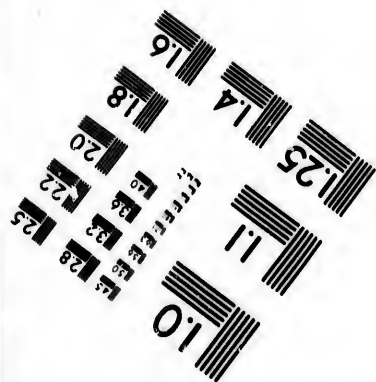
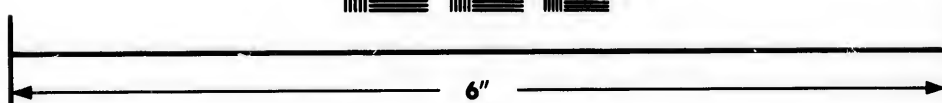
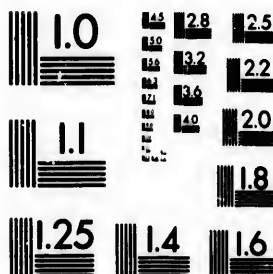


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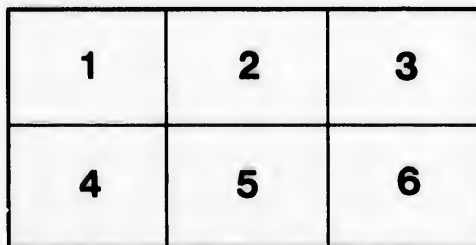
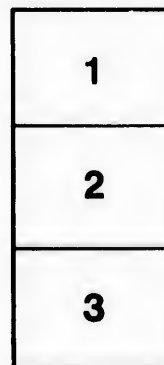
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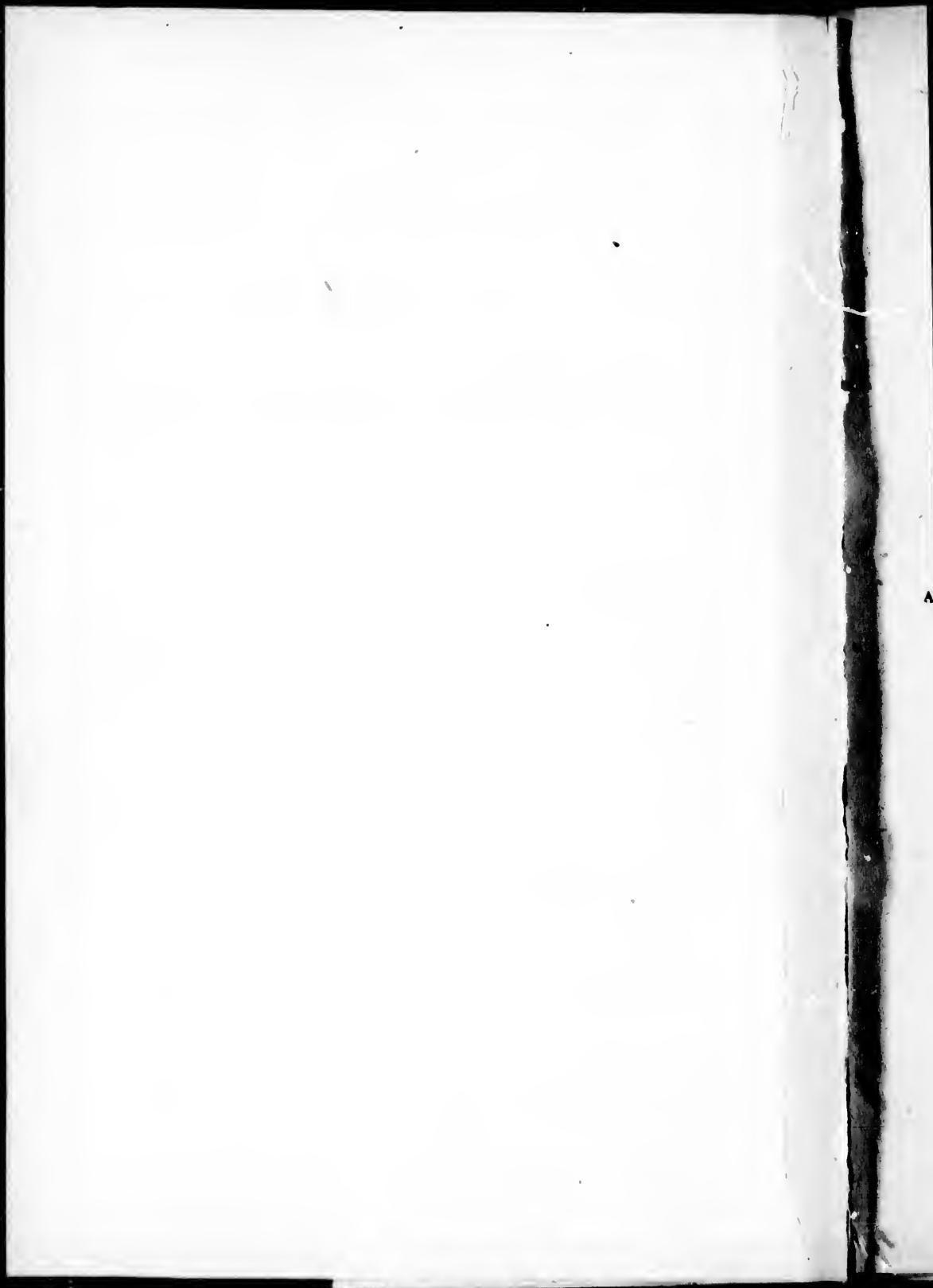
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# A FALSE START.

