

and looking round the room with an air of defiance as he proposed so well-known a toast. Sir Hugh was a man of a certain grim humor, as he drained his goblet and nodded to his companion, he added, 'May the rats dance to his whistle, and the devil—that's you, Ned—take the hindmost!'

Colonel Bludyer rose from his chair placed his cocked hat on his head, and turned the buckle of his sword belt in front. 'The King!' he shouted, raising his hat with one hand and filling a bumper with the other. 'The King!' he repeated, scowling fiercely at his two neighbors.

'Over the water!' roared Ned Meredith; and the Colonel, turning rapidly round, and mistaking his man, flung his cocked-hat right in Sir Hugh Horsingham's face. Swords were out in a second—thrust, parry, and return passed like lightning, but the bystanders separated the combatants; and Meredith, determining for the sake of Lucy that Sir Hugh should encounter no unnecessary danger, took the whole quarrel on himself, and arranged a meeting for the following morning with the redoubtable Colonel Bludyer. Thus it was that while Lucy and her boy were basking in the summer sunshine, Cousin Edward was exhausting all his knowledge of swordsmanship in vain endeavors to get within that iron Colonel's guard. The duel was fought on the ground now occupied by Leicester Square, Sir Hugh and Mr. Thornton officiating as seconds, though, the latter being disabled from the effects of a recent encounter, they did not, as was usual in those days, fight to the death, merely *pour se desarmayer*. Stripped to their shirts—in breeches and silk stockings, with no shoes—the antagonists lunged, and glared, and panted, and twice paused for breath by mutual consent, with no further damage than two slight wounds in Ned's sword-arm.

'Very pretty practice,' said Mr. Thornton, coolly taking a pinch of snuff, and offering his box to Sir Hugh; 'I'm in despair at not being able to oblige you this fine morning.'

'Some other time,' replied Sir Hugh, with a grim smile; 'd—ation,' he added, 'Ned's down!'

Sure enough, Cousin Edward was on the grass striving in vain to raise himself, and gasping out that he wasn't the least hurt. He had got it just between the ribs, and was trying to staunch the blood with a delicate laced handkerchief, in a corner of which, had he examined it closely, Sir Hugh would have found embroidered the well-known name of Lucy. Poor, Cousin Edward! it was all he had belonging to his lost love, and he would have been unwilling to die without that fragment of lace in his hand.

'A very promising fencer,' remarked Colonel Bludyer, as he wiped his rapier on the grass. 'If he ever gets over it, he won't forget that *plongant* thrust in tierce. I never knew it fail. Thornton—never, with a man under thirty.' So the Colonel put his coat on and drove off to breakfast, while Sir Hugh took charge of Ned Meredith, and as soon as he was recovered—for his wound was not mortal—carried him down with him to get thoroughly well at Dangerfield Hall.

It is an old, old story! Love, outraged and set at defiance, bids his time, and takes his revenge. Dangerfield looked a different place now, so thought Lucy; and her spirits rose, and the color came back to her cheeks, and she even summoned courage to speak without hesitating to Sir Hugh. When Cousin Edward was strong enough to limp about the house, it seemed that glimpses of sunshine brightened those dark oak rooms, and at last he was able to take the air, once more leaning on Lucy's arm, alas! alas! he had become even dearer to the impassioned, thoughtful man than ever he was to the timid, vacillating girl. There was an addition now to the party on the terrace in the bright autumn noontimes, but the two boys

\*One of the many passwords by which the adherents of the Chevalier distinguished their falconed Prince.

cheerlessness and desolation, and its mistress went moping about, more than ever miserable and broken-hearted. Such a state of things could not long go on; the visits forbidden openly took place by stealth, and the climax rapidly approached which was to result in the celebrated Dangerfield tragedy.

At this period there was set on foot another of those determined plots which, during the first two reigns of the house of Hanover, so constantly harassed that dynasty. Sir Hugh, of course, was a prime mover of the conspiracy, and was much in London and elsewhere, gathering intelligence, raising funds, and making converts to his opinions. Ned Meredith—having, it is to be presumed, all his energies occupied in his own private intrigues—had somewhat withdrawn of late from the Jacobite party; and Sir Hugh heard, with his grim, unmoved smile, many a jest and innuendo levelled at the absentee.

