

stantly by the General appeared at this nature, with tidings of the carriage, while through a vista of time might be seen at the open door a thoroughbred horse on his hind legs, impatient of delay.

"Good-bye, dear Blanche! You look so tired. I hope you haven't done too much."

"Good-bye, dear Clara! I've had such a pleasant afternoon."

Putting her into the carriage, the General's kind heart melted within him. She looked so pale and worn. She clung so confidently, so dejectedly to his arm. She pressed his hand so affectionately when he bade her good-bye, and seemed so loth to let it go that, but for the eyes of all England, which every man believes are fixed on himself alone, he would have sprung in too, and driven off with her then and there.

But he consoled himself with the certainty of seeing her next day. That comfort accompanied him to his bachelor lodgings, where he dressed, and lasted all through a magnificent dinner at the London Tavern.

While a distinguished leader proposed his health, alluding in flattering terms to the services he had rendered, and the dangers he had faced, General St. Joseph was thinking far less of his short soldier-like reply than of the pale face and the dark eyes that would so surely greet him on the morrow; of the future about to open before him at last, that should make amends for a life of war and turmoil, with its gentle solace of love, and confidence, and repose.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A HARD MORSEL.

Like the feasts of Apicius, that dinner at the London Tavern was protracted to an unconscionable length. Its dishes were rich, various, and indigestible, nothing being served *au naturel* and without "garnish" but the brave simplicity of the guests.

"Wines too there were, that would have slain young Amnon."

and old comrades seldom part under such conditions without the consumption of much tobacco in the small hours. Nevertheless, St. Joseph rose next morning fresh and hopeful as a boy. He ordered his horse for an early canter in the Park, and shared the flow with divers young ladies of tender years but dauntless courage, who crammed their ponies along at a pace that caused manes, and tails, and golden hair to float horizontal on the breeze, defiant even of that mounted inspector, whose heart though professionally intolerant of "furious riding," softened to a pugny with snub nose and rosy cheeks, on a tiny quadruped as round, as fat, and as saucy-looking as itself.

St. Joseph felt in charity with all mankind, and returned to breakfast so light of heart that he ought to have known, under the invariable law of compensation, some evil at misfortune was in store.

He had little appetite; happiness, like sorrow, when excessive, never wants to eat; but he dressed himself again with the utmost care, and after exhausting every expedient to while away the dragging hours, started at half-past eleven for the abode of his lady-love.

Do what he would, it was scarcely twelve when he arrived at her door, where his summons remained so long unanswered, that he had leisure to speculate on the possibility of Miss Douglas being indisposed and not yet awake. So he rang next time stealthily, and as it wore, under protest, but in vain.

The General then applied himself to the area bell. "They'll come directly, now," he argued; "they'll think it's the beer!" And sure enough the street-door was quickly unfastened, with more turning of keys, clanking of chains, and withdrawing of bolts than is usual during the middle of the season, in the middle of the day.

A very grumpy old woman met him on the threshold, and peering suspiciously out of her keen, deep-set eyes, demanded his business in a hoarse voice, suggestive of gin.

gone. I should say as they wa'n't coming back, none of 'em, no more."

This redundancy of negatives forcibly expressed her hopefulness of their return, and the General's good sense told him it was time wasted to cross-question his informant any further. Summoning his energies, he reflected that the post office would be the best place whereto to prosecute inquiries, so he bade the old woman farewell, with all the fortitude he could muster, leaving her much impressed by his manners, bearing, and profusely lib'rality.

At the post-office, however (an Italian warehouse round the corner), they knew nothing. The General, at his wits' end, bet-thought him of those livery-stables where Satanella kept her namesake, the redoubtable black mare.

Here his plight excited the utmost interest and commiseration. "Certainly. The General should have all the assistance in their power. Of course, the lady had forgotten to leave her address, no doubt. Ladies was careless, sometimes, in such matters. A beautiful 'orse-woman," the livery-stable keeper understood, "an' kep' two remarkably clever ones for her own riding. Had an idea th' y went away this very morning. Might be mistaken. John could tell. John was the head-ostler. It was John's business to know." So a bell rang, and John, in a long-sleeved waistcoat, sleeking a close-cropped head, appeared forthwith.

