

horse till their claim to him is established.

'Very good. Now I am off.'

On arrival at Xminster, Pearman proceeded direct to Glinn, and inquired for Mr. Denison. He was shown into the library, and speedily joined by that gentleman.

'I have come over, Mr. Denison, to have some conversation with you about this somewhat preposterous claim of yours as to 'right of heriot' over Mannersley.'

'I am advised,' replied the squire, 'that the claim is a perfectly valid one, and of course just now valuable.'

'My dear sir, I am not alluding to the right or wrong of the case; but, situated as we are to each other, it seems rather absurd our going to law with each other.'

'Better, Mr. Pearman, say, situated as we were. Moreover, the nearer and dearer the relationship, the more acrimonious the lawsuit; for a bitter quarrel commend me to brothers, from Cain and Abel downward.'

'Then I am to understand that my engagement with Miss Denison is at an end? May I ask upon what grounds it is broken off?'

'My dear sir, your Creator gave you understanding, not I. If you wish to know upon what terms you stand with Miss Denison, see her, and don't trouble me.'

'You said situated as we were.'

'Of course I did. I owed you £10,000, and hadn't got it. Now, it seems you also owe me £10,000, which, of course, makes my not being able to pay you of very little consequence.'

'But you consented to my engagement with your daughter.'

'And would now, if I thought you'd ever want it.'

'I don't understand you.'

'Then it's no use continuing this conversation.'

'Will you answer me a straightforward question? May I ask you if my engagement with your daughter is still to hold good? I care little about this other affair if that remains as it was.'

'And don't I keep telling you that that, being an arrangement between Maude and yourself, if you have any doubts upon the subject, you had better see her?'

'I will ask leave to do so presently. In the meantime, Mr. Denison, to return to this claim of heriot—'

'Excuse me, Mr. Pearman, that I can't touch upon. I have put myself completely in my nephew's hands regarding that subject; but I will send him to you at once, and merely remark, that any arrangement you may make with him has my cordial assent.'

Grenville Rose, meanwhile, had early cognizance of Pearman's arrival, and prepared at once for the encounter. He first ordered a horse to be saddled, and a groom to be in readiness to take a message to Xminster. Next he summoned his cousin to come to him in his uncle's sanctum.

'Maude, dearest,' he said, as she entered, 'the crisis of our fate is at hand. I want you to come and be my aide-to-camp. You must be all eye and brain this morning.'

'Yes. What is it, Gren?' And the gray eyes opened wide as she saw the grave, earnest look upon her lover's face.

'Pearman is here, and your uncle is gone to see him. But in a few minutes I shall be sent for. I'm playing for a great stake this morning, Maude; to wit, the freeing your father from his difficulties, and to win your own sweet self for my own love. Listen. James has got a horse all ready to go for me to Xminster. You see these telegram sheets: I shall come here for one minute, and fill up with a message. Mind James has it, and is off with it at once. You see he does not linger. It is of the utmost importance to us.'

'I understand, Gren. Anything more?'

What do you mean?

'What I say. He might be injured or he beat; in either case, he would not be so valuable a horse as he is now.'

Pearman said nothing for a minute or two; at last he exclaimed abruptly, 'Do you ever bet, Mr. Rose?'

'Certainly not,' was the Jesuitical reply; for, though Grenville Rose never did meddle with turf matters, though he had not made a single bet on the forthcoming 'Two Thousand,' he was yet aware that Dallison was betting for him; albeit he neither knew nor cared to know, so far the particulars of the transaction.

'You can hardly suppose I shall pay such a sum as £10,000. Perhaps you will state what compromise you really intend to offer me?'

'I have none other to propose, than that you sign Mr. Denison a release of the mortgage you hold to that amount upon Glinn.'

'Ah, well! I am afraid you price the horse a little too high.'

'Not at all! We value the horse at £5,000 and the stakes of the 'Two Thousand' at £5,000 more.'

'And who the deuce tells you he is going to win that race?'

'Well, you see,' returned Grenville, smiling, 'we are guided entirely by your own opinion. We are credibly informed that you have thought it worth while to invest a large sum of money on his chance, and we have a high opinion of your judgment in such matters.'

Pearman paused. He was a shrewd man, and he could not help being struck with the ability with which his opponent had got up his case. 'Suppose I let you take the horse?' he said at length.

'Even then he is a valuable horse, and worth just now a fictitious price. There would be people who would give pretty nearly that sum to insure his not starting for that particular race.'

'I'll give you credit, Mr. Rose,' replied Pearman at length. 'I'll sign a release to the mortgage, with this proviso, that my engagement with Miss Denison remains as it was.'

'I have told you already that that question is totally aloof, and must be held entirely distinct from the claim of heriot. It is a point upon which I am not empowered to enter, and have nothing to say.'

Grenville Rose is proving himself a master of casuistry. Though not his mission or interest to speak on that subject, I think it was one he had a good deal to say to.

'Then there is nothing more to be said,' observed Pearman, rising.

'I am afraid not. It would be better on both sides, I fancy, if we had come to terms. We shall probably not make quite so much—that we must take our chance of. You will certainly lose a good deal more.'

