

TILBURY NOGO.

[CONTINUED.]

"Help!" spluttered the Doctor as he came to the surface, where, despite of my most strenuous endeavors, I found it impossible to detach him. "Help! Mr. Nogo! I shall be drowned! what a conclusion!" and leaving the horses to their fate, I scrambled up to the bank, and found my unfortunate friend standing up to his shoulders in water. For though the brook was of no great depth, it must be remembered that neither was the Doctor a man of colossal proportions, and I could not get him out; and the poor little man, what with cold and apprehension, was fast becoming more and more helpless. In this dilemma, it occurred to me that I had better begin to "holloa" with might and main, and at least take the chance of those buildings being inhabited which I felt confident I had seen. Accordingly I began to roar out, at the utmost pitch of my voice, the alarming cry of "Murder!—Murder!" accompanied, though in feeble tones, by the falsetto soprano of the chattering Doctor. Ere long I had the satisfaction of seeing lights distinctly glimmering at no great distance, and in the direction where I had before supposed there stood an inhabited house; and, as we redoubled our cries and exclamations, we were cheered by the tones of a gruff voice shouting, in accents of mingled anger and anxiety, "Where be ye?"—"We're a-comin'!"—"Here, Giles! Tummas! till a few more exclamations from the exhausted Doctor brought a powerful auxiliary to our rescue in the shape of a sturdy west-country farmer, accompanied by two ploughmen and a lantern; who, after much difficulty in finding out our actual position, and a somewhat prolonged dialogue exchanged between the rescuers on the bank and the sufferers in the bed of the stream—for in my efforts to extricate the Doctor I had myself got in up to the waist—succeeded in hauling us by main strength to "terre firma," where, with natural curiosity, he proceeded to inquire how we came into our present plight, and what train of events had produced the very unusual spectacle of two distinguished gentlemen, clad in hunting costume, standing waist-deep in water, towards

he was sure it was to be a run, how he had led the field over the five-foot wall! and distinguished himself when even Mr. Nogo's horse was bent! how he had preserved his presence of mind when on the point of destruction in the river at the back of the house, and how nothing but his extraordinary proficiency in swimming had preserved him from an untimely death—all this he told again, with a delight that, much as it amused our open-mouthed host, it was impossible for him not to share; and when, towards eight o'clock at night, Bill made his appearance with the lost hounds and the head and brass of the game fox, that they had gallantly accounted for, some twenty minutes after we had declined the chase, and that they had eaten in the dark, with no other witness than my undeniable young whipper-in, whose presence at the finish seemed little short of miraculous, the Doctor, whose triumph wanted but this culminating stroke, embraced us all round, with tears in his eyes, and, falling prostrate on the ground, was carried off to his dormitory, a Bacchanalian Nimrod, feebly struggling with his potatoes, and to the last endeavoring to describe to us how well he had been going all day, and the exact method in which Blueskin had jumped the wall, &c.

Lucky for my hounds, Bill, though not knowing the least where he was, had hit upon a cart track, which after many circuitous evolutions, at last led him to the very farm house we were occupying; and by ten o'clock men, hounds, and horses, snug and warm for the night, were enjoying that repose which an unusually severe day renders so grateful to man and beast. The last toast proposed by our hospitable entertainer, after we had disposed of the Doctor, was, "Success to fox hunting!" and I sought my welcome couch with the stentorian refrain of his jolly song, "Tally-ho the hounds, sir!" ringing in my ears. Nor was it without many a kind invitation to return, and many a hearty good wish, that he allowed us to commence our homeward journey on the morrow, jaded, stiff, and weary, but triumphant notwithstanding; though I am bound to confess that the Doctor had a splitting headache, and I myself was not without misgivings as to the sort of reception which, after "being absent without leave all night," I should experience from Mrs. Nogo.

CHAPTER XXVII.

They reached the hotel, forth streamed from the front door a tide of well-clad waiters and around the mob stood.

Don Juan.

And laughed, and blushed, and oft did say Her pretty oath by yes and nay She could not, would not, dars't not play. At length, upon the harp, with gleo,

found with what avidity she seized upon by my wife, I resolved—though sorely against my inclination—upon quitting Wild wood, selling the barrier, breaking up the establishment, and leaving the farm to take care of itself—a method that, at least, could not pay worse than the present one. No sooner had this course been decided on, than I had reason to admire my wife's professional foresight, in the immediate improvement which took place in my wife's health; and by the time our arrangements for departure were concluded, and Bath—that city of precipices—fixed upon as our temporary residence, she was so well, that for the life of me I could not perceive any reason why we should go away at all. However, it was too late to repent. The farm house was shut up, the furniture put away and covered, the stables deserted and desolate, with here and there a melancholy pookah propping the open door of some comfortless loose box—for I had sent on the three horses I determined to keep, that I might get a little hunting during my banishment. The kennels were cleaned and emptied, the very garden looked like a wilderness, and as the woman "left in possession," with soapy arms, and coarse apron crumpled round her skirt, made her farewell curtsey, and shut the front-door upon our departing carriage, I threw myself into the corner of the vehicle, and for the first time in my life felt very much disposed to quarrel with Mrs. Nogo, for the unfeeling state of high spirits in which she left her home.