A Novel.

BY

HAWLEY SMART.

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "FROM POST TO FINISH,"  
"SADDLE AND SABRE," Etc., Etc.



TORONTO :  
THE NATIONAL PUBLISHING COMPANY.

1888.

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# A FALSE START.



## CHAPTER I.

### ON THEIR HONEYMOON.

THE long lazy rollers surge slowly in, and a glorious autumnal sunset gilds the salt water as Maurice Enderby looks out over the sea-wall from the Spa at Scarborough on the departing day. A sea this without much life in it, a sail here and there in the far offing, but no such flood of traffic as runs by the sea-ports on the English Channel.

He puffs hard at his cigar as he muses over this thing that he has done. Not a wise thing, perhaps; his friends and relations have not hesitated to tell him, with all that delightful candour characteristic of friends and relations, that it is a very foolish thing. And yet for the life of him he cannot as yet be made to endorse that opinion. With health and spirits, a man must be a pitiful creature who can take a despondant view of his position at four-and-twenty. Friends may say, acidulated aunts may argue, respected uncles may growl and insist, that merely to have taken a degree at the University is not to be called a provision for the future; that a man whose participation in the loaves and fishes of the Church has got no further than this is not justified in taking unto himself a helpmate. But Maurice, ever masterful of his nature, had taken his future into his own hand, and married pretty Bessie Madingley.

It is all very well, but half of that hundred pounds upon which Maurice started on his wedding trip is already gone, and he ruminates sadly upon a heavy arrear of Oxford "ticks," and that his relations' congratulations on his marriage consist for the most part of bitter rebukes upon his imprudence and unpalatable advice with regard to his future. The outlook is not particularly

brilliant, he has some little income of his own, and of course a curacy is obtainable, still it has as yet to be sought for. As for his wife, although there is a probability of money coming to her in the future, she has nothing at present—the probabilities most likely depending in a great measure upon how Maurice may prosper in the world. It is singular that people leave their money, not to those in urgent need of it, but to their more prosperous relations; in short, let you only compass your first legacy, and none of your relations will ever pass you over in their wills.

A few days more, thought Maurice, and I must pull myself together in real earnest. I must get a curacy and eke out things by the aid of my pen; if it wasn't for this confounded drag-chain of my old Oxford liabilities I shouldn't be so much afraid of the world. Bessie is young, strong, hopeful, and the dearest little thing possible, but we must begin life in earnest at once. I'll send off an advertisement to-morrow. A curacy don't bring much of an annual income, but one must make a beginning, and let your vocation be what it may, you don't, as a rule, rake in much to start upon. Well! I can make a good lunch off bread and cheese as yet, and have still a magnificent capacity for beer in its native pewter, a taste nourishing and inexpensive. And then Mr. Enderby threw his cigar-end into the sea and strolled back to the Grand Hotel to look after his wife.

Maurice Enderby was no weak, flabby young man; on the contrary, he was a young gentleman abounding in energy and vitality; one of his college eleven, not at all a bad man to hounds, and at the same time bearing a very good reputation for ability—he had taken a very fair degree, and was equally a favourite both with his fellows and the authorities. He had been rash, foolish, no doubt; a man of moderate means, he had striven to swim with the brazen pots, and got badly cracked in the process. How many of these poor earthenware vases make shipwreck of their lives by that short-lived struggle to keep pace with those who have ten or twenty times their income! Gay, joyous, pleasure-loving Maurice Enderby threw himself headlong into the race with all the best sporting set of the university, but hacks, hunters, college wines, red coats, and all the other paraphernalia attendant on the "sport of kings," run into money, and so poor Maurice to his horror found, for at the termination of his university career he had to look his liabilities in the face.