'By—you're right! I'll do it!'

'Depend upon it, it's your cheapest way out of the scrape, and I hope Coriander will speedily recoup you. Excuse me for one moment, and I'll fetch the release. I had it drawn up in the event of your taking a sensible view of the transaction,' and Grenville left the room.

'All right, my pet, so far,' he exclaimed, as he entered Denison's private sanctuary, where Maude was anxiously awaiting him, 'Pen and ink, quick!' And seizing one of the telegram slips he wrote rapidly:

'To Mrs. Hudson, Paper Buildings, Temple. From Grenville Rose, Xminster. Shall be home to-night: have something for dinner.'

'There, fold that up, and send it off directly to the telegram-office. No time to be lost Maude.'

'Well, I don't see much in that,' retorted Maude. 'What a gourmand you must be, Gren!'

'Never mind. Where's that deed?—ah

The clerk and Pearman were upon rather intimate relations. The late owner of Mannersley had employed the electric wire pretty freely. His son, also, was wont to use it a good deal. The latter, moreover, constantly sent the clerk game in the season—very often told him he had invested a sovereign for him on one of his horses that he thought was likely to win. It may be conceived that the conductor of the telegraph at Xminster held Mr. Sam Pearman in high esteem.

'You'll be going up by the six train, I suppose, sir? Only half-past three now, but I expect you're going home again first.'

'Just so. I want to have about an hour at the paddocks first.'

'One last look at the crack, eh, sir? Win, won't he, though they do take strange liberties with him in the betting?'

'He's very well, and I'll make some of them open their eyes and shut their mouths before many days are over.'

'Well, you'll have company up, sir—Mr. Grenville Rose, from Glinn; he's going by that train. Know him, Mr. Pearman, I suppose?'

'D—n him, yes. I do know him,' said Pearman, as he thought over their recent interview.

'Beg pardon, sir; didn't know you didn't like him; he's usually reckoned a nice gentleman.'

'How do you know he's going to town?'

'Because he sent a message to say so.'

'What, a telegram? How long ago?'

'About an hour and a half; it was about two o'clock.'

'That was the time I left Glinn, and his telegram left Xminster then. Hum! It must have left Denison's while I was there,' thought Pearman. 'What the devil could it have been about? I say, what was Mr. Rose's message—exactly?'

'Beg pardon, sir, but you know we ain't allowed—'

'Yes, of course. I know; there's a sovereign for you—go on.'

'Well, it can't be of any consequence, and you won't let out I told you, Mr. Pearman,' said the clerk, as his hand closed on the gold coin. 'It was only this: 'To Mrs. Hudson, Paper Buildings, Temple. From Grenville Rose, Xminster. I shall be home to-night; have some dinner.'

'That was all? You're sure?'

'Every word, I'll take my oath.'

'Thank you; keep a place for me by the six train,' and Pearman drove off to see his horses.

It was a very simple message, but the owner of Coriander had been long enough on the turf to know that a telegram may represent anything but what it appears to say. It disquieted him much. He wished that he had driven straight to the station instead of home to Mannersley; he might have written his letters there, and his own telegram would have been off much sooner. In the mean while here he was at the paddocks.

'Well, Martin?' he inquired, as his trainer came out to meet him; 'how are they all going on?'

'Well as can be, sir. Coriander did two nice canters and a good mile and a quarter gallop, to wind up with, this morning. No horse can be doing better. But they tell me they're laying against him in London, as if something was the matter,' and the trainer glanced rather inquiringly at his master.

'Something has been the matter, Martin. Too long a matter to tell you at present; but everything is now satisfactorily arranged. But I want to talk to you about those two-year olds, so come inside.'

After a lengthed conference with his trainer, Pearman returned to the station. Grenville Rose was a fellow-traveller with him, and they even occupied the same carriage but beyond a few words of recognition no conversation passed between them.

Upon entering the Theatine, the first thing Pearman saw in the hall, on casting his eye on the notice-board containing the latest

horse is being backed in earnest, and when, about half-past four, Pearman's accredited agent began also to put money on the horse, the furor became intense.

The ring, or stock-brokers of the turf, like their brethren of the eastern exchange, with all their acuteness, are marvellously like sheep in times of panic. The leaders at both places can increase or depreciate property pretty much at their pleasure. As there is, of course, money to be made by such fluctuations, it can scarcely be wondered at that they do it. But why should the one be deemed virtuous and respectable, and the other the contrary? There is little to choose between the scandals of the two betting rings.

Grenville Rose, upon Pearman's departure had carried the release in triumph to the squire. Harold Denison was jubilant beyond measure; free from these difficulties, and, to use his own expression, 'out of the hands of those blood-suckers, the Pearmans.' The hopes Grenville had raised had influenced him in his interview with Sam Pearman, and, if a little sarcastic in his retorts, the bitter cynicism of his nature had toned down rather upon that occasion. Rose now thought it time to do a little work for himself, so, without more ado plunged in medias res, reverted to his passion for his cousin, and solicited his uncle's permission for their engagement.

