

## SADDLE AND SABRE.

(Continued.)

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Devereux. Are you up in town for long? Heard you were dining with my husband last night; but I suppose they don't give you a long furlough from Cambridge?"

"No," laughed Charlie; "very short, indeed, but I hope soon—yes, very soon—to have done with it. I have a chance of entering the army, and if that comes off I shall cut Cambridge at once. Don't you think I shall be right?"

"Yes, indeed, I do," replied Mrs. Kynaston. "You will make a very fair Dragoon, and I don't think you 'frame' for anything like bookwork."

"That's just what Lettie says!" exclaimed Charlie.

"Yes. The life will just suit you—and remember I speak as a woman having experience."

"I don't think I am clever," replied Devereux, laughing; "but you needn't tell a fellow so, Mrs. Kynaston. I think I can ride a bit and play a decent game of billiards. I had some tough battles with the Major the other night, and had decidedly the best of it."

"Perhaps he was not in form," replied Mrs. Kynaston, drily. "My husband takes a good deal of beating in a general way."

"And I flatter myself I do also," rejoined Charlie, a little piqued. "No, I honestly believe I am a few points better than the Major."

"Well, perhaps it is so," replied Mrs. Kynaston, "only recollect that my husband has had far wider experience than you have had. He is apt to play carelessly except for money."

"We had a trifle on, just to make it interesting," replied Charlie.

"Well, perhaps you are the best," said Mrs. Kynaston, indifferently, "only I wouldn't be too sure. How is Polestar?"

"Doing wonderfully well, I hear, and very much improved since we got so disgracefully beaten at Lincoln. I hope to avenge my defeat there in the autumn, and that you will be there to see it."

"I hope so too," rejoined Mrs. Kynaston. "But our movements at present are very uncertain. The Major never makes up his mind until the end of the season, and very often not until the end of October."

Major Kynaston's movements were in good truth governed considerably by his financial success on the Turf, as his wife confided to Lettie, but Mrs. Kynaston was not likely to enter into such confidences with Charlie.

"And when do you expect to go up for your inspection? Lettie told me all about it, and I know that you are to be paraded before Major Braddock. I trust that the wine may be properly iced, and that the cook may have done his *dévoirs* dextly," continued Mrs. Kynaston, laughing, "I suppose you know that a mistake in a side dish, or the claret served at an undue temperature, may nip your aspirations in the bud?"

"Yes," replied Charlie, joining in her laugh. "I have heard that Major Braddock regards dinner as a very solemn function; but we are to dine at his own club, and surely there should be safety in that. I should think the chef for his own sake would do his best for Major Braddock."

"There is much worldly wisdom in your speech," rejoined Mrs. Kynaston. "Gourmets like Major Braddock 'back their bills,' and make bitter the lives of both cook and committee should even their mutton-chop not be done to the exact turn."

"Let us hope the Fates will be propitious. And now, Mrs. Kynaston, I must wish you good bye, for I have but just time to pack up my traps and catch my train."

"Good-bye, and may all success attend you. Write as soon as you know; or, better still, come and tell me you are to be a Dragoon."

Kate Kynaston sat plunged in reverie for some time after Charlie had taken his departure. She knew her husband too well to suppose that the light-hearted boy would have any chance with him at cards or billiards. What could Dick mean? He surely did not intend to plunder such small game as Charlie Devereux, and yet that the latter had any chance with her husband at billiards or cards she did not believe for one moment. Poor Kate! it was far from her nature to turn hawk, and she had winced at first when her eyes were opened to the fact that Dick Kynaston got his living for the most part by his skill in all description of 'play.' But she soon grew callous, and even stooped to make use of her own smiles and bright eyes to lure men into her husband's net. Yet she was loyal to her favorites, and Dick, though he ruled her with an iron hand, on the whole knew that now and again she would stand no plundering of the innocents. It was on behalf of the young ones Kate chiefly interfered. Her elder admirers, she deemed, ought to be able to take care of themselves, but she would interfere sharply sometimes on behalf of her boyish adorer—and she was just the sort of woman whom quite young men especially worship. I don't mean to say that Kate Kynaston had not plenty of men of all ages at her feet, but she had a quiet way with her that put "young ones" at their ease in the first half-hour. No, she would not have this thing. She would tell Dick that he must stay his hand as far as Charlie Devereux was concerned. She knew that was wild, and she knew that he was weak, but she would not have it on her conscience that she stood by and saw this boy ruined on the threshold of his career. She was submissive in general, and Dick Kynaston was not the man to bear the thwarting of his schemes quietly, but this matter should be speedily settled between them, and she would let him know that Charlie Devereux must be spared.

Then her thoughts ran back to the old channel. She did not deceive herself in the least. She knew that her liking for Gilbert Slade was growing on her. She knew it from the dismay with which she had learnt that he had interfered in Charlie Devereux's behalf at Lettie's request. Gilbert, she argued, must be much struck with that young lady to take all this

trouble on her brother's account. She had taken a great fancy to Lettie, but unfortunately she had taken an equally strong one for Slade, and when two such friendships clash it is pretty safe to predict that the woman will be thrown over in favor of the man.

