

The Captain, however, after a long and painful struggle, had put a long distance between them and the land. "No more—tapping, Charlie," said Lord Verriest, "till we get to the old land. You really are the most unfortunate fellow I ever saw for getting into trouble, and by no fault of your own."

Lord Mary Thornhill had been terribly excited by the event of the morning; but she found calmness in the outline of the rock got faint in the distance. "Charlie," she said, as they sat together on the deck, "you must promise me one thing, or I will never be your wife."

"What is it, dearest?" he asked.

"That you never again, under any pretence whatever, fight another duel; I shall be wretched if I get over the fright of this. I think nothing more similar would kill me."

"Well, I think, Mary, I can safely promise you never to fight again. I did not seek it; but to be struck before a lot of gentlemen, many of whom were perfect strangers to me, was more than I could bear or put up with."

"So it is, Charlie," said Sir John, who had caught the words. "but you have done quite enough to prove you are no coward, and, my boy, this is your first and last duel of this sort. You have passed your word, which is quite sufficient, but you will soon have him in charge, Mary. You must see it you cannot take it out of him; then we do; I should like to think what might have been the consequence. It is all your fault, though; why will you captivate the men with that bewitching little face of yours? I shall soon have to put you down as a regular flirt."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW AS FUGITIVE BECAME A MAN OF SUBSTANCE.

Mr. Pastern had done but little since he left Colonel Downey's service. Lately he had become a great man, for Bluster had taken him on again. As long as he kept away from drink, no one could do a horse better than Pastern. His master had now only two, the same he had purchased of All-anob in Yorkshire. So Pastern was taken on again, with the explicit understanding he was to give up drink, at least during the day. This he had done, and he really looked quite a different personage.

"He was sitting one evening in the little bar-parlour of the 'Hen and Chickens,' the chief hostelry of the village in which Bluster now resided, about three miles from Brighton. This saloon was kept by a buxom widow of forty, who was doing a brisk business, the house, garden, and stabling were her own, with thirty acres of meadow land, and not, as she said, 'a single sixpence owing on it.'"

Pastern had often thought what a famous arrangement it would be if he could only induce Mrs. Martin to change her name, and that he could call himself the landlord of the house. He had thrown out sundry hints, but they had not as yet been taken, and all he had effected was an entree into the bar-parlour, where he sat, if an evening, smoking his long clay and drinking his rum and water, and it is very fun to him to say he had not exceeded in his libations.

Well one evening as I have said, he sat in the parlour; Mrs. Martin and her barmaid were busy serving customers, when a little dapper man entered, and asked if "there was a Mr. Pastern in the house."

"You will find him in the bar-parlour, sir," pointing to the door, and wondering at the same time who the spruce little gentleman could be.

"Good evening, sir," said the stranger, entering. "Are you James Pastern?"

"Yes I am, sir; what might you be wanting with me?"

"I want a good deal, Mr. Pastern; I have

been thinking of it for some time. I have it. What have you, Mr. Pastern?" asked the stranger, who that instant entered unperceived by the groom.

"Why I should like to have you," he replied, valiantly.

"Lord, Pastern, don't talk such nonsense."

"There isn't no nonsense in it, I can tell you, Mrs. Martin. Look here, you saw that little gent that came into me just now; he's a lawyer from London, and came to inform me that my old Aunt Martha is dead, and left me—how much do you think?"

"Perhaps twenty-five pounds; perhaps a hundred."

"What do you think of six hundred pounds Mrs. Jane Martin? every blessed halfpenny of it."

"Lord, Mr. Pastern, and what will you do with such a sum? Well, I am glad, I'm sure."

"Do with it, Mrs. Martin? will you share it with me? With this house and that coin we can do pretty well, I reckon."

The matter was soon settled between them. Mrs. Martin agreed to change her name to Pastern.

"There's stabling here for eight horses, and four loose boxes; I shall fill those, Jane," he said, as they sat over their tea. "I must do a little in the horse-dealing line. This is in the midst of a hunting country, such as it is; but I can make it answer, I know," and after discussing various plans, they separated for the night.

Bluster was more than astonished at the news his servant gave him, and as he was a good natured fellow, congratulated him on it.

