

the bay horse unwilling. As might have been expected, the green coat kissed mother earth; whilst his own horse and his pursuer and his pursuers have rolled about on the top of him in a most complicated gam of all four. As they picked each other up, I heard the fat man in green, much to my astonishment, apologising for the accident with the greatest composure.

'A thousand pardons, my dear sir! How could I be so clumsy?—it might have been a most serious accident. All of which excuses the aggressor, as was to be expected, received with boundless affability and good-humor. In the meantime we had a beautiful view of the run. The hounds were still streaming away, two fields in front of every one, the huntsman and the two officers going gallantly abreast in their wake. One of them reminded me a little of Frank Lovell. The noble master, too, had cut in, and was striding along over every obstacle; 'the London dealers had dropped somewhat in the rear, and the farmer's horse was already completely sobered by the pace. The hounds turned towards us. John entreated us to stop. They crossed the lane under our horses' heads, and taking up the scent in an adjoining pasture, went off again at a score—not a soul really with them.

'Fish and fowl can't stand this,' exclaimed Miss Lumley, as turning the Gitanas short round at a high style with a foot board, she and I sat in the back. 'Don't attempt it, Kate! she screamed out to me, had turned on her saddle. I heard John's voice to, I used no speculation, but it was too late. I was already in the air. I thought brilliant would never come to the ground; and when he did touch it, he was so excited with his previous restraint and his present position, that he broke clean away with me. I was a little frightened, but I never lost my nerve. I flew past Mr. Lumley like an arrow; and though she put the Gitanas to her speed, and made my horse more violent still as she thrust a dagger up in his quarters, I was too proud to ask her to give me a pull; and a wicked, jealous feeling rose in my heart that was an excellent substitute for true courage at the time. My horse was almost frantic, but fortunately he knew my voice, and by speaking to him I was able to steady him before he reached the fence. He bounded over like a deer and went quite quietly, now that he had nothing before him but the hounds. I had never known to now what it was to ride for myself, hitherto I had always followed a leader, but henceforth I resolved to enjoy the true pleasure of finding my own way. I looked back—I was positively first, but Mrs. Lumley was not fifty yards behind me, and coming up rapidly.

'Well done, Kate!' said she, as we flew our third fence side by side. Still the hounds flouted on, and I never took my eye off them, but urged my horse in their wake, taking every turn they did, and swerving from nothing. Fortunately, brilliant was the rough bred and the fences light, or, even with my weight, such a style of riding must soon have produced fatal results. I shall never go again as well as I did that day; but do what I would I could not shake off Mrs. Lumley. If I lost sight of her for an instant, she was sure to gain a turn upon me, and on one or two occasions she was actually in my front. I felt I could have ridden into a chalk pit, and dared her to follow me with the greatest satisfaction. At last the hounds crossed a wide stream with them, I felt almost delirious with the excitement.

'What an example we have made of the gentlemen!' Kate said Mrs. Lumley, turning the Gitanas' head to the wind. 'I had no idea my effort was like this.'

I did not answer, but I thought 'What a little and a snow you.' I felt I hated her, though she was my friend. Again the hounds stooped to the scent, they crossed a deep narrow lane, upon which I saw two crowds advancing. I put my horse into his pace.

brilliant. It was a pure, wholesome, legitimate excitement, there was no harassing doubt and fears, no wounded feelings and bitter thoughts, no hours and days of suspense and bitter thoughts, no hours and days of suspense and misery to atone for a few short moments of delight. If I was disappointed in other things, could I not devote myself wholly to hunting, and so lead a happy and harmless life? If I had been a man, I should have answered in the affirmative; but I am a woman, and gradually softer thoughts stole over me. A distant vision of a happy home, with home interests and home pleasures—other to love, others to care for, besides myself—all a woman's duties, and all a woman's best delights. I shut my eyes, and tried to realize the picture. When I opened them again, Mrs. Lumley had gone fast to sleep; but John was watching me with a look of painful attention. He certainly had acquired a very earnest, keen look of fat, such as he never used to wear. I do not know what prompted the question, but I could not forbear asking him, in a sort of half-laughing way, 'John, if I had broken my neck to-day, what on earth should you have done?'