What a contrast was it, after a few hours of travelling, to rattle up to the door of the White Rose Hotel, where we had determined to take up our abode until we could procure a suitable residence in the valetudinarian city of Bath! How the post-boy, conscious of the dignity in which these railroad days is attached to a real travelling carriage and appendages, boomed up his merriment, to stop dead-short with a jerk that nearly sent my nose through the front window! How the magnificent proportions of "James" and his cauliflower head struck dumb the throng of idlers, who are always ready to witness the descent of a private individual from his carriage! How the landlord attended Mrs. Nogo into his house, with a deference usually reserved for princesses of the blood; while the head-waiter—a privileged and plethoric individual in black silk shirt and gold knee-buckles—asked after my brother-in-law, Mr. Topthorne, and "hoped I had enjoyed good sport with my hounds!" How the ostlers and attendants without, and the chambermaid and boots within, all seemed to know me personally as a friend, and to revere me immeasurably as a superior; and how I hugged myself in the conviction that although I might have driven up to the door of the Clarendon, nor found that the name of Nogo commanded attention from one regardless functionary of that metropolitan establishment, yet my arrival at the "White Rose Hotel" had been heralded with all

physician," must prove a hopeless remedy. In vain to overlay that parched skin with paint, and plaster it with cosmetics; in vain to conceal that grizzled crop beneath those dark flowing ringlets, shorn from some guilty head, whose very beauty, perhaps, was the primary cause of the female convict's disgrace and punishment; as she minces down Milsom street, in shoes a "world too tight" for those lame and swollen feet, net all the charms of manner, not all the hypocrisy of dress, can conceal the unwelcome fact that the toast of long-forgotten revellers, the flower of days gone by, has shrivelled into an ugly old woman at last; but see with tottering step and bow of the old school (alas that its flexibility should be so damaged by chronic rheumatism!) a contemporary Damon staggers up to this antiquated Phylis, and in croaking tones they exchange greetings and inquiries, mutual compliments, and welcome bits of scandal, with an eagerness and a concern which prove how anxious they still are to retain their slippery foothold in society—how they are still gasping and struggling to stem "the tide, nor leave the word which leaveth them." And now, a fine old admiral, frank of countenance and bluff of bearing, but whose limbs, alas! "the bullets and the gout" have rendered incapable of supporting his jolly frame, is wheeled up in an invalid's chair, which, much to the danger of the toes of an inattentive public, he persists in steering himself, and joins these faded fashionables, to whom he forms a pleasing and instructive contrast. The living stream thus stemmed for an instant, rapidly accumulates its volume of idlers, and ere long the pavement is blocked up by the gossiping throng. A tall, handsome girl with bright sunny ringlets (such an one—so thinks ancient Phylis—as she herself was not so very long ago!), chaperoned by a stout lady, who is doubtless the mamma, forms an additional attraction to the group, and accounts by her presence for the number of young gentlemen who swell the conclave, and offer to the curious in costume an interesting study indeed. Various are the garments; and of a cut and texture seldom seen, save amongst their own immediate set. But the prevailing taste appears to be a habit in which the wearer, without the slightest inconvenience to himself, is prepared to jump into the saddle, and ride to London at a moment's notice. The noble animal, the horse, furnishes with his accoutrements the favorite ornaments of these his adorers. As the ladies of ancient Rome caused their jewels to be shaped into such talismanic forms as were best appreciated by those virtuous matrons, so does young England, in its outward adornment affect an equestrian style of decoration, which shall argue a corresponding taste within; and whilst a turquoise horseshoe fastens the folds of a cambric bosom, picked out with Derby winners, the snaffle connects his button-hole, the curb-