"Black mare and chestnut 'oss," said John decidedly. "Gone this morning; groom took with him saddles, clothing, and everything. Paid up to the end of their week. Looked like travelling—had their knee-caps on. Groom a close chap; wouldn't say where. Wish he (John) could find out. Left a setting-muzzle behind, and would like to send it after him."

There seemed nothing to be done here, and the General was fain to retrace his steps, hurt, anxious, angry, and more puzzled when he reached home than he had ever been in his life.

For an hour or two, the whole thing seemed so impossible, and the absurdity of the situation struck him as so ridiculous, that he sat idly in his chair to wait for tidings. In this nineteenth century, he told himself, people could not disappear from the surface of society, and leave no sign. Rather, like the sea-bird diving in the waves, if they go down in one place, they must come up in another. There were no kidnappings now, no sendings off to the Plantations, no forcible abductions of ladies young or old. Then his heart turned sick, and his blood ran cold, while he recalled more than one instance in his own experience, where individuals had suddenly vanished from their homes and never been heard of again.

Stung to action by such thoughts, he collected his ideas to organize a comprehensive system of pursuit, that should embrace enquiries at all the railway stations, cab-stands and turnpikes in and about the metropolis, with the assistance of Scotland Yard in the background. Then he remembered how an old brother-officer had told him, only the other day, of a similar search made by himself, and attended with success. So he resolved to consult that comrade without delay. It was now two o'clock. He would find him eating luncheon at his club. In five minutes the General was in a hansom cab, and in less than ten, leaped out on the steps of that military resort.

Had he gone there an hour ago, it would have spared him a good deal of mental agitation, though perhaps any amount of anxiety would have been preferable to the dull, sickening resignation which succeeded a blow that could no longer be modified, parried, nor escaped. In after-times, the General looked back to those ten minutes in the hansom cab as the close of an era in his life. Henceforth, every object in nature seemed to have lost something of its coloring, and the sun never shone so bright again.

In the hall an obsequious porter handed him a letter. He staggered when he recognized the familiar hand-writing on the envelope, and drew his breath hard for the effort before he tore it open.

may, as you love me—not to try! So now, farewell—a long farewell, that it pains me sore to say. I shall never forget you. In all my conflict of feelings, in all my self-reproach and bitter sorrow, when I think of your pain, I cannot bring myself to wish we had never met. I am proud of your notice and your regard—proud to remain under obligations to you—proud to have loved you so far as my false, wicked nature had the power. Even now I can say, though you put me out of your heart, do not let me pass entirely from your memory. Think sometimes, and not unkindly, of your wilful, wayward—

"BLANCHE."

So it was all over. "It's a good letter," murmured the General; "but I prefer the one Julia wrote to Juan." Then he read it through again, and found, as is usually the case, that the second perusal reversed his impression of the first. Did she really mean he was to abstain from all attempt to follow her? He examined the envelope; it bore the stamp of the General Post Office; the contents certainly afforded him no clue, yet, judging by analogy, he argued that no woman would lay such stress on the precautions she had taken if she did not wish their efficacy to be proved. When he found, however, that nothing short of police-detectives and newspaper advertisements would avail him, he took a juster view of her intentions, and in the chivalry of his nature resolved that under this great affliction, as in every other condition of their acquaintance, he would yield implicitly to her wish.

So he went back into the world, grave, kindly, and courteous as before. There were a few more grey hairs in his whiskers, and he avoided ladies' society altogether; otherwise, to the unobservant eye, he was little altered: but a dear old friend whom he had nursed through cholera at Varna, and dragged from under a dead horse at Lucknow, took him into a bay-window of the club-library, and thus addressed him—

"My good fellow, you're looking shamefully sedy. Idleness never suited you. Nothing like work to keep old horses sound. Why don't you apply for employment? There's always something to do in the East."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"SEEKING REST AND FINDING NONE."