'Mourned for you as a sister, Kate,' he replied, gravely, even severely. 'I did not speak another word the whole way home.'

## CHAPTER XIX.

I shall miss you sadly, Kate; but, if you enjoy your visit I shall be quite satisfied.

It was Aunt Deborah who spoke. Dear Aunt Deborah! I felt as if I had not been half as brave enough to her lately. I had selfishly been so taken up with my own thoughts and my own schemes, that I had neglected my poor suffering relative; and now my heart smote for my want of consideration. Aunt Deborah had not left the house since our return from Dangerfield. She looked worn and old, but had the same kind heart, the same measured accents as ever. Though she bore a good deal of pain and was kept in close confinement, she never complained; patient and quiet, she had a kind word for every one; and even her maid avowed that 'missus's' temper was that of an angel. 'H'angel,' the maid called it, but it was perfectly true. Aunt Deborah must have had something very satisfactory to look forward to, or she never would have been so light-hearted. One thing I remarked—she was fonder of John than ever.

'I won't go, my dear aunt,' was my reply, for my conscience smote me hard. 'I won't go, I don't care about it; I had much rather stay and nurse you here.'

But Aunt Deborah wouldn't hear of it.

'No, no,' said she, 'my dear; you are at the right age to enjoy yourself. I don't care much about Scamperley, and I have a far more charitable opinion of Lady Scapegrace than the world in general; but I dare say you will have a pleasant party, and I can trust you anywhere with John.'

There it was, John again—always John—and I knew exactly what John thought of me; and it made me thoroughly despise myself. I reflected that if I were John, I should have a very poor opinion of my cousin; I should consider her silly, vacillating, easily deceived, and by no means to be depended upon; more than woman in her weaknesses, and less than woman in her affections. 'What a character! and what a contempt he must have for me!'

My cousin called to take me to the railway, and to accompany me as a chaperone on a visit to Sir Guy and Lady Scapegrace, who were, as usual, entertaining a distinguished party of fashionable at their residence, Scamperley. By the way, what an

month less like a flower than ever. How came I there? Why, because I was piqued, and hurt, and reckless. I was capable of almost any enormity. John's manner to me in the tram had well-nigh driven me mad—so quiet, so composed, so cold, so kind and considerate, but a kindness and consideration such as that which one treats a child. He seemed to feel he was my superior—he seemed even to soothe and pity me. I would have given words to have spoken frankly out to him, to have asked him what I had done to offend him, even to have brought him back to that topic upon which I felt he would never enter more. But it was impossible. I dared not wound that kind, generous heart again—I dared not trust myself. No, he was only 'Cousin John' now; he had said to himself. Surely he need not have given me up quite so easily; surely I was worthy of an effort at least; yet I knew it had been my own fault—though I would not allow it even to myself—and this I believe it was that rankled and gnawed at my heart till I could hardly bear my own identity. It was a relief to do everything I could think of to annoy him—to heap self-contempt on my wicked head, to show him I was reckless of his good opinion as of my own, to lay up a store of agonizing reproaches for the future, to gnash my teeth, as it were, and nerve myself into a savage indifference for the present. Nay, there was even a diabolical pleasure in it. Frank Lovell occupied a seat behind me: at another time I might be gratified at his near neighborhood, and annoyed to think he should have been paying so long a visit at Scamperley. I was startled to hear how little I cared. He leaned over and whispered occasionally, and seemed pleased with the marked encouragement I gave him. After all, I could not help liking Frank very much—and was my cousin not at the back of the coach to witness all that took place? But Sir Guy would not allow me to be 'monopolized' as he called it.

