

"I have an idea, and that is that I will marry you," said the other, "How very singular!" remarked the other, "I have come to the same conclusion; but we shall meet them at the Turtlefats, and then we shall be able to judge if our surmises are or are not."

They were alluding to the dinner we have already spoken of, and where Lord Verriest would have proposed to Bessy if he had not been interrupted.

They were sadly shocked at beholding the wreck of the once handsome Charlie; though much stronger, he was far less emaciated, and the least thing seemed to excite and unnerve him.

His cousin Mary was reading to him as the lady entered, but he was in a sort of a listless mood, and hardly seemed to know that strangers were in the room till he was tapped on the shoulder by his old nurse.

"Master Charlie," said she softly, bending over him, "I have come to see you—you are not as well, are you? Miss Mary has been reading to you this ever so long."

The young man smiled languidly as they approached, and held out his thin wasted hand, more like a child's than anything else—so white and ghostly did he look, and so changed, with his beard and moustache shaved off, and his hair cropped close, that neither of the ladies recognized him.

"My poor fellow," said Lady Lavender speaking first, "you do indeed look ill."

As for Lady Mary she was speechless, never before having been in a sick-room.

"Nurse," she said, drawing the old woman aside, "do you think he possibly can live? How fearfully ill he looks," tears were in her eyes as she asked the question.

"Yes, miss, my Lady, I mean, he is far better and stronger to what he was; you should have seen him a fortnight ago."

"I am glad, nurse," I did not."

It was not one of the invalid's strong days, for the weather was cold; so after a few minutes' conversation with him (for they saw he was fatigued and tired) they took their leave.

"I can never," said Lady Mary, entering the carriage, "speak to those two men again without thinking of that fearful accident has for ever shut them out from being again asked to any shooting parties."

"It might have been Lavender's or your husband's fate," remarked her friend; "bad as it is, I am glad it is no worse. Poor Mary too seems worn out and cast down; how truly Lord Lavender said this morning, what misery the carelessness of those two men had caused, and Mary Thornhill is still more wretched because—here the lady hesitated."

"Because what?" asked her friend.

"Because," said Lavender, slowly, and very distinctly, "because she sees the man who loves her at death's door."

The quick eye of her Ladyship had detected what the other had failed to discover.

Colonel Downey was remarkably spruce in his blue buttoned-up frock-coat, gray trousers, lavender kids, and slinky "Lincoln and Bennech." He was, as his friend Rasper remarked, got up within an inch of his life.

"Then you are really going in for it?" demanded the Major.

"Like a bird," gaily replied the Colonel, "I'm about the ticket, the correct card, ain't I?"

"You look as beaming as the morning sun, Downey, you could not be better; but you've stuck on the fluid though rather too thick, the whiskers and moustache have too much of the beet-root and pickled cabbage look about them."

"No, have they?" said the Colonel, "I'll soon rectify that, pass them through the lead comb," and he rushed from the room.

"How do they look now?" he asked, as he entered the room a few minutes after.

"Ah! that's more the thing, Downey, you must pitch it in strong; don't make the running too heavy at first, you must hold hard for your second horse, your second wind I mean—do you know her pretty well?"

"Well, yes, middling, Rasper; always talk when we meet, shake hands and all that sort of thing; I say, do you think a glass of cherry brandy would do me any harm? just to keep my pick up you know."

"Do you all the good in the world, Downey, and the cherry brandy was tossed off."

"Now, mind, said the Major, as his friend rode away on Mr. Spavin's valuable 'Jun Crow,' "this is the advice I am giving you at starting, don't cut out the running too strong at first, keep your horse, I mean yourself, well in hand; don't crane, look well before you, come in with a rush at the finish, and nail her on the post; and be sure you don't use whip or spur till the last moment; they won't stand the lathfords. Good-bye,

alluded eagerly to "lonely hearts," hummed snatches of "You'll remember me," "We may be happy yet," and so on, and so excited was she, that her daughter could hardly make her out.

"Why, what on earth is the matter with you, mamma, to-night? you seem quite beside yourself."

"Oh, my darling girl, you have made me so happy by what you told me this morning; do you—do you really think Lord Verriest will propose?"

"Just as surely as you sit there, mamma."

"And when do you think you will be married?" asked her mother.

"I really cannot say, mamma, he has not even proposed yet, but that I know will come; but when I am to be married I cannot possibly tell you; you do not expect me, when I am engaged, to say I must be married on such a particular day."

"Oh! of course not, my love," returned her mother, "I only meant—in fact I should like to know, because—"

"Because what, mamma?"

"Because, my dear, I am going to be married myself."

"What! exclaimed her daughter, starting back, "married! you going to be married, mamma—who to? Not to wretched Duffer, I hope, or Bluster?" she added, "but are you joking, mamma?"

