

on foot at the present moment that required a coadjutor. The Major then seated himself at his writing-table, and made some brief and mysterious memoranda in his betting book, without which volume, unless perchance it had been in his bath, Dick Kynaston had for years never been met.

XII.

BOB BRADDOCK'S CONDITIONS.

"So I'm to be civil to Mr. Furzedon, am I?" mused Mrs. Kynaston, as she sat in her pretty drawing-room the day after her meeting with Miss Devereux. "Now I wonder what that means. Dick never gives me those instructions without a reason. I don't particularly fancy Mr. Furzedon myself; I wonder what Lettie thinks of him. She had ample opportunity of studying him during the month he was at North Leach; however, as she is coming to lunch here, I shall have an opportunity of ascertaining."

Miss Devereux was true to her appointment, and the two ladies sat down to their meal *tête-à-tête*. After gossiping gaily over various subjects, Lettie asked her friend whether she thought there was any chance of their taking The Firs again next winter.

"I am sure I can't say," replied Mrs. Kynaston. "You see men like my husband now and then don't hunt at all. Dick will race, and there are bad years as well as good ones at that amusement; and then we can't afford horses. The Firs is a cheap place, but I don't think Dick quite liked it. He prefers a more thickly populated neighborhood. By the way, have you seen anything of that Mr. Furzedon who was staying with you last winter?"

"Oh, yes; he called the other day. He has quite done with Cambridge, you know, now, and is settled in London."

"Yes," replied Kate, "I have an idea he is trying hard to push his way into London society. What did you think of him, Lettie?"

"He made himself very pleasant while he was with us—was very good-natured, and seemed to enjoy himself."

"All of which, my dear," said Mrs. Kynaston, laughing, "does not give me the slightest insight into what you think of him. Do you consider him quite good form? Is he of the same stamp as Mr. Slade, for instance?"

"No," rejoined Miss Devereux, quickly; "but he is a soldier, and there is something different about soldiers, you know. I am so anxious that Charlie should become one. He is much too fond of hunting to become a clergyman, and I'm sure he would never do any good as a barrister, and he must be something."

"Quite so," replied Mrs. Kynaston, with mock gravity; "men must be something, if it is only to keep them out of mischief, and they don't always do that. Charlie would make a very dashing Hussar; and I ought to be a judge, for I knew the ringing of bits and bridles well in my early married days. Dick didn't sell out for a couple of years after we married. Mr. Slade is good-looking," she continued, after a momentary pause. "Don't you think so?"

"Yes," rejoined Lettie; "it is one of those dark, handsome faces we are all apt to go wild about."

"He can be very agreeable, too, when he likes. I hope you found him so the other day at Lady Ramsbury's."

"Very much so," replied Miss Devereux. "I am glad to say that there is a chance of seeing a little of him next winter."

"How so?" inquired Mrs. Kynaston.

"His regiment has been moved up to York, and the Dragoons from there often come down to our country balls; besides, he has declared that he will come down and see Polestar run at Lincoln in the autumn."

Mrs. Kynaston cast one quick look at her companion, and wondered how far she and Mr. Slade were interested in each other. Kate Kynaston felt almost inclined to resent this idea. She had commenced a slight flirtation with Gilbert at Lincoln; and when Mrs. Kynaston did that, she was wont to regard a man as her own peculiar property, and looked for unswerving allegiance on his part. Like many women of her type, she was very good-tempered and pleasant till you happened to interfere with any of her schemes or caprices; and then one who should have known her well—for had he not been in the toils?—said,

"You may look out for squalls; you've got one of the cleverest women in England against you, and it's long odds she carries her point, more especially if she is playing against a man."

Gilbert Slade is lounging in the smoking-room of the Thermopolium with a view to, if possible, catching hold of Major Braddock. He had promised to consult his uncle as to whether he could assist young Devereux to a nomination for the army, a fact which, when it came to Mrs. Kynaston's ears, disconcerted that lady not a little. She argued that when men exert themselves to assist young ladies' brothers, they, at all events, have considerable admiration for the young lady herself; and Mrs. Kynaston, upon very insufficient grounds, considered that Gilbert had no business just at present to admire anybody but Kate Kynaston. She need not have perturbed herself, that insouciant Hussar thought of his two recent acquaintances only as a couple of pretty, agreeable women; but he certainly did go this length, that of the two he preferred Miss Devereux. No very great preference, perhaps, but still such it was as far as it went. It would have angered both ladies to know that what occupied his mind at the present moment much more than their fair selves was the nuisance of having to go back to York. York was all very well when you came to the grouse time, the races, and the hunting; but York during the London season was unendurable. He loathed the loud blare of the barrack-yard; he knew how hot and dusty Cow Street would be, everybody would be away, and an evening country ride without any object was not much for a man to look forward to. "No wonder," he muttered, "we soldiers drink a good deal of claret, and rather stiffen our points at whist in these dull country quarters. What a deuce of a bore it is having to go back."

(To be continued.)

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