'You've lost your roses sadly in London, Miss Coventry,' said he, poking his odious face almost under my bonnet, and doubling through the off which most unmercifully. 'Never mind, I think a woman looks best when one is pale. Egad, you're more color now, though. Don't be angry, it's only my way; you know I'm your slave.'

'Sir Guy don't mean to be rude,' whispered Frank, for I confess I was beginning to get indignant; and the baronet went on—

'Don't you remember our picnic at Richmond, Miss Coventry, and my promise, that if ever honored me by taking a place on my coach you should drive? Take hold of 'em now, there's a good girl; you ought to know something about the ribbons, and the next four mils is quite straight, and a dead flat.'

I was in that state of mind that I should not have had the least scruple in upsetting the coach, and risking the lives of all upon it, my own included; but I know not what imp of evil prompted me to turn round and call to my cousin at the back—

'John, do you think I could drive four horses?'

'Pary don't,' whispered Frank Lovell, who seemed to disapprove of the whole proceeding; but I did not heed him, for my cousin never answered till I asked him again.

'Do as you like, Kate,' was the reply, 'I shouldn't advise you to try; but he looked very grave, and seriously hurt and annoyed.'

This was enough for me—I laughed aloud—I was determined to provoke him, and I changed places with Sir Guy. He showed me how to part and hold the reins, I lectured me on the art of putting horses together, he got into a state of high good-humor, and smiled, and swore, and patronized me, and had the effrontery to call me a 'd—d fine girl, and never boxed his ears,

sporting dandies and thoughtless visitors who came down 'to stay with Scapegrace,' because he had more pheasants and better 'dry' (meaning champagne) than anybody else, ever thought of the many proprietors those old oaks and chestnuts had seen pass away—the strange doings they must have witnessed as generation after generation of Scapegrace lived their short hour and went to their account, having done all the mischief they could—for they were a wild, wicked race, from father to son. The present Baronet's childhood was nursed in profligacy and excess. Sir Gilbert had been a fitting sire to Sir Guy, and drank, and drove, and sinned, and turned his wife out of doors, and gathered his boon companions about him, and placed his heir, a little child, upon the table, and baptized him, in mockery, with blood-red wine; and one fine morning he was found dead in his dressing-room, with a dark stream stealing slowly along the floor. They talked of broken blood-vessels, and a full habit; but some people thought he had died by his own hand; and the dressing-room was made a lumber-room of, and nobody ever used it any more. However, it was the only thing to save the family. A long minority put the present possessor fairly on his legs again, and the oaks and the chestnuts were spared the fate that had seemed too surely awaiting them. Nor was this the only escape they had experienced. A Scapegrace of former days had served in the Parliamentary army during his father's lifetime; had gone over to the king at his death; had fought at Edgehill and Marston Moor—and to do Sir Neville justice, he could fight like a demon; but he had abandoned the royal cause when it was hopeless, and, by betraying his sovereign, escaped the usual fate and amercement of malcontents; the protector remarking, with a certain solemn humor, 'that Sir Neville was an instrument in the hand of the Lord, but that Satan had a share in him, which doubtless he would not fail to claim in due time.' So Sir Neville lived at Scamperley in abundance and honour, and preserved his oaks and his rents, and professed the strictest Puritanism; and died in a fit brought on by excessive drinking to the success of the Restoration, when he heard that Charles had landed and the king was really 'to enjoy his own again.' He was succeeded by his grandson Sir Montague; the best-looking, and best-hearted, and weakest of his race; there was a picture of him hanging on the great staircase—a handsome, well-proportioned man, with a woman's beauty of countenance, and womanly softness of expression. Lady Scapegrace and I stopped and gazed at it for hours.

