



### A SUDDEN CALL.

MAIDSERVANT—"Madam, Mr. Swellerton has rung up the telephone and wishes to speak to you."

MRS. FLIGHT (agitated)—"Mr. Swellerton? Gracious, Perkins, go and hold the connection until I get my dress changed."

### THE PLUNKTOWN ANNALS.

(Number One.)

#### LITTLE BISTON'S BIG MARE.

LITTLE BISTON had an idea. This was something new with Biston. For some time he had fluttered, like the proverbial moth, around the flame of Honoria McKetchum's charms. Miss McKetchum was a young lady of Amazonian proportions, whilst little B., even with the adventitious aid of high heels, only stood five feet three inches in his boots. Miss McK. admired the heroic in men. Little B. was of effeminate tastes—had never fired a shot or mounted a horse. Miss McK. had audibly expressed her contempt for small men at Butterby's ball—and in Biston's presence.

Now, Biston had a number ten soul in his number three body, and the said soul chafed at the insult. "Frederick the Great, Napoleon, Wellington," he mused, "were all of small stature, and attained fame; why not I?" Out of this musing was evolved the idea: "I will get a horse," he said. "I will become the best horseman in Plunktown. As I ride up High street everyone will say, 'Oh, there's Biston. What a firm seat and graceful carriage!' Thus will I bring the haughty Amazon to time." The great soul of little B. swelled so tremendously at the thought that the three lower buttons of his vest flew off.

As Biston knew nothing of horses, he took counsel with a turfy friend, who said: "B., me boy, get a *big* horse—nothing less than sixteen hands—big bone, muscle and chest. Staying power depends upon the lungs, and the lungs depend on the chest."

Biston went to a German horse-dealer, who recommended an immense carrot-colored mare. True, she had the heaves and was a confirmed roarer, but—as B. sententiously remarked to an equally knowing friend—"a horse whose breathing can be heard all over the block *must* have good lungs, and that means staying

power." "What do you call her, Poppenheim?" "Vell, I call her Donner-und blitzen—she vas so shentle und kind." Biston did not understand German, but, not wishing to expose his ignorance, he accepted the statement and called her "Donna" for short.

The first morning after the amiable beast arrived, B. thought he would attend to her himself. He now admits that this was a mistake. Donna was lying down when he entered, and, though Biston entreated her to "Get up, good Donna, kind Donna," she remained alike insensible to flattery or command. After due reflection, he concluded that it was *not* possible for a man of his size to lift her up, and, in his perplexity (standing between the prostrate mare and the wall) he lit his pipe and thoughtlessly threw the burning match so that it fell on Donna's tail, which was instantly consumed.

Donna got up! Oh, yes! but in so doing she squashed poor Biston so flat against the wall that when he crawled out he looked like a Gruyere cheese in a tweed wrapper.

Despite this and many similar painful episodes, he persevered in his riding lessons, and soon made his first appearance on High street. In size he bore about the same relation to his mount as the chimney does to a good-sized house. A small boy ran behind his carrot mare for a block loudly calling attention of the promenaders to "the bloomin' tomtit on a round-o'-beef," but he was happily unconscious of this allusion.

At the most crowded corner he stopped to talk to a friend, when suddenly he espied the McKetchum equipage being driven rapidly toward him. This was the supreme moment of little Biston's life. He tightened the rein suddenly with one hand, whilst the other gave a vicious smack with the whip—at the same time he drove the rowels of his new spurs in Donna's flanks in one mad effort to get into motion before the fair Honoria passed him. "Donna" at once exercised her staying powers. She "stayed" right there, erect on her hind legs, pawing the air with her feet. Biston fondly and frantically embraced her neck. The next instant the position was reversed; the mare snuffing dust, and heels wildly kicking. Biston saved himself from sliding over her head by grasping her ears. Another reversal, and the brute again pawed air, poor Biston hanging from her ears like a crab apple on a twig. Sure enough, the people turned and said, "Ah! there's Biston," but they laughed consumedly as they said so, and *that* was not on the programme. The amusement, however, turned to sincere sympathy as that fiend of a mare fell backward and nearly crushed his life out. When he recovered consciousness, about ten days later, the first sight his eyes lit upon was the tear-stained face of Honoria McKetchum. Need we tell the sequel? His misfortunes had touched her heart as no success could have done, and she married him. Thus did little Biston's big mare win him a bride, though not according to the plan originally mapped out. "Donna" is still seen daily on the streets of Plunktown, in business relations with a butcher cart.

SNIGGLESBY GODFREY.

### NO BALM.

JACK—"So she rejected you, eh? But what could a poor devil like you expect? Girls will always marry for money, so cheer up."

HARRY—"If I could only lay that balm to my heart I wouldn't feel so badly. What provokes me is that the fellow she prefers to me is poorer than I am."