As every one knows, during that period the tradesmen of either university town take little heed about a settlement, but the academical course once run they become extremely solicitous for a wiping out of the slate, if not in full, at all events in great measure. Maurice Enderby, could look back upon his time at the university with one satisfaction, that whatever his follies may have been he had at all events taken a degree, and made at any rate that progress up life's ladder. On arriving at his hotel he called at the office for letters, previous to going up to his rooms. There were three or four awaiting him, which, after just glancing at their superscriptions, he thrust into his pocket, and leisurely ascended the stairs. He was in good truth not a little troubled about the future. He had never troubled about it before. Men, as a rule, at his age, when they have only themselves to consider, are not wont to be very anxious on that point; the world is all before them you see, they have experienced no failure, the possible woolsack, the possible bishopric, the novel or the play which is to make the town ring again, are yet to be achieved.

Years spent in country curacies, years in which the heart has grown sick awaiting the briefs that never come; a trunk full of rejected manuscripts, or a play that never saw the week through, but died drowned in derision;—these are the experiences that make a man silently and sullenly think over his own solitary welfare; but when he takes to himself a wife he must, unless steeped in selfishness, become conscious that there is another life dependant upon his exertions, and what caused him no anxiety for himself may well, if he really loves the girl he has married, fill his mind with dreary forebodings about the future.

"Ah! here you are," exclaimed Bessie, as she sprang forward to welcome her newly-elected lord. "I've been anxiously awaiting you—this bracing air makes one so desperately hungry. I am positively dying for my dinner. Ah! letters," she continued, as Maurice threw the little pile on to the table. "Are there any for me?"

"Yes, three. Read them while I wash my hands, and then we'll go down and get something to eat."

Mrs. Enderby proceeded to run hastily through her correspondence while her husband donned the conventional sables.

"It is very odd," she murmured to herself; "again there is no letter from Uncle John. I don't understand it. There are con-

gratulations on my marriage from old friends. I think I've had a kindly word now from nearly every one, but there's not a line from him ; he, too, the one wealthy relative I have in the world ; the only one who has it in his power to befriend us if he chooses. I know we've been rash, desperately rash ; and, although Maurice is so clever that he is sure to make his way in his profession, yet it must take time, and a man in Uncle John's position could surely extend a helping hand to us in many ways if he chose. Surely it cannot be that he is angry with me. Are you ready, Maurice ?" she said, as she tapped at the door of her husband's dressing-room.

"Almost ; come in and tell me what your news is."

"Nothing much ; congratulations from two or three dear friends whom you have never heard of."

"And not a line from John Madingley ?" asked her husband.

"No," replied Bessie ; "It's very odd, is it not ?"

"Well, yes ; he might have sent you a bangle or a tea-pot or a cheque. I should have thought he could have remembered his favourite niece to that extent, but come along, let us go down stairs," and the two descended to the coffee-room.

As they entered the room a tall good-looking man, who was apparently engaged in a hot controversy with the head-waiter, turned his head. "Bob Grafton, by all that's unfathomable !" exclaimed Maurice, as he frankly held out his hand to the new comer.

"My dear Maurice, I am delighted to see you," rejoined Grafton, as he shook it heartily, "and this of course is your bride. As one of your husband's most intimate friends I must shake hands and congratulate you without waiting for a further introduction."

"But who on earth would have thought of seeing you here ?" said Maurice.

"My dear fellow, there are certain places at which you need never feel surprised at seeing any one, and Scarborough is one of them. People come here they don't know why."

"Well ! never mind, what brought you ?" exclaimed Maurice. "Let us all dine together and you shall tell me all your adventures since we last met, and where your foreign wanderings have taken you."

"You mustn't pay any attention to him, Mrs. Enderby," returned Grafton, laughing, "cab accidents are more rife in Re-

gent street and railway disasters in this country than they are on the Continent, and in the prosaic times in which we live that is about as much disaster as is likely to happen to you in Europe; of course, if you are of a quarrelsome disposition the luxury of a row with a foreign *gendarme* is always to be had for the seeking. It's mighty little sport and you're sure to get the worst of it. Capital *bisque*, Mrs. Enderby, try it."

"And what do you mean doing now you are at home?" said Maurice, "Are you really going to make a start in life?"

"Of course I am," rejoined Grafton; "didn't I get 'called' just before I left England? but I am cursed with 800*l.* a year, and, though I am going up to town now to sit waiting for briefs, nobody ever heard of a fellow doing much good at the bar with so little incentive to stick to it. I must follow Maurice's example, Mrs Enderby, and find me a wife; a wife who will want operaboxes and carriages, and then like the rest of us I shall have to serve my eight hours a day at money-grinding—

'Oh! if I'd a thousand a year, Robin Rough,  
If I had but a thousand a year;'

and if the singer didn't want two he might make his mind quite easy that Mrs. Robin would."