One stormy winter's evening, the baronet, well armed, cloaked and booted, left his own house for the metropolis, accompanied by one trusty servant. He was bearing papers of importance, and was hurrying on to lay them, with the greatest despatch, before his fellow-conspirators. As the night was drawing on, Sir Hugh's horse shied away from a wild figure, looming like some spectre in the fading light; and ere he had forced the animal back into the path, his bridle was caught by a half-naked lad, whom the rider at once recognized as an emissary he had often before employed to be the bearer of secret intelligence, and who, under an affectation of being half-witted, concealed much shrewdness of observation, and unimpeachable fidelity to the cause.

'Whip and spur, Sir Hugh—whip and spur,' said the lad, who seemed flustered and confused with drink; 'you may burst your best horse betwixt this and London, and all to get there before you're wanted. A dollar to drink, Sir Hugh, like Handsome Ned gave me this morning—a dollar to drink, and I'll save you a journey for the sake of the Bony White Rose, and the Bird with the Yellow Bill.'

Sir Hugh scrutinized the lad with a piercing eye, flung him a crown from his purse, and bid him out with what he had to say, for that he himself was hurried, and must push on to further the good cause. The lad was sobered in an instant.

'Look ye here, Sir Hugh,' he said eagerly; 'Handsome Ned went down the road at a gallop this morning. There's something brewing in London, you may trust me, Sir Hugh, and I tried to stop him to learn his errand; but he tossed me a crown, and galloped on. He took the Hill-road, Sir Hugh, and you came up the Vale; but he's bound for Dangerfield, I know, and mayhap he's got papers that will save your journey to London. No offence, Sir Hugh,' added the lad, for the baronet's face was black as midnight.

'None, my good boy,' was the reply, in a hoarse, thick voice. 'Hold, there's another crown for you—drink it every farthing, you villain! or I never give you a sixpence again; and Sir Hugh rode on, as though bound for London, but stopped a mile farther forward, at a place where two roads met; and entrusting his papers to his servant, bade him hasten on with them, whilst he galloped back through the darkness in the direction of his home.

Home, indeed! Had it ever been home to Sir Hugh? Would it be home to-night? When he got back there, and skulked into his own house like a midnight thief—what would he do?—why was he galloping so fast? Sir Hugh set his teeth tight, and holding his powerful horse hard by the head, urged him on faster than before. The lights are all out in the little village of which he is sole master, and his horse's hoofs clattering through the street, rouse the sleepy inmates for an instant, ere they return to their peaceful rest. Sir Hugh is not asleep—he feels as if he never should want to sleep again.

How dark it is in the Park, under those huge old trees! He fastens his horse on

my wife to obey me.' Lucy was forced to rise, and, trembling in every limb, to present the tables to her lord. Sir Hugh placed the dice-box on the table, laid his pistols beside it, and, taking a seat, motioned to Cousin Edward to do the same. 'You are a man of honor, Mr. Meredith,' he repeated; 'we will throw three times, and the highest cast shall blow the other's brains out.' Lucy shrieked and rushed to the door; it was fast, and her husband forced her to sit down and watch the ghastly game.

'Good God, Sir Hugh!' exclaimed Cousin Edward, 'this is too horrible—for your wife's sake—any reparation I can make, I will; but this is murder, deliberate murder!'

'You are a man of honor, Mr. Meredith,' reiterated Sir Hugh; 'I ask for no reparation but this—the chances are equal if the stakes are high. You are my guest, or rather, I should say, Lady Horsingham's guest. Begin.' Cousin Edward's face turned ghastly pale: he took the box, shook it, hesitated, but the immovable eye was fixed on him; the stern lips repeated once more, 'you are a man of honor,' and he threw—'Four.' It was now Sir Hugh's turn. With a courteous bow he received the box, and threw—'Seven.' Again the adversaries cast the one a six, the other a three; and now they were even in the ghastly match. Once more Cousin Edward shook the box, and the leaping dice turned up—'Eleven.' Lucy's white face stood out in the lamplight, as she watched with stony eyes that seemed to have lost the very power of sight.

'For God's sake, forego this frightful determination, Sir Hugh,' pleaded Cousin Edward; 'take my life in a fair field. I will offer no resistance; but you can hardly expect to outdo my throw, and nothing shall induce me to take advantage of it: think better of it, Sir Hugh, I entreat you.'