"I hope, Bessy," said the widow, bristling up, "there is nothing extraordinary in my being married—it is not to either of the gentlemen you have mentioned; but I only wished to know when you are likely to be settled, because I am to be in a month or six weeks, and I don't wish to put it off."

"But who are you going to be married to?" demanded her daughter.

"To an officer and a gentleman, Bessy, Colonel Downey!"

"The man with the nose?" ejaculated the young lady.

"Bessy," said her mother, loftily, "never dare make such a remark again."

"I beg your pardon, mamma, dear," replied her daughter, "I wish you every happiness, I am sure" (kissing her) "but he has such a nose."

"What on earth can there be in this Yorkshire air?" she asked herself, as she was undressing for bed, "every one seems to be in love. I suppose hunting-men have little else to think of; fancy mamma, too, and the man with the nose. Ah well! it is the best thing she could have done. Now my mind is easy; what order the Colonel will be kept in though—he little knows mamma."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### FERN GORSE.

The Meet at Fern Gorse was a favorite one of the Wareheel hunt, situated in the heart of their best country, and was never known to be drawn blank.

It was not only a favorite meet of the gentlemen, but of the ladies also, for it was a fine open country, with large grass pastures, and those in their carriages could view the hunt for a long way.

Whichever way the fox broke, both equestrians, pedestrians, and those in their carriages could have an uninterrupted view.

Fern Gorse was a fine holding covert for a fox, about forty acres of furz and fern intermingled.

One fine mild morning, about a week or ten days after the Turtlefats' dinner party, old John was jogging along with his hounds the two under-whips in his rear ready to ride down and double thong any of the rioters.

Horses were being led along by their respective grooms, hooded and clothed, and the neat got-up second horsemen were enjoying their morning pipes, now that they were away from their master's eye and that of the stud-groom.

Carriages, too, were wending their way towards the scene of action. In a high dog-cart driven by Shirkington Duffer, sat his friend Bluster.

"I think you ought to admit, Shirkington," said the Captain, "that I can see a little farther ahead than you can—did I not tell you that Bessy Sprightly would be Lady Verriest?"

It was known to all that the nobleman had proposed and was accepted.

"Well, Bluster, I believe you did say something of the sort; who on earth would have thought Verriest could have been such an infernal fool?"

"I don't see anything foolish in it at all; you only say so because she refused you, and you are knocked out of time—she is a very pretty, nice girl and I admire his choice."

"I know I was refused," said Duffer sulki-

ly, and considered the finest lady's "enter in Yorkshire."

"In—deed," remarked Shirkington, "you may think so, but Miss Thornhill's chestnut horse 'Sultan' would give him a stone and a beating anywhere; don't see anything in him."

"Really, sir; really, I don't pretend to dictate to a gentleman of your experience" (this he said in the most impudent manner possible) "but my opinion is, he's got the legs of the 'unt, and will show them the way," he would like to have added "show you the way," but remembering his mistress's warning, kept a silent tongue).

"Oh, dear no," said Shirkington, "your mistress can't hold a candle to Miss Thornhill across country."

"Ah, you jealous beggar," muttered Mr. Pastern to himself as they drove off, "you're bowled out, you carrot-poll snob. I wonder," continued Mr. Pastern to himself, "that a stud-groom like me ever took service under such a lass as you."

Such a number of horsemen and carriages had not been seen at Fern Gorse that season.

Drawn up by the sign-post was the Master and his hounds; Lady Mary Slytox was there, Lady Lavender, Lady Turtlefat, and many others of the neighboring gentry; Miss Dutchbild was also present, and mounted on a useful-looking new bay hunter.

Bessy Sprightly had driven her mamma in the pony-carriage, and young Turtlefat had also on this morning put in an appearance; Colonel Downey was also grand in a brand new pink, on the priceless "Jim Crow."

Great was the rush when the Squire of Linden Hall drove up, for all were anxious to say a kind word to Charlie Thornhill.

"My poor dear boy," said the old Master of the hounds, "I am truly delighted to see you out again; would to God you were in the pig-skin, and taking your usual place in a run."

Mary Thornhill was now mounted, and talking to young Turtlefat. Lord Verriest had given Bessy Sprightly a lift on to her new horse, the Colonel was doing the amiable to his fiancee; and Charlie Thornhill had been shifted into the carriage of Lady Lavender, Lady Mary had joined her, so they were a trio by themselves.

Mrs. Allsob was present, as was her husband and brother.

Charlie Thornhill sighed as he saw the hounds, in obedience to a wave from Mr. Conyer's arm, rush into the covert, and thought how much he should like to be mounted and in for a gallop.

