

WON IN A CANTER.

(CONTINUED.)

"I wonder where Emily can have got to," he exclaimed testily, closing up his book with a bang, and taking a sip at his glass. "This makes the fourth day she is away, and not a line from her; she might have been back yesterday, but women are so infernally dilatory. I could have done the business in a couple of days," his meditations were cut short by a cab drawing up to the door.

"Ah," said he jumping up, there she is at last, better late than never. Well, old girl, as the so-called Mrs. Bruton entered the room, "what news, has he bled?"

"No, Harry," meaning herself wearily in a chair, "he has not bled. Give me the baby, Mary, I will warn him, the poor little pet is frozen to death. Go down and get your supper, and come up as soon as you have finished. No, Harry," she continued, as soon as the girl had left the room—she did not mention the fifty pounds she had received—"he has not bled; I know, before you sent me on this wild-goose chase, it would be of no use; and really I do not see how you could expect it. I must say he has behaved most liberally to me; this house, though it is in St. John's Wood, is worth a hundred a year, and the furniture is worth another, with it and three hundred a year we ought to do well. And we can live well; but you are so idle and will do nothing, ever in the billiard-room, away at night, or at race meetings, how do you think we can get on? I am thoroughly ashamed of myself, but you would make me go."

"He is an infernal screw," replied her companion, "nothing better than a screw. What is a couple of hundred more to him? A bagatelle."

"That may be, Harry, but people are not so fond of parting with their money. I have nothing to complain of, as regards Lord Verriest, if you have; did you not take me away from a happy home under the solemn promise of marriage, and how have you kept the promise? What have I been obliged to do? It maddens me when I think of it, you bring me to London, in six months you are penniless; then you twist me on Seymour, and I have to keep you all the time on the wages of my sin. Seymour, after a time, pines for a fresh toy, dismisses, or rather passes me over to his friend Verriest. What misery! what degradation! Oh, Harry, Harry, you have brought me to all this. Why don't you marry me, and make me an honest woman? Thank what I have to go through for you," and she burst into tears. "It is as well you should know now all I have to say," she continued, after a short pause. "I swear I will give you shelter here no longer. I will not lead this life, this house, and the income I receive, are mine; I have a child now to provide for. I am certain if I write to his Lordship he will get me another house, for the lease of this has only three more months to run. I will go far away to some quiet corner, where I shall never be known, with my little one. I can never marry any one except yourself, so choose if you will have a true wife, or whether you will go on your own way, and by yourself."

The young man pondered awhile. "What could we do?" he asked at length, "the only thing I understand is farming, and we have no capital to commence with. I hate London, I am tired of it; I am fond of shooting and country pursuits."

"If I get the means," she asked, "will you marry me? but understand me, if I do, I keep the money, as I have hitherto. If I had not, what would have become of us? Marry me, let us take a farm far away, and try and forget the miserable past, and bring up the poor baby properly. God knows whose it is, his or yours, but he has promised to provide for it, and that promise he will keep."

"By Heavens! Emily, if you only get the means, I will marry you, marry you under any circumstances—there, what can I say more?"

Henry Bruton was not a bad-hearted young man in the main, but he had terribly deceived his poor victim. The least said about their wretched history the better. We see the same thing every day, and it will ever be the same till the end of all time.

"Bessy," said Lord Verriest, one morning, after he had unlocked the letter-bag, and gone through all his letters, "you remember Mrs. Bruton, that person who called on you the other day?"

"Of course I do, George, what about it?"

"Well, I have just had a letter from her; the man who first seduced her from home wishes to marry her and set up farming—

her servant said, "An elderly gent, quite respectable." Could he have come to see her, could he have forgiven her?

"Show him up, Mary," and Mary accordingly ushered in the elderly gent. The man was a stranger to her; taking the seat which she had pointed to him, he commenced.

"I am Lord Verriest's lawyer. You wrote to him a day or two ago, did you not? asking for some assistance to take and stock a farm. I am desired by his Lordship to tell you he accedes to your wishes, but it is on condition you are married to the gentleman you named; I must be present at your wedding, and when you are married my instructions are to pay to your credit one thousand pounds and, also the sum of one hundred and twenty-five pounds quarterly; which is five hundred per annum."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed the poor creature, bursting into tears, "how good, how generous! what can I do in return for such generosity?"