Again, Mrs. Kynaston had chosen, in virtue of her prior acquaintance, to regard Gilbert Slade as her own peculiar property. How very slight that acquaintance had been was shown by the fact that when he met her on old Tom Devereux's drag at Lincoln he had failed to remember her. True, Gilbert had devoted himself to her upon that occasion more than to Lettie, but a man would have laughed at Mrs. Kynaston's entertaining such an idea that she held right of vassalage over Gilbert, though a woman would perfectly have understood it, and have divined in a moment that the friendship of those two would be of short duration now that Mrs. Kynaston's jealousy was aroused. That lady, of rousing herself at length from her reverie, sprang to her feet, and as she paced up and down the drawing-room, was quite as determined that Lettie Devereux should never wed Gilbert Slade, as that her husband should not plunder the brother.

## XIV.

## CHARLIE ON PROBATION.

Gilbert Slade contrived to see a good deal of Miss Devereux during this last fortnight. As the diplomatist who had the arranging a meeting between Charlie and Major Braddock on the most favorable terms, he found it necessary to consult Lettie very often. The Major usually, and more especially at this time of year, had pretty numerous engagements in the dinner way. Therefore it was necessary to ascertain, first, what evening would suit him. Then it was imperative that Charlie should be written to, and told that if anything should prevent his attending on that occasion he must telegraph at once, as otherwise he would create a most unfavorable impression on the Major, who regarded engagements of this sort as bonds of the most solemn description. Charlie also had to be cautioned against the heinous sin of unpunctuality. Very fond was the Major of laying down the axiom, that to be late on such an occasion was an insult both to your host and his cook. When in the army he had been always given to harrying the subalterns about being late for mess. Unpunctuality on other parades he might look over, but not on this one; so that altogether Gilbert was a good deal in Onslow Gardens. However, at last everything was arranged. Charlie had been most carefully tutored, as far as Lettie, inspired by Slade, could do so by the post. He had even been tutored into studying "Lucille," and warned, if he saw a fair opportunity, to fire off the following quotation from that poem:—

"We may live without friends,  
We may live without books;  
But civilised men  
Cannot live without cooks."

"I am so very anxious," said Lettie, when the important day was finally fixed. "I do so hope Charlie will acquit himself creditably. I have done as you told me. I have warned him to be highly-appreciative of the good things set before him, but to be a little diffident as to giving an opinion about the wine."

"Quite right," said Gilbert laughing. "Very young men are apt to set up as judges in that respect, and I know that always moves Uncle Bob's wrath. I even once heard him assert that no man knew anything about wine until he had had a fit of the gout."

"But," cried Lettie, "men don't always have the gout, do they?"

"I fancy my uncle and his cronies are unanimous concerning that complaint. We must only hope that he is not disposed to it just now."

"It is very good of you, Mr. Slade, to take all this trouble for me, and I am very grateful to you; but I feel wofully nervous about Charlie's ordeal. Your uncle seems somewhat peculiar."

"Not at all, Miss Devereux; not more so than the generality of mankind. The only thing is that, as I want Charlie to show to the best advantage, I'm giving you a chart of the country. We have most of us peculiarities, and it is just our clashing of these that makes people take a dislike to us when we first meet them."

"It is very good of you, and I can't be sufficiently grateful."

"Don't think of it," interrupted Gilbert; "I'm only too pleased that I managed to arrange the matter before my time was up. I must leave London the day after to-morrow, and I was so afraid that it might not come off."

"But I shall see you again before you go?" said Lettie.

"Oh, yes, I'll come down to-morrow afternoon, if you'll allow me, and tell you how things went off. And now I must say adieu. Depend on it, it will be all right, Miss Devereux. Uncle Bob is a good-natured fellow, though perhaps over-fond of his dinner, and has always done anything I wanted;" and with these words of encouragement Gilbert Slade took his departure.

Lettie was very anxious that Charlie should get into the army. She had been greatly pleased with the enthusiasm he showed at the prospect, and it was therefore no wonder that she should be anxious about his success.

"It's odd," thought Lettie, "but really at present his chance seems to depend on the caprice of a middle-aged gentleman." Then she thought how very kind Mr. Slade had been about the whole business; and then I think her whole reverie rather concentrated itself on Mr. Slade himself. It is a very easy transition, when the subject is a good-looking young man, to glide from "how very kind" to "how very nice" he was, and from that to those day-dreams in which all young ladies are prone to indulge, and to what answer she should give if ever he should ask the momentous question, and from that the whole thing dies away in a background of orange flowers, bridesmaids, rice, and old slippers.

The fateful evening at last arrived. Charlie Devereux, having compared his watch with the Horseguards in the afternoon—the one authority on