when brought to perfection by a skillful practitioner in the art of cookery? "I understand, Mr. Gibbon," said his anxious historian, "that you are a great gourmand!" "Pardon me, madam—I am only a great glutton!" was the discerning reply of him whose pen has rescued from oblivion the costly dishes of a Domitian, the luxurious banquets of a Nero. But without going quite so far as the candid confession of Mr. Gibbon, I am willing to concede that there are few corporeal enjoyments in this world superior to that of a good dinner, followed by a bottle of good wine, and all this properly consumed in agreeable society, and, if in winter, by a cheerful fire; but a sine qua non to the whole comfort of such an arrangement is, that digestion, which avowedly goes on best in a state of perfect repose, should not be interfered with by any labor or exertion whatever, whether of body or mind, and that the active duties of the day having been disposed of, the patient should be allowed to remain a certain number of hours undisturbed in his easy-chair, and only exchange that recumbent attitude for the more complete repose of his welcome couch. With these feelings, and these inclinations, can anything have been more disagreeable to me than the necessity of performing the duties of the toilette after dinner? To wash the post-prandial face in cold water—to imprison in starch and patent leather the well-fed frame, to whose swelling proportions a dressing-gown and slippers would be the most acceptable and appropriate costume—to exchange the cozy fireside, and the embraces of a roomy arm-chair, for the cold interior of a damp fly, and standing room amongst a crowd of people whom one don't know—and above all, to do this without the satisfaction of growling, and with a smiling face, as though it were one of the greatest pleasures of life to be thoroughly uncomfortable: if this is not domestic martyrdom, I should like to have a satisfactory definition of that very general infliction.

But, luckily, Bagshot's temporary home is but a few streets from the "White Rose"; and ere the jingling wretched fly has decomposed the muslin folds of Mrs. Nogo's well-chosen toilette, or shaken out one ringlet of her rich soft hair—and truth to say, I am somewhat proud of Mrs. N.'s taste in dress, and her magnificent "chevelure," in fact, I cannot conceal from myself the fact, which I think she has not yet discovered, that she looks "best of an evening"—we arrive at the place of our destination, and are admitted by a sober clerical-looking personage in black, hired for the occasion, who consigns us to the care of a pretty waiting-maid, in a wondrously-becoming cap, by whose dexterous assistance Mrs. Nogo is relieved of her ermine cloak and coverings, whilst I tie up travelling-cap and overcoat into a shapeless mass, and consign them to

water's night. "What to see ye, squire Nogo," said the hospitable yeoman, as he strode before us towards his farm, greedily listening to an explanation—"I said to see ye, even in such a plight as you. My men'll find your horses, I warrant, and hounds as well, and meantime, you're heartily welcome—and you too, sir. With which words, he ushered us into his ample, air-looking kitchen, where, a blazing fire, lighting up all the elegance of that most comfortable apartment, vividly suggested to us the kind ideas of supper, warm and accommodating, which but a few minutes before had seemed so utterly hopeless and unattainable. The host was in earnest, the business active, and the various orders, issued to be executed, and when, an hour afterwards, I stretched my legs beneath the farmer's hospitable fire, and surveyed the "world too wide" for my least proportions, I forgot my hounds, I forgot Bill, I forgot Mrs. Nogo, and making myself a steaming glass of hot gin and water, I had concluded to a plentiful repast of cold beef, hot eggs, and bacon, and the richness of some made butter and cheese, and the comfort of home-brewed ale—I pledged myself just with a lively perception of the necessity of all "symposiums," and a full satisfaction—that greatest of all human rest after labor, ease after anxiety, and a warm after external cold—in fine, pleasure after pain.

As for the Doctor, to use a common but forcible expression, there was "no holding him." I could say lost in the farthest of things, nothing much more ridiculous could be conceived than the little man, in his half-upholstered tumbler to his eye, and his eyesight lighted up with an enthusiasm that I might have sworn by such an occasion as the present Caesar after Actium. No sooner after Anstey's Wellington after Waterloo, a rare fair sample to typify that which the Doctor felt himself in a position to do, what was it to him that he had been probably lost? that Bill had been probably lost? that moment, bivouacked with a bird in the open moor? that he would unquestionably be

