

... I remember the... and I've such a bad memory for names. ... what the dog is? ... Some-thing, if I remember right?"

Major Crasher burst out laughing. "You mean a bad thing you are, Sawyer," and he laughed I grant you, he ought to laugh. I thought everybody knew Mr. Varnish's horse, didn't he?" And the Major went off as before again, thinking what a capital story he had got against Sawyer for that day at dinner, and a good many days after. A joke, you see, lasts a long time in the hunting season, when the supply is by no means equal to the demand.

And Mr. Sawyer turned his horse's head out of the crowd, feeling a little humiliated, and a little disgusted. The five guineas for the cigars stuck horribly in his throat. However, he and Mr. Varnish, as will presently be seen, finally came to a closed account yet.

But what are the low spirits, blue devils, or, to come to the reflections that can hold them over for an instant against the cheering sound of "Gone away!" Three notes on the huntsman's horn, five or six couple of hounds streaming noiselessly across a field, the rest more clamorous, leaping and dashing through a gorse, a rush of horsemen towards the point at which the fox has been seen, and the man who is really fond of hunting has not the vestige of an idea to spare for anything else in the world.

John Standish Sawyer could ride "above a bit." Even in a strange country, and with hounds running "live smoke," he was not a man to shrink from taking his own line; and severely valuing the grey, perhaps, according to its deserts, he had no scruple in riding that good little animal at whatever came in his way.

A quick turn to the five couple of leading hounds, that he sped racing down the side of a long row, and the happy negotiation of a very nasty place, with a stake in it that would certainly have impaled a more costly nag, placed our friend on terms with the pack. A fine grass country lay spread out before him. The fox, evidently a good one, bore straight across the middle of the fields. The hounds, without forcing any extraordinary pace, appeared well settled to the scent, and not inclined to flash over it a yard. A large fence and a little brook had combined to afford them more room than usual. Everything seemed to look uncommonly like a run; and the Honorable Crasher, shooting by our friend, on Confidence, whom he rode with a shamefully loose rein, observed that "it was all right; and he shouldn't wonder if they were going to have a gallop."

Mr. Sawyer laid hold of the grey, and determined to assume a place in the front rank—of which the occupants would have been equally at home in the rows of stalls nearest the orchestra at the Opera. There was more than one lady riding of he never saw lady ride before—perfectly straight; turning aside from no obstacle, jumping a gate with extreme coriarity, it should be noted, and taking it all in the earnest, yet off-hand, graceful manner, with which a woman sets about doing what she likes best. The Mountaineers, stride for stride, and fence for fence, while sailing away with perfect ease, looking as if they were scarcely out of a canter, yet, do what he would—and it must be owned he was very hard upon the grey. Mr. Sawyer could not, for the life of him, decrease the distance between himself and these leading horsemen.

The Honorable Crasher, having got confidence amongst some very intricate fences on the right, though a little wider than he liked of the hounds, was disputing himself therein, with considerable gratification. Struggles and the Reverend Dove, to-day with the

country. They had not a piece for the extensive fields, nor scope for the large fence, each of which, though he did the most gallantly, entailed too great an exertion to bear frequent repetition. Notwithstanding two falls, however, he struggled gamely to the end; and it speaks well both for man and horse, that they should have got there at all.

Mr. Sawyer, however, was now thoroughly bitten. He had never felt so keen in his life. He would never hunt anywhere else. He could ride with any of them, he thought; he was determined to be as well mounted. Mr. Varnish and he discussed the subject in all its bearings, as they rode home; and the result of their conversation was—the arrival of the chestnut five-year-old and a good-looking brown at Mr. Sawyer's stables, and the transference to Mr. Varnish, in lieu thereof, of the Honorable Crasher's cueque, and another signed in full with the perfectly solvent name of John Standish Sawyer.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE DOVE-COTE.

Let us take a peep into Dove-cote Rectory, smiling in the wintry sun, as it lies snugly sheltered from the north winds by a thick plantation, and rejoicing in that most desirable advantage in our climate—a southern aspect. This house is one that would make any sportsman oblivious of the tenth commandment. Who could refrain from coveting possession of those cheerful rooms, that fine extensive view; above all, the excellent and commodious stables within reach of the c packs of hounds, and situated in the best grass country in England?

It is, however, with the inside of the mansion that we have now to do, and with those gentle beings who constitute a home, without whom a palace is little better than a dungeon.

