

with his hunting whip, and led the way to the stable.

We may now return to Monsieur Perrot, and see how he set about the discharge of his sudden commission; but it may be necessary, at the same time, to explain one or two particulars not known to his master, or to the Squire. Monsieur Perrot was very gallant, and his tender heart had been smitten by the charms of Mary, the still-room maid; it so happened on this very morning that he had prepared sily, as a surprise, a little "*déjeuner à la fourchette*," with which he intended to soften Mary's obduracy. We will not inquire how he had obtained the mushroom, the lemon, and the sundry other good things with which he was busily engaged in dressing a plump hen-pheasant, when he received the above unexpected summons. Monsieur Perrot's vanity was greater than either his gourmandise or his love; and, without hesitation, he determined to sacrifice to it the hen-pheasant: his first step was to run to the still-room; and having stolen a kiss from Mary, and received a box on the ear as a reward, he gave her two or three very brief but important hints for the coffee, which was to be made immediately; he then turned his attention to the hen-pheasant, sliced some hacon, cut up a ham, took possession of a whole basket of eggs, and flew about the kitchen with such surprising activity, and calling for so many things at once, that Mr. Alltripe left his dominion, and retired to his own room in high dejection.

Meanwhile the Squire, having sauntered through the stables with Reginald, and enlightened him with various comments upon the points and qualities of his favourite hunters, took out his watch, and exclaimed, "the time is up, my boy; let us go in and see what your precious Mounseer has got for us." As they entered the library, Monsieur opened the opposite door, and announced breakfast as quietly and composedly as if no unusual demand had been made upon his talents. The Squire led the way into the breakfast-room, and was scarcely more surprised than was Reginald himself at the viands that regaled his eye on the table. In addition to the brown and white loaves, the rolls, and other varieties of bread, there smoked on one dish the delicate salmi of pheasant, on another the Squire's favourite dish of bacon, with poached eggs, and on a third, a most tempting *Omelette au Jambon*.

Marmaduke Shirley opened his eyes and mouth wide with astonishment, as Monsieur Perrot offered him, one after another, these delicacies, inquiring, with undisturbed gravity, if "Monsieur desired anything else! as there were other dishes ready below!"

"Other dishes! why, man, here's a breakfast for a Court of aldermen," said the Squire; and having ascertained that the things were as agreeable to the taste as to the eye, and that the coffee was more clear and high flavoured than he had ever tasted before, he seized his nephew's hand, saying, "Reginald, my boy, I give in; your Master Perrot's a trump, and no man shall ever speak a word against him in this house! A rare fellow!" here he took another turn at the omelette; "hang me if he shan't have a day's sport;" and the Squire, chuckling at the idea that had suddenly crossed

him, rang the bell violently: "Tell Repton," said he to the servant who entered, "to saddle 'Rattling Bess' for Monsieur Perrot, and to take her to the cover-side with the other horses, at ten."

"She kicks a bit at starting," he added to Reginald; "but she's as safe as a mill; and though she rushes now and then at the fences, she always gets through or over 'em."

Now it was poor Perrot's turn to be astonished: to do him justice, he was neither a bad horseman (as a courier) nor a coward; but he had never been out with hounds, and the enumeration of "Rattling Bess's" qualities did not sound very attractive to his ear; he began gently to make excuses, and to decline the proposed favour: he had not the "proper dress;" "he had much to do for Monsieur's wardrobe at home;" but it was all to no purpose, the Squire was determined; Repton's coat and breeches would fit him, and go he *must*.

With a rueful look at his master, Perrot slunk off, cursing in his heart the salmi and the omelette, which had procured him this undesired favour; but he was ordered to lose no time in preparing himself, so he first endeavoured to get into Mr. Ripton's clothes; that proved impossible, as Mr. R. had been a racing jockey, and was a feather-weight, with legs like nut-crackers; having no time for deliberation, Monsieur Perrot drew from his valise the courier suit which he had worn in France; and, to the surprise of the whole party assembled at the door, he appeared clad in a blue coat, turned up with yellow, a cornered hat, and enormous boots, half a foot higher than his knees: he was ordered to jump up behind the Squire's carriage, and away they went to the cover-side, amid the ill-suppressed titter of the grooms and footmen, and the loud laughter of the maids, whose malicious faces, not excepting that of Mary, were at the open windows below.

When they reached the place appointed for "the meet," and proceeded to mount the impatient horses awaiting them, Perrot eyed with no agreeable anticipation the long ears of Rattling Bess laid back, and the restless wag of her rat-tail, and he ventured one more attempt at an escape. "Really, sir," said he to the Squire, "I never hunted, and I don't think I can manage that animal; she looks very savage."

"Never mind her, Monsieur Perrot," said the Squire, enjoying the poor valet's ill-dissembled uneasiness. "She knows her business here as well as any whipper-in or huntsman; only let her go her own way, and you'll never be far from the brush."

"Very well," muttered Perrot; "I hope she knows her business; I know mine, and that is to keep on her back, which I'll do as well as I can."

The eyes of the whole field were upon this strangely attired figure, and as soon as he got into the saddle, "Rattling Bess" began to kick and plunge violently; we have said that he was not in some respects a bad horseman, and although in this, her first prank, he lost one of his stirrups, and his cornered hat fell off, he contrived to keep both his seat and his temper; while the hounds were drawing the cover, one of the Squire's grooms restored the hat, and

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