous animal was compelled to evacuate his quarters in the wardrobe for a more suitable resi-

they were ma ried in London, and inaugurated the first day of their honeymoon by a quick thing with the Windsor drag-hounds.
Of Mrs. Lushington there is little more to be said. The sad fate of her former friend she accepted with the resignation usually displayed by those of her particular set in the face of such afflictions as do not immediately affect themselves and their pleasures. She vowed it was very sad, talked of wearing black—but didn't I and went out to dinner much as usual. Even Bessio Gordon showed more feeling, for she did cry when she heard the news, and appeared that night at a a ball with swollen red place under her nose. Many people asked what had become of Miss Douglas? The answer was usually something to

dence out of barracks, at a livery-stable. So

"Don't you remember? Painful business; shocking accident. Killed out hunting. Odd story; odd girl. Yes, handsome, but person of the story." culiar style !'

They buried the good black mare where she fell. Long before the grass was green over her grave, rider and horse had been very generally foorgotten. Yet in their own circle both had created no small sensation in their time. But life is so far like the chase, that it admits of but little leisure for hesitation; none whatever foregret. How should we over get to the finish if we must needs stop to pick up the fallen, or to mourn for the dead?

In certain kind and faithful hearts, however, it is but justice to say the memory of that hapless pair remains fresh and vivid as on the day of their fatal downfall.