Breakfast has been over at the Dove-cote for an hour or so. Cissy and her mamma have established themselves in what they call "the little drawing-room"—a snug apartment of small dimensions, with windows opening to the ground, and "giving," as the French say, on a neatly laid-out garden, in spring and summer the peculiar care of the daughter of the house. To-day, however, flowers and blossoms are replaced by a million sparkling gems, formed by last night's white frost, which is melting rapidly under the noon-day sun. Inside the furniture is of a rich and somewhat gaudy pattern, assorting well with the rose-tinted muslin curtains and multiplicity of looking glasses, which are so characteristic of a lady's bower, whilst a thousand pretty knick-knacks, and a graceful litter of books, music, work, paper-digits, stray gloves, and gossamer handkerchiefs betray at once the sex of the occupants. A little statuette of a Cupid in tears, with nothing on but a quiver, occupies a niche between the windows, under a portrait of Miss Dove, depicted by the artist in a graceful attitude on the chestnut horse, attired in a blue riding habit, with her hat off, and her hair falling about her shoulders, as it is only right to observe, she is not in the habit of wearing it when taking equestrian exercises. Altogether the painter's idea seems to have been borrowed from a French print entitled "The Rendezvous," representing a desolate damsel waiting for a gentleman in a wood—not in the best of humors, as is natural under the circumstances, and sitting her white horse in a listless, woe-begone attitude, unworthy of an Amazon. The landscape, however, is perceptible in the far distance, making up for lost time on an exceed-

unable to contribute to the pleasure of the position; so the trial's lack on their Harbor-rough friends.

Mr. Crasher never comes except on Sundays, or when there is a hard frost; and the rest of the gang I would just as soon be without, for they will light their cigars in the hall—a thing I've quite broke your papa's doing, till the whole place smells like a public-house. But I do think that Mr. Saw-bridge, or whatever his name is, might have called in common civility, if it was only to ask how you were at your long day."

Cissy was of the same opinion; but she adhered steadily to the crochets, and said nothing; perhaps she thought the more. She had confided to her mamma certain passages of the nocturnal ride into Market Harborough, and Mr. Sawyer's categorical answers to her very pertinent queries. I do not think, however, she had quite made what is called "a clean breast of it."

The mother, as is often the case in these days of improvement, had scarcely so much force of character as the daughter. She never dared cross-question "Cissy" beyond a certain point. Not that the girl was rebellious, but she had a quiet way of setting her mamma down, which was as uncomfortable as it was irascible.

Mrs. Dove, however, was not without her share of matronly cunning. She had been young herself, and had not forgotten it; nay, she felt quite young again sometimes, even now. It does not follow that because a lady increases in bulk she should decrease in susceptibility. Look at a German baroness—fifteen stone good, in her ball dress, and athletic to the tips of her plump fingers. Mamma got up to fetch her scissors; cut the little boy's shirt to the true Corazza pattern, and, holding up that ridiculous little garment as if to dry, went on with her argument.

"I don't think much of that Mr. Saw-bridge after all, if you ask me," said she, looking over the collar fall in her daughter's face. "He seems very shy, by no means good looking, and I should say had not seen much of the world! Steadier perhaps than Brush, and not so stout as Straggles, but yet he don't give me the idea of a very gentlemanlike person—like Mr. Crasher, for instance."

The Honorable was one of the good lady's great favorites. She admired hugely, as country dames will, his languor, his *insouciance*, his recklessness and dandyism—above all, his tendency to become torpid at a moment's notice, which latter faculty frequently provoked the strong-minded "Cissy" beyond endurance.

The girl's color, always high, rose perceptibly. Like a true woman, she stood up for her new friend.

"Indeed, Mamma," said she, "Mr. Sawyer is quite as gentleman-like as anybody we meet anywhere, and as for being shy, I confess I like people all the better for not being forward, like that rudo Mr. Savage, who told me I should look hideous with my hair a l'Imperatrice. Now, Mr. Sawyer at least tries to make himself agreeable."

"And seems to succeed, Cissy," rejoined Mamma, with an arch smile that deepened the young lady's colour still more, and consequently made her resemble her buxom parent. "Well, dear, I must remind Papa about asking some of them to dinner. Shall I tell him to send Mr. Sawbridge an invitation?"

"Really, I don't the least care," answered Miss Dove, with a toss of her shining black head. "I suppose you can't well leave him out. But, Mamma, I wish you would call the man by his right name. It isn't Sawbridge, but Sawyer."

"Gracious Heavens! Mrs. Dove!" exclaimed the Reverend, plumping down into an arm-chair, and raising both hands in irritable deprecation, "knowing what you do, how can you ask such a question? Of course, if this house is too uncomfortable to live in, and it don't matter about the parish going to the dogs, and the Bishop is to be a nonentity, and my duties a farce, you are perfectly right to go gadding about from here to Brighton, and from Brighton to London, and from London to Halifax, if you like, and I shall be happy to indulge you. I only wish you would tell me where the money is to come from—where the money is to come from, Mrs. Dove—that's all!" And, having thus spoken, the Reverend took up the Leicester Journal, and looked over the top of it at his wife, as if he had indeed propounded a poser.