'He's not very like the present baronet, my dear,' she would say, her haughty features gathering into a sneer—and Lady Scapegrace's sneer was that of Mephistopheles himself: 'he is beautiful, exceedingly. I love to look at his hazel eyes, his low antique brow, his silky chestnut hair, and his sweet melancholy smile. Depend upon it, Kate, no man with such a smile as that is ever capable of succeeding in any one thing he undertakes. I don't care what his intellect may be, I don't care what animal courage he may possess, however dashing his spirit, however chivalrous his sentiments—so surely as he was woman's weakness of heart, so surely must he go to the wall. I have seen it a hundred times, Kate, and I never knew it otherwise.'

Since the affair of the bull, Lady Scapegrace had contracted a great affection for me, and would have me to roam about the house with her for hours. She was a clever intelligent woman, without one idea or sentiment in common with his husband. In this state of mental widowhood she had consoled herself by study, amongst other things; and the history of the family into which she had married afforded her ample materials for respectation and research. She had collected every scrap of writing, every private memorandum, letter, and document that could

ly. There are certain bills and memoranda with his signature attached, relating to loves of men and great purchases of arms, which look as if he had plunged into some desperate enterprise, doubtless at her instigation; and in his sonnets there are frequent allusions to "winning her by the sword," "loving her to the death," and such Quixotic protestations, that look as if he had at one time mediated an unusually daring stroke. "He was a fool," said Lady Scapegrace, reflectively, "but he was a fine fellow, too, to throw wealth, life, and honor at the feet of a woman who was not worth a throb of that kind, generous heart—a drop of the loyal gallant blood!"

'Then he married, I can't quite make out why, as there is a considerable gap in the correspondence of the family about this time, only partially connected by the diary of an old chaplain, who seems to have been formerly tutor to Sir Montague, and to have cherished a great regard for his pupil. The lady was a foreigner and a Romanist; and although we have no picture of her, we gather from the reverend chronicler that she was "low of stature, dark-browed, and swarthy in complexion," though he gallantly adds, that she was doubtless pleasing to the eyes of those who loved such southern beauty. At her wedding it appears that Lady Mabel was present; and my good master's attire and ornaments, consisting of peach-colored dress-let, and pearl-silken hose, and many gems of unspeakable price, dazzling to the sight of humble men, are detailed with strange minuteness and fidelity. Even the plume in his hat and the jewelled hilt of his rapier are dwelt upon at considerable length. But notwithstanding his magnificence, the worthy chaplain did not fail to remark, that my good master seemed ill at ease, and the vigils seizing him during the ceremony, he must have fallen, had I not caught him something cunningly under the arm-pits, assisted by worthy Master Holder, and one of the groomsmen. The chaplain, who seems to have been as blind as became his reserved character, cannot forbear from expressing his admiration of the Lady Mabel, whom he describes as fair and comely in color, like the bloom of the spring rose; of a buxom stature, and of a lofty gait and gestures without. What was she doing at Sir Montague's wedding!—no wonder the old attack of vertigo which her elderflower wine gave her rather to have increased, should have come on again.'

'One thing is pretty clear, the baronet detested his wife (the Scapegraces have generally owned that amiable weakness, my dear). I think it must have been in consequence of her religion that he became so strenuous supporter of the opposite faith. At last he joined Monmouth, and still the correspondence seems to have gone on, for the night before Sedgmoor he wrote her a bitter. Such letter, Kate! I was lucky enough to get it from a descendant of the lady, who was under great obligations to me; I'll show it you to-morrow. No man with that much could have written such a letter, except his death was looking him in the face. I can think when she got it, she must have gone away at last. But it was too late. He was killed in the first charge of the royal troops. His own regiment, raw recruits and country men, turned at the first shot; but he led like a Scapegrace, waving his hat and cheering them on. We are rather proud of him in the family, after all. Compared with the rest of them, his was a harmless life and a creditable end.'

'But what became of Lady Mabel?' I asked; for I confess I was a little interested in this disjointed romance of long-past days.

'Did you ever know a thoroughly useful person in your life that did not prosper?' was her ladyship's reply; and again her features writhed into the Mephistophelesian

(To be continued.)