'You are a man of honor, Mr. Meredith, and so am I,' was the only reply, as Sir Hugh brandished the box aloft, and thundered it down on the table—'Sixes!' 'Good casting,' he remarked; and at the same instant, cocking the pistol nearest to him, discharged it full into his antagonist's bosom. The bullet sped through a delicate lace handkerchief, which he always wore there, straight and true into Cousin Edward's heart. As he fell forward across the table, a dark stream flowed slowly, slowly along the carpet, till it dyed the border of Lucy's white dress with a crimson stain. She was on her knees, apparently insensible; but one small hand felt the cold, wet contact, and she looked at it, and saw that it was blood. Once more she uttered a shriek that rang through those vast buildings, and rushed again to the door to find it locked. In sheer despair she made for the window, threw open the casement, and, ere Sir Hugh could seize or stop her, flung herself headlong into the court below. When the horrified husband looked down into the darkness, a wisp of white garments, a bruised and lifeless body, was all that remained of Lady Horsingham.

That night one half of Dangerfield Hall was consumed by fire. Its mistress was said to have perished in the flames. The good neighbors, the honest country-people, pitied poor Sir Hugh, galloping back from London, to find his house in ruins and his wife a corpse. His wife's companions missed Ned Meredith from his usual haunts; but it was generally supposed he had obtained a mission to the Court of St. Germain, and there was a rumor that he had perished in a duel with a French marquis. A certain half-witted lad, who had followed Sir Hugh back to Dangerfield on that fearful night, might have elucidated the mystery, but he had been kidnapped and sent to the plantation. After many years he returned to England, and on his deathbed left a written statement, implicating Sir Hugh in the double crime of arson and murder. But long ere this the culprit had appeared before the tribunal which admits of no reprieve, and the pretty boy with the golden curls had become lord of Dangerfield Hall. The long corridor had been but partially destroyed. It was repaired and refurnished by

lavender one, that had done a great deal of London work, but was still quite good enough for the country,—and started off for a walk all by myself, confiding my intentions to no one; as I well knew, if I did, I should have Aunt Deborah's 'Kate, pray don't overheat yourself, my dear. Do wrap yourself up, and take care not to catch cold;' and Lady Horsingham's sarcastic smile, and 'In my time, Miss Coventry, young ladies were not in the habit of trailing all over the country by themselves; and fishing, and shooting, I shouldn't wonder—not worse than hunting, at any rate. However, I say nothing;' and Cousin Amelia, with her lackadaisical sneer, and her avowal that 'she was not equal to walking,' and her offer to 'go as far as the garden with me in the afternoon.' So I tripped down the back of the staircase, and away to the stables, with a bit of sugar for Brilliant, who had arrived safely by the train, in company with White Stockings; and on through the kitchen-garden and the home-farm up to the free, fresh, breezy down.

I do enjoy a walk by myself, and it was the last chance I should have of one; for Cousin John was expected that very day, and when Cousin John and I are anywhere, of course we are inseparable. But I am sure an occasional stroll quite by one's self does one more good than anything. I think of such quantities of things that never occur to me at other times—fairies, brigands, knights, and damsels, and all sorts of wild adventures; and I feel so brave and determined, as if I could face anything in a right cause, and so good, and I make such excellent resolutions, and walk faster and faster, and get more and more romantic, like a goose, as I know I am.

Well, it was a beautiful morning, early in autumn—blue sky, light fleecy clouds, a sharp clear air from the north—the low country studded with corn-ricks, and alive with reapers, and cart-teams, cattle: a green valley below me, rich in fine old timber, and clothed with high thick hedgerows, concealing the sluggish river that stole softly away, and only gleamed out here and there to light up the distance; whilst above and around me stretched far and wide the vast expanse of down, cutting sharply against the sky, and dwarfing to mere shrubs the clumps of *old fir-trees that relieved its magnificent monotony*. I was deep in a daydream, and an imaginary conversation with Frank Lovell—in which I was running over with much mental eloquence what I should say, and what he would say, and what I should reply to that—when a shrill whistle caused me to start and turn suddenly round, whilst at the same instant a great black retriever bounced up against my legs, and two handsome pointers raced by me as if just emancipated from the kennel. The consequence of this all was, that I stepped hastily on a loose stone, turned my foot the wrong way under me, and came down with a slightly-sprained ankle, and the black retriever, an animal of exceedingly noisome breath, after affectionately licking my face.