the honor, and the stay was likely to be prolonged to an indefinite length, and whose bill would bear due proportion, multiplying its items and increasing in its volume, as the termination of his journey was further and further postponed. "The bill of fare, sir—this morning," said the list of visitors at Bath, and I heard of appointments of the hounds, "whereof the fat waiter, as he entered our sitting room with all these important documents in his hands. "Like to see your apartments, madam," added an elderly and smartly dressed female, who had evidently made a capital race with the water up-stairs, and only been beaten at the post. "I trust you will find the suite of rooms I have prepared comfortable," continued the landlord, as, following on the heels of the tyrannical, he conducted us through a labyrinth of passages, and across spacious and stately halls, to the comfortable dormitories prepared for our reception. And here I leave Mrs. Nogo, in her glory, to arrange with James about bringing up cap-boxes, parcels, and imperials, and with her own Abigail and all the chambermaids, to discuss warning, airing, and unpacking, whilst I recede from the inextricable confusion to consult with my first friend, the fat waiter, as to ordering dinner, and afterwards to refresh my agitated mind with a stroll through the town. "There is no solitude like solitude in a crowd," but at the same time, few things are more amusing than to find one self suddenly dropped among a set of people, to all of whom one is unknown, and to be able as an unobserved observer to watch the habits, and study the peculiarities of these unconscious fellow-creatures. I knew nobody at Bath, and nobody knew me; and as I turned down Milsom street, at that hour in the afternoon the fashionable resort of all the distinguished individuals whose names I had perused in the Visitors' List at the White Rose, I felt the same sort of interest in remarking on the customs and manners of the aborigines, as if I had been a visitor in Paris, a stranger in St. Petersburg, a wayfarer in Warsaw, or a missionary swaggering down the principal

walking stick, supported with a representation (wrought in the precious metal) of that quadruped to whom certain cynics will opine the owner to be a first cousin once removed. What a relief to discover the honest, handsome countenance, to recognize the manly simplicity of dress which distinguishes my friend Joe Bagshot, amongst this bevy of second-rate dandies! His greeting is kind and cordial, as usual; he links his arm within mine, and soon in our multitude of confidences and inquiries we forget faded belles, superannated bucks, mutilated warriors, juvenile tigers, Milsom-street, Bath, and all but our own concerns and our own proceedings. Kate will be so glad to hear you have arrived!" says my friend; "come to us to-morrow evening at half-past eight. She has a sort of quiet 'at-home' in our small house. I cannot ask you to dinner, old fellow, for our cook gave up her place yesterday, because Kate objected to her wearing her hair in long ringlets—only don't say I told you that, but drop in to-morrow night, at any rate, before twelve, and bring Mrs. Nogo with you." And with these words—it being now lamp-light—my friend took leave of me on the steps of the "White Rose," and betook himself to his own home, and the society of his wife, who, I could not help suspecting, was a legitimate by no means adapted for my frank-hearted old schoolfellow. The whole of the ensuing day we spent in what Mrs. Nogo terms "settling"—a mysterious evolution, of which it is difficult to discuss the nature or the details. My own share of the performance was limited to an inspection of my stud, who had arrived the day before by the road, under the immediate custody of Bill, and had performed the journey with the usual loss of condition and swing of legs, inseparable from a cavalry career. Whilst I was feeling siney and jangling joints, terribly swelled by that unmerciful punishment the animal inflicts on a person, in what grooms term "luteal mass," I had to listen to a tisp of complaints from my master-of-the-horse, as to the commodation provided for himself and charge. Of course the water was hard, the coats kiln-dried, the hay must

hopes of ever seeing my property again. The house is small, though commodious; and ere I have settled myself well into my neck-cloth, and got a tight kid glove partly on my left hand, I find myself following my better half into Mrs. Bagshot's pretty little drawing-room, and, as I shake hands with my smiling hostess, admiring for the hundredth time the nameless fascination of her manner, and the admirable taste of her "get-up." I confess myself to be a shy man—one of those unhappy individuals who, with a constant hankering after the pleasures of society, suffer torments only known to the diffident, under the gaze of their fellow-creatures, and dissemble with Spartan fortitude the pain inflicted on them by the casual observations which well-meaning neighbors address to those who are so obviously ill-at-ease with themselves. At a London party an immediate refuge presents itself in the vortex of the crowd, who, jammed together in a half-suffocated mass, neither know nor care for any other consideration than the facility of obtaining "the carriage," in order to go through the same martyrdom elsewhere. But here, in Bath, no such protraction was afforded by the contracted circle that comprised the elite of that city; and small as was Mrs. Bagshot's drawing-room, it was not half full. Mrs. Nogo, who suffered as little from bashfulness as any other lady of a certain age (and it is curious to observe at how early a period the fair sex outgrow this weakness), was soon comfortably established as the centre of a small group of admirers—evidently old acquaintances; and chiefly of high military and naval rank, as indeed, from the obvious length of their services, they deserved to be. My friend Joe was busy making the agreeable to an elderly lady, adorned with a curious superstructure on her head, who, I concluded, was either his aunt, or an intimate friend of that important relative, and I had ample leisure, as I sipped the cup of weak tea offered me by the temporary butler—whose countenance I have since recognized at all the entertainments I have attended in Bath—to take a good look at the different individuals thought-worthy to comprise one of pretty Mrs. Bagshot's "at-homes." It speaks volumes for the tact and cleverness of the elegant