The next morning Pastern took himself to London, but the same evening saw him in a little bar-parlour of the "Hen and Chickens."

"It's all settled, Jane," producing a cheque book, "and the money is lodged, and it only remains for you and I to fix a day; the sooner the better."

After the usual pleadings for delay on the part of the lady, it was agreed that they were to be married the following week—which they were.

Pastern was now a man of substance, and was soon busy at work. He gave up drinking more than was good for him; the stables and loose boxes were done up nicely, some of the fields divided, and sheds put up, and he commenced as horse-dealer and breeder. He had half-a-dozen good brood mares, and other horses always on sale. The first he bought were those of Shirkington Duffer, the two he had purchased in Yorkshire; the poor fellow's nerve was gone, and by his attentiv. little wife's advice, he sold them, and invested in a nice pair of carriage horses.

Pastern's place was soon the talk of the surrounding country. If you wanted a hunter or a carriage horse, Pastern's was the place to get it; if he had not the animal you required, he would soon get it for you. He worked hard, and money came in fast, and he was careful of it; there was no denying he was sharp practice, but he was as honest as many of the others. Money-making became his idol, and he determined to extend his operations, and go into a fresh line, and that was a little racing.

It soon became known that Mr. Pastern was owner of a pretty good pair of platers. He contented himself with the small meetings, where he was pretty certain to win. Pastern was almost grown out of people's knowledge, he was so altered; he was dressed in a sporting style, and had grown a beard and moustache, in fact, the Pastern of former days was not to be recognized in the spruce, smart, well-to-do Pastern of the present. He did a little in the betting line too. At home he was grand, and seated in his little bar-parlour, with a few choice friends with him, he was an emperor of horse-dealers.

"Racing and steeple-chasing is all very well," he said to an admiring audience, "for them as understands it, but where one does, a hundred know nothing about it. Then the horses they will go betting and piling on the lagoon, knowing not what they are doing. A man as makes a book mustn't be too particular; if he is, he's doomed to a dead certainty. Then, bless you, many 'osses is put into tip-top fettle, and fit to run for their lives, but it ain't intended for them to win, that would not suit the stable, or the owners either; they've worked the oracle another way, and they win by their horses losing, and the public is thereby let in. No, 'oss racing is a very ticklish thing to meddle with, I can tell you. I remember once as nice a

At a service, sir," replied the groom, touching his hat. "Walk inside, sir."

"You are, I think," said the gentleman, "dabbling a little on the turf?"

"In a small way, sir, a very small way; it's more in 'osses I deals, but I have a couple of middling platers just for amusement's sake, as it might be; but they pay, and have paid well hitherto."

"Just so, Mr. Pastern. Well, I am Mr. —," giving his name.

"What, the great Mr. —?" said the other, in astonishment.

"Yes, the great Mr. —, if you will have it so. Now, what I have to say is strictly between ourselves. I have your word never to divulge a syllable of what I am going to state to you?"

"Not a word, sir. Mum's the word. I'm as close as wax?"

"Good," said the stranger. "Now, I have a horse going for a large stake. He carries an immense sum of money, but he must not"—dropping his voice to a whisper—"win—do you understand?"

"I twig, sir."

"Now," continued the stranger, "are you willing to go into the market and lay against him?"

"Of course, I am, sir, if I can see my way but I must be made safe."

"Certainly you will be, but it is a very ticklish business."

"Never mind that, sir. If I'm made safe I can work the oracle. What might you propose giving me for my trouble?"

"Well, I propose five hundred pounds."

Mr. Pastern whistled softly.

"You're going against him heavily," he said.

"A fortune," replied the other; "but, now I come to consider of it, it will be better for you to do it through an agent, if you will undertake it. I will give you five thousand five hundred in notes. The five thousand you must pay at once to the agent, and give me his receipt for the money, the five hundred you keep for yourself. You will go up with me to town at once, then we will take a cab, and go direct to the agent. Does this suit you?"

"This is your own horse you are laying against, sir?" said Pastern, interrogatively.

"It matters not whose horse it is. I am supposed to be backing him heavily. So I am, but I am laying against him still more heavily; I shall win ten times more by his losing than I should by his winning. Say yes or no."