'Down, June!—I beg your pardon a million times!—Get down, June!—How shall I ever apologise?—Confound you, get down!' said an agitated voice above me; and looking up, I espied the red-haired stranger of the railway, dressed in a most conspicuous shooting-cum-fur, white hat and all, whose dogs had been the means of bringing me thus suddenly to the earth, and on whom I was now dependent for succour and support till I should be able to reach home.

In such an emergency, my new friend was not half so confused and shy as I should have expected. He seemed to summon all his energies to consider what was best to be done; and as my foot pained me considerably when I tried to walk (particularly down-hill), he made me more ado, but lifted me carefully in his arms, and proceeded incessantly to carry me off in the direction of Dangerfield House, where he seemed intuitively to know I was at present residing. It was, to say the least of it, an unusual

and done under the name of pleasure and duty which belong in reality to neither; and that those who live entirely in the country inflict on themselves a great variety of unnecessary disagreeables, as they lose a great many of its quiet delights. Of all receptacles for weariness, commend me to a dinner-party of country neighbors by daylight—people who know each other just well enough to have opposite interests and secret jealousies—who arrive ill at ease in their smart dresses, to sit through a protracted meal with hot servants and forced conversation, till one young lady on her promotion being victimized at the pianoforte, enables them to yawn unobserved; and welcome ten o'clock brings round the carriage and tipsy coachman, in order that they may enter on their long dark, drive home through lanes and byways which is only endurable from the consideration that the annual ordeal has been accomplished, and that they need not do it again till this time next year.

There was a dinner-party at Dangerfield regularly once a month, and this was a day Aunt Horsingham was great on these occasions, astonishing the neighbors as much with her London dresses as did Cousin Amelia with her London manners. We all assembled a few minutes earlier than usual in the drawing-room, so as to be ready to receive our guests, and great was the infliction of poor Aunt Deborah and my humble self. How they trooped in, one after another! Sir Brian and Lady Banneret, and Miss Banneret, and two Misses Banneret: these were the great cards of the party, so Lady Horsingham kissed Lady Banneret and young ladies, and opined Master Banneret was grown, much to the indignation of the young gentleman, who, being an Oxonian, of course considered himself a man. Sir Brian was a good-humored jolly old boy, with a loud laugh, and stood with his coat-tails flung ed, and his back to the empty fireplace, in perfect ease and contentment. Not so the lady; first she scrutinized everything Lady Horsingham had got on; then she took a view of the furniture, and specially marked one faded place in the carpet; lastly, she turned a curious and disappointed glance myself. I accounted for the latter mark displeasure by the becoming shade of my gown; I knew it was a pretty one, and would meet with feminine censure accordingly. The Bannerets were soon followed by Mr. and Mrs. Plumridge, a newly-married couple, who were feted accordingly. Plumridge was a light-haired unmanly-looking individual, partially bald, with a coat and white satin neckcloth; his bride, lively, sarcastic, black-eyed little woman, must have married him for her own convenience—they said afterwards she was over-governed; but at all events she held her own handsomely when alone with the ladies after dinner, and partly from good nature, partly from an exceedingly off-hand manner, forced even Lady Banneret to be civil to her. Then came the Marquis and the Margyolds, and old Mrs. Fitch, a sedan-chair from the adjoining village, a goodish-looking man whose name I made out, and Mr. Spriggs the curate; and lastly, in a white heat and a state of confusion, my shy acquaintance of the way and the pointers, who was ushered by Lady Horsingham's pompous butler in the style and title of Mr. Haycock. He appeared to be a great friend of the Marquis, and, much to his own discomfiture, immediately laid violent hands on my eye and cousin—the former not thinking it necessary to present him to me, till he offered his arm to take me to dinner, when the face of reproval, on his stammering when he had met Miss Coventry before, was anything expressive as it was of shock and priety and puzzled astonishment.

When you have a secret only known by your two selves, even with a shy man, it is wonderful how it brings him on. My soap was off the table, Sir Hugh Haycock had become wonderfully good friends, I had hoped 'my ankle did not pain me.' I had trusted 'his arms did not ache.'

(To be Continued)