"His Lordship will be more than repaid if he knows you are going on quietly and steadily. Now as to a farm; I presume you wish to get as far away from town as possible. I know one of some five hundred acres in Cornwall, beautifully situated; it is to be rented for a mere song, and it will pay you. The house is small, a cottage, in fact, sweetly pretty, but quite large enough; it is a little paradise. The stock, furniture and all, can be had at a valuation, and that I should think would be about six or seven hundred pounds. Now, young lady, take an old man's advice, and strike whilst the iron is hot; be married by special license to-morrow, say the word and I will procure it."

The next morning Emily was married to Henry Bruton.

"Thank God, Harry, you have at last done what was right," she said as she hung fondly and proudly on her husband's arm. "I am indeed a happy woman; you shall never have cause to reproach me by word or deed. To-morrow we will go down to Cornwall and look at the farm."

Far away from the busy hum of the vast and overgrown metropolis, far away from the eternal noise and little village—among a primitive people, quiet and homely in their ways, close to the sea, which is for ever breaking against the iron-bound coast of Cornwall, reside Bruton and his wife. In a sweet little cottage, covered with myrtle and jessamine, they are settled for life—life which has so many charms for some, and so bitter to others.

Happy is the man or woman who can live to three-score and ten without sorrow; do such exist? I fancy not—life so fleeting, so uncertain, so eluding to, and yet so hateful to tens of thousands.

The higher we are educated, the more we think—the more we are aware of our littleness and insignificance; for the short space that is allowed us on earth, we ought to do all we can, and make our fellow-creatures happy too.

Henry Bruton had made his wife's life joyous by marrying her; he had repaid; as far as he could, a grievous fault, and he had determined to make her forget, if possible, the past which he would willingly have recalled; he liked his new life, his farm and stock employed all his time, he kept the house in game, and was ever busy and doing, and in a short time he found by attention that it would pay him well.

"My happiness would be complete, Harry," his wife said to him one night, "if I could only get my father to forgive me, and come down and see us; poor old man, I did so love him. I have written three times, but my letters have never been answered."

"You must give him time, Emily; with time he may come round, and I am sure I hope he will for both our sakes; luckily, he is not aware you have ever lived with any one but myself, and he need never be wiser on that point. I wonder he holds out, now we are married."

"You little know my father, Harry. He feels deeply the way in which I have disgraced him, and I fear he will never notice me more. I can fancy his loneliness at home all by himself, my two brothers away in America, and my sister married and in New Zealand—poor desolate old man, I pity him."

A loud knocking at the door at this instant interrupted their conversation, and Harry went to see who it was at this hour. The night was pitch dark, and there was a drizzling rain falling.

"I've had an accident!" exclaimed a voice; but Bruton could not see who the speaker was, "for the love of God come down with me and bring a lantern, I am afraid the gentleman is killed. I had no lamp and drove into the ditch and upset the trap."

Barton hurried away with a light and a couple of his men. "Get a bed ready, Emily," he said, on leaving, "it may be

The first person he recognised was his daughter, and a smile flitted across his face as he saw her.

"Emily! he feebly exclaimed, "forgiven!"

Consciously and tenderly did she nurse him, and at the end of a week he was sitting up; then came explanations.

"I longed to see your face again, my poor girl, I was so lonely at home, so I resolved to let the past be forgotten and take you to my heart once more."

"Lonely, father, of course you are, why not come and live with us? you will easily get some one to take your cottage off your hands, for the remainder of your lease, you have no furniture to move. Why not send Harry for your things, and remain here altogether?"

"Would you have me?" he asked.

"Only too happy, my dear kind old dad."

"Well then, Emily, it shall be so; I shall be no expense to you, I have my own little income, but you must go and get all my traps yourself. You know them all, which your husband does not, he will not mind staying with me."

The next day she was gone, the old man's cottage was put into an agent's hands, his things collected, packed up, and sent off; she then ran up to London to make a few purchases, intending to take the early mail next morning. It was somewhat late in the evening when she finished making her purchases, and she was proceeding down Bond Street, intending to call a cab to take her to the hotel, she ran against her former protector, Seymour.

"Good heavens, Emily, is that you? dressed to the nines, too—who the devil are you living with now? Come home and have dinner with me."

"You are mistaken, sir," she answered haughtily, "I decline your acquaintance; but as you wish to know who I am living with, I answer, my husband," and she passed on.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the gentleman, "she does the high moral famously; married! no, I am not so green as to swallow that tale; living with some one who keeps her well at any rate, she was beautifully dressed. Well, such is life," and he sauntered away to his club.

Emily was dreadfully agitated at this meeting, it recalled the past vividly to her mind, and she was only too glad to take her seat in the "Gallop" next morning to return to Cornwall.