"Why yes, of course, sir, I am your man. I will be with you in five minutes."

And he bustled away to prepare for the journey. The two were soon on the road to London, which they reached in due time. Taking a cab, they pulled up short at a well-known betting agent's, and Pastern got out and proceeded the rest of the way on foot, his companion waiting for him in the cab.

"It is a large sum," remarked the agent, as he was taking down the numbers of the notes; "it cannot be all got on here, I must work Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester. Are you laying out this money on your own account?"

"Every farthing of it," replied Pastern. "You will let me know from time to time how you are getting on," and giving him his address took his departure.

He did not proceed direct to the cab till he had assured himself no one was following him.

"Is it all arranged?" asked the other, as Pastern made his appearance.

"All settled, sir, and here is the receipt for the money."

"Good, Pastern; the cab will put me down at my club, and afterwards take you on to the station if you choose. I suppose you are going back at once. I shall see you from time to time. I never write on matters of this sort. Now, if you are wise, you will invest that five hundred on your own hook at the price the horse will be soon. You may make five thousand of it; you will never have such a chance again. Here we are. Now, mind, Pastern, you keep your mouth shut."

"Well, this is a start," soliloquized Pastern, as he was driven towards the terminus, "five hundred pounds for doing, as one might say, nothing. I wondered how he found me out, but law, those fellows know every one that may be of the slightest use to them. Make five hundred into five thousand, might I? Well I won't risk it, safe bind, safe find."

perfectly of condition. "Well, what do you think of him?" asked a voice at his elbow. Pastern turned and beheld Major Rasper.

"Ah, good-morning, Major, glad to see you, and looking so well. What do I think of him? Why, he looks fit to run for a man's life, for a kingdom."

"There's nearly enough money, Pastern, on and against him, to buy a kingdom."

"Do you stand against him, Major?" asked the ex-groom.

"No, Pastern, I do not; on the contrary. I took 44 to 1 ten times over. I stand to lose ten pounds, and win four hundred and forty."

At last the horses took their preliminary canter.

Those that had laid against him looked anything but comfortable as they saw his easy and grand action as he strode along, mounted by one of the most brilliant and fortunate jocks of the day.

It is needless to describe the race, the maddening excitement of the countless thousands, when "Mystery" won in a canter.

Pastern turned pale as he thought of what might have been the fate of his five hundred pounds if he had laid against him. He had won in the exact sum the Major had, for he had been tempted to risk ten sovereigns.

"I see it all now," he exclaimed to himself, "cunning devil, all of them. They backed the horse at first but could not get on at the price they wanted; they risk perhaps ten or twelve thousand pounds to draw the horse back in the market, and then take all the odds by commission, and at 44 to 1 they must have done pretty well; but to try and put me in the hole, and tell me to lay against him; a nice gentlemanly trick. Dashed if I'll ever bet another farthing!"

And he never did, he had made nine hundred and forty pounds out of the transaction, and thought he had done enough.

Pastern became quite an altered character; with money came importance and proper behaviour. He looked after his affairs well; he both bred and sold horses, but never ran another after the "great sell," as he called it.

The "Hen and Chickens" threw under the careful and watchful eye of Mrs. Pastern, and it was allowed on all hands that a better conducted inn was not to be found. But Pastern never meddled in household matters, his horses were his hobby, and he made a good thing of them, and he passed away his time as merrily as might be.

Having brought him so far on his stage through life, we here take leave of him.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

The "Firefly" sped merrily on her way homewards, carrying a fair wind with her. A great load was off Mary's heart as she saw the grand old rock sink, and gradually die away in the distance; but still there was an unaccountable sadness on her which she could not shake off—the presentiment of evil was still upon her though she tried all she could do to shake it off, and appear gay.

"What is the matter with you, Mary?" asked Charlie, as they were pacing the deck, "you are not yourself at all, there is no occasion to be frightened now all is over."

"Would that I could think so, Charlie, but I am so sad, and I scarcely know why. I wish with all my heart we were safe and sound at dear old Linden Hall again."

"So you will be soon, dearest, we are getting on famously, the vessel is positively tearing through the water—she is going as fast a steamer."