But great nations do not plunge recklessly into war, nor even do mountain tribes rise suddenly in rebellion because an elderly gentleman is suffering like some sentimental school-girl from a disappointment of the heart. General St. Joseph's extorted, indeed, from a great personage the promise that if anything turned up he would not be forgotten, and was fain to content himself for the time, with a pledge in which he knew he could place implicit trust. So the weary, hot months dragged on, and he remained in London, solitary, silent, pre-occupied, wandering about the scenes of his former happiness, like a ghost. He went yachting, indeed, with one friend, and agreed on a pedestrian excursion through Switzerland with another; but the "sad sea waves" were too sad for him to endure, and the energy that should have taken him over a mountain, or up a glacier, seemed to fail with the purchase of a knapsack and the perusal of a foreign Bradshaw, so the walking tour was abandoned, and the friend rather congratulated himself on escaping such a mournful companion.

When autumn came round with its many temptations to Scotland, where the mair-fowl were crowing about their heathery knolls, and the red-deer sunning their fat backs on the leeward side of the corrie, he did indeed avail himself of certain invitations to the hospitable North; and the General, who could level rifle or fowling-piece, breast a hill, or plunge through a moss with his juniors by twenty years, strove hard in fatigue of body to earn repose for the mind. But he did not stay long; the grand, grave beauty of those silent hills oppressed and

concern themselves about its fate, but continue their browings, baskings, croppings, waterings, and friskings, with a well-bred resignation to another's plight worthy of the human race. If the General's friends and acquaintances asked each other what had become of him, and waited for an answer, they were satisfied with the conventional surmise—

"Gone to Scotland, I fancy. They tell me it's a wonderful year for grouse!"

Mrs. Lushington, yachting at Cowes, and remaining a good deal at anchor, because it was "blowing fresh outside," thought of him perhaps more than anybody else. Not that she felt the least remorseful for the break-up she believed to have originated solely in her own manoeuvres. She was persuaded that her information conveyed through the anonymous letter had aroused suspicions which, becoming certainties on inquiry, detached him from Satanella, and, completely mistaking his character, considered it impossible, but that their dissolution of partnership originated with the gentleman. How, the lady fared interested her but little, and in conversation with other dearest friends, she usually summed up the fate of this one by explaining—

"It was impossible to keep poor Blanche straight. Always excitable, and unlike other people, you know. Latterly, I am afraid, more than flighty, my dear, and more than odd."

Besides, Mrs. Lushington, as usual had a great deal of business on hand. For herself and her set Cowes was nothing in the world but London gone down to the sea. Shorter petticoats, and hats instead of bonnets, made the whole difference. There were the same attractions, the same interests, the same intrigues. Even the same horses went to and fro, and bored, as they breathed, more freely in the soft, Channel air. Altogether, it was fresher and quieter, but, if possible, stupider than Pall Mall.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Lushington being in her natural element, exercised her natural functions. She was hard at work, trying to mate Bessie Gordon, nothing loth, with a crafty widower, who seemed as shy of the bait as an old grudgeon under Kew Bridge. She had undertaken, in conspiracy with other frisky matrons, to spoil poor Rosie Barton's game with young Wideacres, the catch of the season; and they liked each other so well that this job alone kept her in constant employment. She had picnics to organise, yachting parties to arrange, and Frank to keep in good humor; the latter no easy task, for Cowes bored him extremely, and, to use his own words, "he wished the whole place at the devil!" She felt also vexed and disappointed that the General had withdrawn himself so entirely from the sphere of her attractions, reflecting that she saw a great deal more of him before he was free. Added to her other troubles was the unpardonable defection of Soldier Bill. That volatile light dragoon had never been near her since Daisy's marriage—a ceremony in which he took the most lively interest, comporting himself as "best man," with an unparalleled audacity, and a joyous flow of spirits, that possessed, for a gathering composed of Hibernians, the greatest attractions. People said, indeed, that Bill had shown himself not entirely unaffected by the of a lovely bridesmaid, the eldest of Lady Mary's daughters; and it was impossible to over-estimate the danger of his position under such suggestive circumstances as must arise from a wedding in the house.