She found her father much improved and anxiously looking out for her; the old gentleman's things were soon placed in a sitting-room expressly fitted up for him, leading to his bedroom. She was now a happy woman.

"Bruton told me," he said, "that a relative of his left him a little money, and he took this place; but if you want any more, I can let you have what you like."

"No father, we want none at present, the farm pays." She was grateful, her husband had got her off telling a lie to her parent.

In a day or two she wrote to Lord Verriest informing him how happily she was settled, what a nice place they had, and that her father was living with them.

"There, Bessy, is a letter from Emily Bruton," said his Lordship, after reading it at breakfast; "poor girl, she is well and happy now."

"I am truly glad to hear it, George. I think and hope she will make an affectionate wife, and that your kindness will not be thrown away. Fancy, I have had a letter from Alice; she says she is delighted with her new home; that she has lots to do, and has never a minute to spare, but that she is ever pestered with the curate there. He first called, then he brought music, then he remained to play and sing, and now he comes nearly every evening—that it is very evident what his intentions are—that she has given him no encouragement—on the contrary, she has been rather rude to him; but he will take no hint or rebuff. She writes to me for advice; he knows too that she is going to be married shortly, and she winds up by saying that although he is such a popular preacher, so much thought of and run after, that she can see nothing in the Reverend Butteer Gammone."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A fashionable preacher was the Reverend Butteer Gammone; people flocked to hear him, there was never such an earnest eloquent young man before; he was a wonder; the parish was indeed lucky to have such a curate appointed by their rich rector, who only made his appearance amongst his parishioners once a year. In person he was tall and well-made; a good figure, black hair and whiskers, most carefully brushed and

voted him an ass and a bore; and more than one had said he was quite sure the curate did not write his own sermons—that he had heard them before. They were remarkably like Dean Stanley's and other celebrated divines.

The Reverend Butteer Gammone, although a ladies' man, was never known to have proposed to any lady. And as he was now about thirty, his congregation thought it was high time he chose one from among them; but, unfortunately, there was not a married one amongst the whole lot, though he always declared he would never marry for filthy lucre, so they had hopes, nor were they as a rule strictly beautiful.

He would attach himself to some young lady for a whole day at a croquet party. She would in consequence rise to the highest pitch of delight and expectation, and feel certain she had hooked him, and that he only wanted an opportunity to pop; but at the next meeting he would choose a fresh idol, and merely say a few civil words to his former partner.

Mamas were over doing the civil to him. Dinners, invitations, and game, when in season, came to him in quantities; and a haunch of venison now and then found its way into his larder.

Such was the Reverend Butteer Gammone, curate of the parish where Alice Lee resided. She was constant in her attendance at church. She went every Sunday morning; but never more than once a day.

The pretty and lucky mistress of Thorley Farm was greatly admired by most of the young farmers and people of her class. But somehow or other she stood aloof from them; and she attended so constantly to her farm and household affairs that she was seldom seen except on Sunday morning.

She took a delight in her newly-acquired property; her house was a picture of order and cleanliness. She had little or no trouble, because her late uncle's farm hands and servants were old and trusted ones.

"If you please, mistress," said her elderly housemaid, coming into Alice's little room one afternoon, where she was sitting marking some new house linen, "the clergyman has come to see you, and has sent in his card," handing one to her (she had then been nearly a month in her new home); "I have shown him into the drawing-room, missus."

"Very well, Jane, I will go in immediately," she was always well-dressed and to be seen at any time.

"I have called, Miss Lee," said the gentleman, "as one of my parishioners, to make your acquaintance. I ought to have come before; but my parish is so large and my duties so heavy that I must plead that as an excuse."

"I am sure, Mr. Gammone, I am much obliged to you for calling now. No apology is necessary; I know how many calls clergy-men have on their time."

"You play, Miss Lee, I see," casting his eyes on the Erard piano Alice had treated herself to—a second-hand one from Cramers' but as good as new.

"Yes, I used to play a good deal. My poor father insisted on my learning, and I am very fond of it; but I have so little time now to attend to it."

"I don't on music," he said, turning up his eyes; "I play a little, enough to accompany myself to my songs." By this he let her know he sang. "Do you sing?"

"A little, but I have very few songs."

"You must allow me to bring you some—some of Moore's melodies, they are beautiful. But you have made quite an alteration in the house, Miss Lee, so comfortably and prettily furnished. Newly papered too! you have great taste."

"It is very kind of you to say so, sir. I do not think my uncle used the sitting-rooms much, for they were quite out of order. I re-furnished them, because—because," she said, hesitatingly and blushing, "I am going to be married."

"Oh! indeed," he answered, somewhat dryly. "Soon?"