"Yes, Charlie, I know that, but still it is a long way—that affair at Athens, and that still more horrible duel of yours, has quite unmoved me, and so it has Lady Verriest."

"Well, well, Mary, you must cheer up, a few days will see us at home again; then you will have your favorite Sultan to ride, and I shall be able to go about with you."

The vessel made good way; but when off the coast of Cornwall the wind shifted, and the yacht labored a bit; the glass too had gone down, and there was every appearance of dirty weather.

"What do you think of it?" asked his Lordship, as he paced the deck with his Captain.

"We are in for nasty weather, my Lord; it looks uncommon threatening, and there is

more?"

"We shall go on shore, sir," returned the seaman. "I've set canvas to keep us off already, but it split like a rag, nothing can save us if it goes on like this."

"This is horrible, most horrible! can nothing be done?"

"I've done all I can, sir, you see yourself what a sea is on, and the gale too; if we were only further down I could make Falmouth. God help us if we are drawn much nearer on the coast."

The ladies were up, poor frightened things, huddled in the saloon. Sir John and old Mr. Thornhill did all they could to cheer them.

"Is there no hope?" asked Lady Verriest, as Charlie came down dripping through.

"I won't say that, returned he gravely, "but we are getting fearfully near the coast, it cannot now be more than a mile off, and the tide has yet four hours' flow; but we must not give way, what can be done will be done, we have an able Captain and a willing crew."

The morning drew on, but there was no abatement in the weather, it blew as hard as ever, and the coast was painfully near.

The noble yacht rose like a cork on the angry waves, everything that seaman's craft could suggest was done to keep her off the iron-bound coast, but to no purpose; people could be seen on shore, for the signal gun of the "Firefly" had been fired constantly.

The captain was standing to windward with his glass to his eyes, scanning intently the shore.

"Oh, George," sobbed poor Lady Verriest, as her husband entered the saloon, and throwing himself into his arms, "to be so soon married and so soon parted; is there no hope?"

"None, Bessie," he replied, "unless God succours us, the vessel and all in it are, I fear, doomed."

The poor frantic women cast themselves on their knees, in earnest prayer, crying and sobbing at intervals—now lamenting they had ever come on this voyage—now praying to God to help them in their distress.

"I see the people making signs, Mr. Charles," said the Captain. "I have it now! there is a little still water yonder, but we shall never reach it. A few minutes will decide our fate; no boat can live in such a sea. Get two anchors ready for'ard," he shouted; "hoist the storm jib, and hands up mainsail; if we can only carry on for a quarter of a mile more, there might be a chance, though a poor one."

Scores of people were now congregated on the shore, rushing wildly about, and making signs towards a comparatively quiet bit of water.

"Will she do it, Captain, do you think?" asked Lord Verriest; he was very pale, but collected.

"There's no yacht afloat, my Lord, can sail nearer the wind than the Firefly. We must go between these two rocks; once inside, I think we might do; but the wind comes puffy now. Keep her up," he bawled to the men at the wheel, "a close till you see the sail shiver in the throat."

Gallantly did the yacht bear the strain on her. She crept along towards the desired spot; but kept drawing nearer and nearer the fatal shore. Her decks were deluged with water; but, considering all things, she stood well up. Frightfully near did she approach the rocks, the men at the helm watching with anxious eye when to put the helm hard up, and let her go through the narrow opening. They waited no telling; they knew full well that their lives—the lives of all on board—depended on their steadiness.

Nearer and nearer they came; one might have thrown a biscuit on some of those tremendous rocks, with their jagged edges.

"God help us now!" he uttered, as the sides of the vessel positively touched one of the rocks; but at that instant her helm was put hard up, and she flew through the narrow opening, the water curling over the stern, and nearly burying her. Then her helm was reversed again, and flew up to wind on the instant, her canvas flapping in the gale.

Then there was a rattle of the chains as they ran through the hawes-holes, and the yacht rode with her head to wind.

A loud cheer echoed along the shore from fifty stalwart throats, which was answered by the crew of the "Firefly."

"Do they hold?" asked the Captain, moving forward. "Down jib and mainsail."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]