Then a grey hair or two had lately shown themselves in her abundant brown locks; while of the people she chose to flirt with, some neglected her society for a cruise, others afforded her more of the excitement produced by rivalry than she relished, none paid her the devoted attention she had learned to consider her due. Altogether, Mrs. Lushington began to find life less *couleur de rose* than she could wish, and to suspect the career she had adopted was not conducive to happiness, or even comfort. Many people make the same discovery when it is too late to abandon the groove in which they have elected to run.

Daisy, in the meantime, true to his ex-

hearts. "What a goose you were to back me!" observed Daisy, with a pressure of the arm that clung so tight round his own. "It served you right, and I hope cured you of betting once for all!"

"That's no answer to my question," persisted Mrs. Walters. "I'm asking you to tell me about my beautiful Blanche Douglas, and why wouldn't the old General marry her if she'd have him?"

"That's it, dear!" replied her husband. "She wouldn't have him! She—she accepted him, I know, and then she threw him over."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Norah. "Though, to be sure, he might have been her father." Then a shadow passed over her fair young brow, and she added wistfully, "Ah, Daisy! I'm thinking I know who she wanted all the time."

"Meaning me?" said Daisy, with a frank, saucy smile, that brought the mirth back to her face, and the sunshine to her heart.

"Meaning you, sir!" she repeated playfully. "But it's very conceited of you to think it, and very wrong to let it out. It's not so wonderful, after all," she added, looking proudly in his handsome young face. "I suppose I'm not the only girl that's liked you, dear, by a many. I oughtn't to expect it!"

"The only one that's landed the fish," laughed Daisy, stopping in the most effectual manner a little side with which she was about to conclude her peroration. "You're mistaken about Miss Douglas, though," he added, "I give you my word. She hadn't your good taste, my dear, and didn't see it! Look, Norah, there's the very place I left Sullivan's fishing-rod. He'll never get it again, so it's lucky I bought his little brown horse. I wonder who found it. What a day that was! Norah do you remember?"

"Remember!"

So the conversation turned on that most interesting of topics—themselves, and did not revert to Satanella nor her doings. If Norah was satisfied, Daisy felt no wish to pursue this subject. However indiscreet concerning his successes, I think when a man has been refused by another lady, he says nothing about it to his wife.

CHAPTER XXIX.

UNDIVIDED.

The late autumn was merging into early winter, that pleasantest of all seasons for those sportsmen who exult in the stride of a good horse, and the stirring music of the hound. Even in Pall Mall true lovers of the chase felt stealing over them the annual epidemic, which winter after rages with unabated virulence, incurable by any known remedy. A sufferer—it would be a misnomer to call him a patient—from this November malady was gaping at a print-shop window, near the bottom of St. James's Street wholly engrossed in the performances of a very bright bay horse, with a high-colored rider, flying an impossible fence, surrounded by happy huntig-grounds, where perspective seemed unknown.

"D'ye think he'll get over, Bill?" said a familiar voice, that could only belong to Daisy Walters, who had stolen unperceived behind his friend.

"Not if the fool on his back can pull him into it," answered the other indignantly. And these comrades, linking arms, turned eastward, in the direction of their club.

"How's the Missis?" said Bill, whose boast it was that he never forgot his manners.

"Fit as a fiddle," replied the happy husband. Had a long letter from Molly this morning. Sent her best love—no, scratched that out, and desired to be kindly remembered to you."

Molly, called after Lady Mary, was the eldest and, in Bill's opinion, the handsomest daughter, so he changed the subject with rather a red face.

TO BE CONTINUED.