Harold Denison was a good deal taken aback. It must be borne in mind that he had not received the slightest hint of this in any way beforehand, and, to say that he was pleased now he did hear it, would be very far from the truth. He liked his nephew, perhaps, as far as it was in his selfish nature to like anybody; but he still thought that Maude, with her personal attractions, ought to marry money or rank, if not both. Still at the present moment, he was virtually indebted to his nephew for £10,000—a circumstance little likely to help him in the long-run, as men of Harold Denison's calibre hate most heartily those to whom they are deeply beholden. However, he had not come to that yet, and the way his nephew had outwitted Pearman pleased his cynic and vindictive nature much.

'Foolish business, Gren, very, I'm afraid,' he replied at length. 'Nobody I'd sooner give her to, providing she's willing to take you.'

'My dear uncle, Maude and I—'

'Pooh! You needn't go on about that. I never doubted that you and Maude had settled it all before you did me the honor to consult me. But what are you to live on? Your £400 a year won't keep a wife, Gren, and I can't help you.'

'No, but we can wait a bit; we are both young, and I shall be making two or three hundred a year at my profession very soon.'

'Nonsense, boy! I know the law. I thoroughly believe you to be clever, and have no doubt the money will come in course of time; but it's slow work, very. Long engagements are not judicious.'

'But this is not to be so very long, and Maude is good to wait a couple of years or so for me.'

'A couple of years,' smiled the squire. 'What did the fee-book say last year? Fifty pounds?'

'Not quite; very near it, though.'

'I'm afraid you'll find it will take all of two years to double it. I don't doubt your doing well at last, but it takes time, it takes time. Still, Gren, I'll not gainsay the match and, if at the end of next year, you can see your way into something like £800 a year, exclusive of what you have, make a wedding of it, if you like.'

'Ten thousand thanks, uncle. This case of yours will find me practised, see if it don't. I have no intention of hiding my light under a bushel. I'll take very good care, through my friends, the case is well talked of. Only wait till the Two Thousand over, and see what details the sporting papers shall have

packages fit in. Don't you think he's making a wife of me, mother, a little before he's entitled to?'

'Go away, you foolish children. I'm tired of your badinage; you can quarrel and make up all the way to the station.'

The refractory portmanteau was soon reduced to subjection under Maude's clever auspices, and then the two cousins walked across the fields to the station.

'Your father's given you to me, Maude, as soon as I can get together an income that we can live upon.'

She might be coquettish before her mother, but she was meek enough to her lover when they were alone together.

'I hope I shall be a good wife to you, Gren. You know I'm not extravagant, however I may laugh about it.'

'No, my darling, I know you better, and, if we have to begin with a little, I hope you'll be able to spend lots of money before long.'

'I never had any money to spend,' said the girl, gravely. 'I've often had to want a five-pound note, both for myself and my poor people in the village.'

'And will have again, pet. Wanting money is the normal condition of ninety-nine hundredths of civilized humanity. But you must turn back now, you have come far enough. Good-bye, and God bless you!' said Rose, as he clasped her in his arms.

'Mine now, forever, isn't it?'

'Yes, Gren. Yours or no one's,' she replied, as she lifted her lips shyly to his. 'Please write.'

'Every day, dearest. Good-bye,' and, with one more kiss, Grenville Rose tore himself away.

How he travelled up to town in the same carriage with Pearman, we have already seen. On his arrival at Waterloo Station he jumped into a cab, and proceeded at once to the Temple. On entering his rooms, the first thing that caught his eye was the figure of Silky Dallison, who, comfortably ensconced in the easiest chair in the room, was making apparently some abstruse calculations on a piece of paper, and referring frequently for guidance to a gayly-bound betting-book.

'All right, old fellow,' he said, in return to Grenville's greeting. 'Wanted to have a talk to you; knew you would come up by that train; told the old party to get rood for two at half-past seven—wants just ten minutes. Go and wash your hands, while I finish what I am about.'

After the 'bit of fish and beefsteak,' that constitutes an ordinary bachelor dinner in chambers, the two began to smoke.

'Now,' said Dallison, 'shall be back to dinner of course meant, as we agreed it should, that Pearman had yielded to your terms. I was off to Plyart directly I got that message, and we have had a busy afternoon of it. We rather woke up the subscription-room at Knightsbridge, I flatter myself. From being an outsider in the betting, we brought Coriander back to 7 to 2, and made him once more first favorite. I told you we had Pearman in a hole, and we had. I suppose you got a lot of money out of him?'

'Yes, indeed, we made him pay £10,000 to let off our claim; and then Grenville recounted his interview with Pearman.'

'Very good; then he's now absolute master of the horse again. Of course, exactly what I expected from your telegram. Now I tell you what I have done. In the first place I laid between us, or rather Plyart did for us, £8,800 to £1,200 against Coriander that was before he was driven back in the betting; of course that left us to win £1,200 if he was beat or didn't start. After getting your telegram I went down to Tattersall's and, with Plyart's assistance, got that who £1,200 on the horse at long odds.'

To be continued.