"Don't sigh in that melancholy way, Charlie," exclaimed Lady Lavender, "we know that you are longing for, but you must have patience; look! there goes the fox," she uttered, pointing to an old ruddy fox, with a white tag to his brush, who had broken not a hundred yards from where they were. He well knew the hounds, and was fully aware that his only chance for life was a quick exit from the cover; he had beaten them some two or three times before by this manoeuvre, and hoped to do it again.

Charlie gave a weak "tally ho," but feeble as it was the Master heard it and was soon in the open, and sounding his horn, the hounds were quickly out of cover and on the line of their fox.

"Oh, how beautiful," exclaimed Lady Lavender, pointing towards the fast receding field, "but look at the ladies, they are all in a cluster. Let us go on towards the hill, we shall have a better view there."

"Quite right, Lady Mary," said Charlie, "our foxes seldom care about wind here; the vale-foxes, as a rule, point for the hills, and the hill foxes take to the vale."

But good position as they had taken up, the hunt was soon out of view, and the carriage was turned to take the invalid back.

On the road they met Mrs. Sprightly, who was driving home in solitary grandeur, Mr. Pastern having received orders to ride to points in case his young mistress should want her second horse, so the widow was feign to return alone.

Never had the Wareheel hounds carried a better head than they did on this day; mile after mile is passed, and still no sign of a check; men are eagerly looking out for their second horse, and nursing their tired hunters over the deep fallows and heavy holding ground.

Mary Thornhill has already pumped 'Sultan,' so has Miss Sprightly her new gray; poor Miss Dutchbild is again hopelessly in the rear, the bay is blowing like a grampus, for he is not up to the welter weight in such a severe burst as this.

One alone holds her own, and that is Mrs. Allsob, whose superior knowledge has enabled her to steal a march over the other ladies.

an hour or more, little knowing, poor girl, that she was retracing her steps over and over again; she was getting to be somewhat nervous, wet, and cold, even her gallant hunter dropped his ears and tail, and was shivering all over. Of a sudden a gigantic horse and figure appeared close by her, and which proved to be the illustrious Mr. John Turtlefat, lost like herself, and endeavoring to find his way home.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the pasty-faced looking gentleman, who was wet and shivering, with drops of water hanging from whiskers and hair, "who the deuce would have thought of meeting you here? Where the hounds are I have not the slightest conception; I have been lost for this hour or more; but one can neither see nor hear in this horrid fog, which makes one's horses look as big as elephants. I am drenched through and so must you be. May I offer you some cherry brandy from my flask?" producing a huge horn from his saddle-bow. "It's real Kentish, some of my Governor's old particular. No? Then I'll take some myself." He seemed to have been at it pretty often already, for his face was flushed, and his eyes dull and watery, suiting the action to the word, he tossed off the remainder, and restored the flask to its receptacle.

"It is now just half-past two," said he, looking at his watch. "I am sure I have not the remotest idea where we are, but we must be some ten miles from home."

"Poor papa will be so anxious," exclaimed his companion; "suppose, Mr. Turtlefat, we follow this road."

They rode along for some time in silence, the lady not courting conversation, for she did not like her companion, and the gentleman evidently too timid to commence it.

At last, plucking up courage, for he saw it was useless waiting for the lady to begin, said, "My father, Miss Thornhill, is going to allow me two thousand a year when I marry; very handsome of him, is it not?"

"Very," returned the lady shortly.

"That," continued the young man, "with the five hundred a year I have of my own that my aunt left me, will make a deuced good income, quite enough to keep a wife on."

"That entirely depends," replied Mary, "on what sort of an establishment you intend keeping." She saw what was coming and determined, if possible, to nip it in the bud. "It would not keep hunters, a house in town, and all that sort of thing; now, if I," continued the young lady, with attempted gaiety, "were to marry, I should expect all this." Poor girl, by this little speech she fondly imagined she had settled her companion, but she little knew Mr. John Turtlefat.

"Oh, don't say so, Miss Thornhill; you know—that is—I have long wished for this opportunity; you have not the smallest conception how much I admire you—love you, nothing would please my father and mother better than to know I had succeeded in the object of my greatest ambition?" but seeing that she did not reply—for she was too much surprised to do so, and had no idea the timid young man could come out so strong—drew still nearer, "Mary, Miss Thornhill, answer me."

"I am sure, Mr. Turtlefat," said the young lady at length, finding her voice, "that I have never given you any reason to suppose that I liked you better than any one else, that you should address me in this way."

"That," interrupted the young man, somewhat rudely, "is no answer;" his face was very flushed now, and his voice thick. "I must have an answer, yes or no; you have given me every encouragement."