This was exactly what that dear artful woman wanted. She knew that when he had blown off his steam, her husband would settle down into his usual easy temper, and become perfectly malleable in about five minutes. So she folded the poor parish-keeper's little sheet with the most accuracy, and repaid in the most perfect good-humour:

"Well, dear, I'm sure I don't want to move here till we go to London. You know I'm so fond of my garden in the spring, and I like you to get your hunting as long as you can; it does you so much good. My mamma's London about the time of the Derby; to be absent for a week; and home again by the beginning of July. After all, we are wonderfully well situated here for the country as regards society, and Harborough never was so full as it seems this season. What should we do in this part of the world if it wasn't for hunting?"

Precious, in proportion to their rarity, opinions so orthodox sank like music in the Reverend's ear. Five-and twenty years' experience had failed to teach him, that such congenial sentiments must as necessarily be followed by a request, as a soft southerly wind is succeeded by rain. And this is the strangest feature in our subservience to the other sex. Though they deceive us ninety-nine times, we believe them the hundredth, and, more foolish than the feathered biped, though its meshes be spread in our very sight, rush open-eyed, neck-and-heels into the net of the fowler.

The Reverend glanced at the wife of his bosom, and thought her wonderfully like that picture done a score of years ago. He said as much; but the compliment by no means diverted Mrs. Dove from the object she had in view. "Cissy and I were just talking," said she simply, "of your friend Mr. Crasher, and the rest of them. By the bye, you really ought to ask some of them to dinner. There's a barrel of oysters come by rail last night, and our turkeys this year are finer than usual. Better say Tuesday, don't you think, Papa?" added she coaxingly.

But the Reverend was not so hospitably inclined as he would have been had the old horse been sound. "They can have plenty of oysters at Harborough," said he. "They won't care to drive all that way in the dark. Bad roads, wet nights, perhaps, and nobody to meet them. Better put it off, I think, Dottie, till the days get a little longer."

You or I would hardly have thought of calling so simple a lady as Mrs. Dove, whose baptismal name indeed was Dorothy, by the above diminutive. Nevertheless, when in his best humor, it was the Reverend's habit to address her by the old pet name, and she returned to the charge accordingly.

"Better do it at once, dear," she replied. "The end of the season comes upon us before we know where we are. And if frost should arrive, or anything, they are all off

Dove-cote Rectory, Friday.

There is nothing ambiguous in the above. It seems a simple invitation to dinner enough; you or I can gather its drift at a glance. Why the man should have read it over at least half-a-dozen times is more than I can divine.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### "THE BOOT ON THE OTHER LEG."

Meanwhile in the stable of the Honorable Crasher is considerable consternation and bewilderment. The helpers look wise, and wink at each other, as they pass from stall to stall, in the execution of their duties. Mr. Tiptop is completely at his wits' end. Can he, the knowing Tiptop, looked up to as the great unerring authority on training, pace, weight for age, and other racing mysteries—Newmarket all over—can he have made a mistake? He begins to think, not only that he can, but that he has.

First of all they gave the hapless Marathon a spin with Chance, as a mere breather, and I have already said with what result.

Mr. Tiptop being determined to get at "the rights of it," then tried the horses a mile at even weights; the consequences admitted of less doubt than ever. Marathon's "form" was so obviously bad, that the groom concluded he must be amiss.

"Why, he can't go no faster than our mare can trot," soliloquised Mr. Tiptop, as he contemplated the bay grinding away at his afternoon's feed (to do Marathon justice, he was always good at this part of his day's work), and thought that the animal did by no means show to advantage amongst his stable companions. "Can he be one of those extraordinary horses as I've heard of, wot can scarcely wag without they're trained a most to fiddle-strings, but as nothing mortal can touch if once you gets them fit?" He almost persuaded himself that the new purchase must indeed be such a phenomenon, and resolved on putting him through a severe course of physic, and into strong training forthwith. Before, however, resorting to such ulterior measures, he had the wisdom to think of applying to old Isaac for a solution of the mystery.

He found the senior busy in his little saddle-room, engaged in no less important an occupation than the improvement of The Boy's mounts and general deportment, for which I grieve to observe, since his arrival at Harborough, there was sufficient room. The youth, though he worked hard, was seldom sober now, and never told the truth but by accident. Isaac's method of imparting ethical instruction was uncompromising, if not agreeable. With the lad's collar in one hand, and a spare stirrup-leather in the other, he insisted forcibly on those maxims which he considered most salutary to the tender mind, accompanying each with a stinging illustration from the strap; the dialogue between the sage and his disciple being conducted much in this wise:—

Isaac: "I've told you over and over again, ye young warmist, and I'll tell it ye every day I live, if I larrup the skin off ye." (Whack.)

The Boy: "Oh, please!"  
Isaac: "You'll never rise in life, nor be fit to be called a stableman, without you can work them qualities which have made me what I am; that's what I am a teaching of ye." (Whack.)

The Boy: "Oh, please!"  
Isaac: "Fire and foremost, sobriety."— (Whack, and "Oh, please!") "Secondly,