"In about two months, sir." He shortly after took his leave, saying "he would call again in a few days, and bring the music."

"I don't know what it is," thought Alice, after her visitor had left, "but somehow or other I don't like that man; there is a sly, cruel expression in his face which is extremely disagreeable. Nothing honest, about it; he never looks one in the face; no, I do not like it at all."

A day or two after, Mr. Gammone found time to call again with a roll of songs. On this occasion he did not leave till he had sung them all through; then he sat and talked for an hour or more, getting what he could out of Alice in a quiet way. And it was not long before he discovered that her engagement was of very recent date; and that she had not known the gentleman very long.

"I shall soon come again," Miss Lee, and

was staying there at the time a Major Stewart with an only daughter, a very nice elegant girl, not beautiful, but still pretty enough; but she had one of the most splendid figures ever seen, and a tiny little foot and ankle. Jessie Stewart and Gammone fell in love with one another. It was reported the Major was exceedingly well off. He kept his brougham and man-servant, gave good dinners, had a wine party once a week, and every now and then a dance at his place. After a while Jessie and Gammone were married; and I came over from Cowes again in the yacht to be his best man. I had promised to do so in a moment of thoughtlessness; and deuced inconvenient it was too, for I lost the first fortnight in Scotland by it. Old Stewart gave a grand wedding breakfast; and it was decided they were to live with him.

"The rest of the story has been told by a friend, for I left the day after they were married."

Gammone and his wife went to Paris for a fortnight, and then returned, taking up their abode with the old gentleman. Gammone did not seem now in such good spirits as he had been, and rumours went about that the bride had no fortune; however, it was only the old dit, and no one knew anything about it. The old gentleman gave his dinners as usual, and everything went on the same; but one day he was struck down by apoplexy, and four and twenty hours afterwards he was lying at the English cemetery at St. Severn. Then came out the truth—there was not a farthing. All the money was sunk in an annuity, and Mrs. Gammone was perfectly penniless. Gammone went over to England to see about things and make some inquiries, leaving his wife behind. A fortnight after he had been gone she received a letter from him, stating that though he exonerated her, her father had miserably deceived him. That they had not money to live together, and that night he was starting for Australia; wished her good-bye, and said he had no doubt she would be well looked after by her St. Severn friends; and that if things ever turned up trumps with him, she would be the first to know, and he would come over and fetch her.

"There was a kind-hearted old English lady living there quite alone, and with plenty of means; she took compassion on the half-maddened creature, and there she is at present moment installed as companion. I only heard about her just before our marriage. As for Gammone, he never wrote a line, nor has he been heard of. Now, Bessy, you have this scoundrel's history."

"Alice shall know all about it by to-morrow's post," said her ladyship, quietly. "This is the pet curate that all make such a fuss about! I'll put Alice on her guard at any rate, and if I know her rightly, which I think I do, she will make it remarkably unpleasant to his reverence."

"My dear Miss Lee," said the curate the Sunday night following the above conversation, "I have come to see what is the matter, you were not at church this morning. I fear you are unwell."

"No, Mr. Gammone, but I did not feel inclined to go to-day."

"Fie, fie," said he, playfully, "you should not neglect your religious duties for a day; if it had been raining, now, or bitterly cold, there might have been some excuse, but such a lovely day as this has been."

"Well, at any rate, Mr. Gammone, I did not go, but you must forgive me."

"Of course, I will forgive you anything, but let us talk of another matter. You cannot but have observed the great interest I feel in you—more than that, the love I have for you; this he said in his most dulcet tones. "Mr. Gammone!" she exclaimed, and her eyes flashing. "You are aware I am engaged, but perhaps, sitting calmly down again, 'it has slipped your memory.'"

"Well, Miss Lee, honestly I cannot say it has, but everything according to the old adage is fair in love or war. Yours is not a long engagement, you have only known the gentleman a short time, he cannot give you the position I can—will you be my wife?—we can be married at once—write to him and break off your engagement; say, Miss Lee—Alice—shall it be so?"

The girl sat perfectly quiet—pale as death—her lips livid and compressed; but she uttered not a word. Her companion fondly imagined his triumph and victory was secure, and that the "Yes" would come as soon as she had sufficiently collected herself.

"Alice," he said, "do not keep me in suspense any longer, say you will be mine; you know now how I doat on you."

"Mr. Gammone," she at length replied, "you have asked me a question, and that is to be your wife; I will answer it by asking you another."

"What is it, Alice? I will answer anything," he breathlessly said.

"Well, Mr. Gammone," she asked, with