"What! sir!" said Mary, indignantly, drawing herself up haughtily, "of all gentlemen of my acquaintance, you are the least I have ever given any encouragement to; my answer to your addresses is no, most emphatically, no! I will now, with your permission, ride on by myself."

"Damn it I say, Miss Thornhill, you know this won't do, I am not to be stove off in this manner. I see, it's your beggarly cousin your head is running after."

"Would you dare tell him so?" said the girl, looking full upon him with withering scorn, "would you dare tell him so, or any other gentleman? Let me pass, sir, and take your hand from my bridle-rein, and never presume under any circumstances to address me again."

"By God! we part not thus," furiously ejaculated the gentleman, maddened by drink and disappointment; "I'll have, yes, by jingo, I'll have a kiss," and he attempted to grasp the frightened girl; but before he could put his drunken threat into execution, a blow of a whip, dealt with no gentle hand, drove his hat over his eyes, and a voice exclaimed, "You paltry cowardly wretch, how dare you

True to her word, forty minutes saw them at the Hall; there was no occasion to ring, for the door was open, and voices were heard within.

"Oh! there is papa's voice," exclaimed Mary, joyfully, as she jumped from Sultan's back without the slightest assistance, and giving the reins of her horse to her companion, ran nimbly up the steps.

"My darling girl!" said the old gentleman.

"Never mind, papa dear, Miss Sprightly has brought me home; I will explain all presently, run down and help her off her horse, and send some one for them."

"God bless my soul! Miss Sprightly!" exclaimed the old gentleman, "you don't say so! I have been frightened to death about you, and was just sending off every one I could get hold of. My dear young lady," said the warm-hearted old man, approaching Bessy, who sat shivering on her horse, and holding the rein of Sultan, "this is truly kind of you, to see my poor girl home; here—to one of the men who approached—take these horses round and see that they are properly done. Is your horse," he continued, "accustomed to a stall or loose box?"

"Oh, do not have him unsaddled, Mr. Thornhill, I shall want him again directly, for mamma will be dreadfully frightened at my being absent so long."

"Nonsense, young lady, you will dine and stay here this evening with Mary. I am just going to send one of the men off in the taxicart to Mrs. Sprightly for your things, and I dare say you will like to despatch to your mamma at the same time; and giving his arm, and without allowing her time to reply, led her up the steps to where his daughter was waiting to receive her.

"Papa," said Mary, "come with me and Miss Sprightly into your study, I have something to tell you. Mr. John Turtlefat," she continued, as they entered her father's sanctum, "has been most insolent and rude towards me; meeting him in the fog as I was endeavoring to find my way home, first of all he proposed to me, and on my refusing him was most violent and offensive, and finished up," here her face flushed with anger, "by attempting to kiss me—the only excuse for him was that he was half tipsy. Miss Sprightly, fortunately coming up at the moment, gave him such a blow with her hunting-whip that he will not forget it for some time."

"What!" interrupted her father, clenching his hands tightly, "do you mean to tell me that John Turtlefat, or any one calling himself a gentleman, could be guilty of such a dastardly act, and towards an unprotected girl too. I am, indeed, Miss Sprightly, truly grateful to you. I will consider over this matter," said the old gentleman, sternly, "and reflect well before I act. Take Miss Sprightly to your room, Mary; she will dine and stay the night here. I am just going to send for things, and she wants to write a note to her mamma."

"This is kind and good of you, I am so glad," said Mary, as she linked her arm into that of her new-found friend's, and led her to her boudoir.

Mr. Thornhill sat ruminating in his arm-chair; he was exceedingly angry, and more moved than he chose to show. Such an insult as his darling daughter had received could not be passed over; but he determined that his nephew should know nothing about it, because he felt certain that as soon as he was able, Charlie would horsewhip Mr. John Turtlefat.

As he was cogitating as to the best course to pursue, his man brought him a note with the Turtlefat crest.

"Ah," mused the old gentleman, as he broke the seal somewhat hastily, "here is an apology," opening the letter.

The contents were as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,

"My son John has just informed me that, whilst showing you daughter home this afternoon he did her the great honor of offering her his hand, and which he felt he was justified in doing after the marked preference Miss Thornhill has shown him on many occasions, and which he did with my perfect concurrence.

"Miss Thornhill not only refused him in a most unceremonious and unfeeling manner, but a young person, by the name of Sprightly, so far forgot herself as a lady as to strike my son with her whip. I need hardly say that after such an occurrence our families can no longer be on terms of intimacy.—I am, yours obediently,

"THOMAS TURTLEFAT.

"Carrier Hall, Wednesday evening."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A perfect fitting shirt is a great comfort to the wearer, leave your measure at Trebles 53 King St. West, 3 doors East of Bay.