"Mr. Grafton!" exclaimed Bessie, "I can't listen to such libels on my sex! Wives are not all of that description, and can learn, if necessary, to take care of their husbands' money. Maurice and I are poor and —"

"Just now," interposed Grafton gaily, "but you won't be long. Bless you! he can do anything if he chooses. Why, whether it was in the class-rooms, in the racquet-court, or with the drag, he could give us all points. You'll be rolling in your chariot while I am disputing with the cabman over a doubtful shilling."

"I say, Bob," said Maurice, "just give the wife another glass of Burgundy. Nothing goes so well with a bird as a glass of red wine. Tell that confounded cook," he continued to the waiter, "I've spoken about it once before—here are the grouse over-roasted again; at an hotel of this kind we expect decent cooking at any rate though we seldom get it. Ah! come, this other bird is better. By the way, Bob, you belong to this many-acred county don't you? Did you ever come across my wife's uncle, old John Madingley?—he's a well-known sportsman up in this country."



"John Madingley! I should think he was. Not a better known man in the three ridings. I'd no idea that he was a relation of Mrs. Enderby's. He got down poking about in that cramped Holderness country the other day and broke his collar-bone. I saw him at Doncaster the other day with his right arm in a sling. It was at the sale-ring, and he was in a state of great jubilation. He said he'd got three or four young ones that were better-looking than anything Messrs Tattersall sold the whole week."

Maurice significantly glanced at his wife, and when she rose accompanied her to the door and said, "Bob and I will have our cigarette and coffee in the smoking-room and then join you up stairs."

---

## CHAPTER II.

"WHAT SORT OF A MAN IS JOHN MADINGLEY?"

THE two men proceeded to the smoking-room, and when they had rung for coffee, had installed themselves in tolerable comfortable chairs, and got their tobacco fairly under weigh, Maurice said, "I suppose the announcement of my marriage took you a little aback, old fellow, but you see I didn't know where the deuce you were, and it was rather a hurried affair."

"Well," rejoined Grafton, "I must own I was surprised when I read it in *The Times*, but you've got a charming little wife, and women of her sort are not to be picked up every day."

"No, that's right enough, she was worth going 'nap' for, and that's just what it is you see, old fellow; I've set up house with a very hazy idea upon what it is to be kept going."

"Phoo! that's all clear enough; you've got a bit of your own, haven't you? And you'll have no trouble about getting a curacy; you won't want much money to start with, and a clever fellow like you is safe to get a living before long; and then, good heavens! you'll blossom into a dean, or a canon, or something or other, and preach such sermons that all London will be fighting to get to hear you. Dear me! I see lawn sleeves and the mitre in the far distance, and myself glowing with pride if your grace touches your shovel hat to me in the park."

"Don't be a fool, Bob," replied Maurice, smiling; "it's all very well: but I'd better tell you a little more about my mar-

riage. My wife is an orphan, and when I met her was eking out the very slender income she had inherited as governess at a house where I was inmate. To start with, she was introduced to me as a phenomenon. Dear Bessie's singing was perfection; dear Bessie was so clever, and all the rest of it. But there were grown-up daughters in the house, and the minute their acute feminine intelligence awoke to the fact that I admired Bessie Madingley extremely, then at once, in homely phraseology, they 'made it very hot' for their former pet. They led her a hard life; she could do nothing right, and, above all, they were fools enough to take to incessantly snubbing the girl in my presence. I was no great catch, but they were a good many of them, and it was quite possible that they thought in time I might do for one of the daughters. Anyhow, it ended in Bessie's position becoming unendurable, and admiration, and then pity, upon my part, ripening into passionate love. We had neither of us anybody much to consult, so we took our fate into our own hands, and made a match of it. As far as I know, we have only one wealthy relative—to wit, that uncle of Bessie's you saw with the broken collar-bone by the ring-side at Doncaster. What sort of a man is John Madingley?"

"John Madingley," rejoined Grafton, "why, he is a man known through all the shires in the north country. He's getting an old man now; but there never was a better sportsman than Parson Madingley. He's been rector of Bingwell for thirty years and more, I should think; but he has a very good property of his own, quite exclusive of the living, which, indeed, is a family one, and came to him when he was a younger son. He's got about as good shooting as you would find anywhere. He keeps a few thorough-bred mares, and has been lucky with their produce more than once. In the former days he was a first-flight man in the shires, and a well-known figure on every northern racecourse. But getting on in years stopped the first, and the present generation are not quite so lenient to the doings of their pastors as our fathers were, though there was a roar of applause through all sporting England when, some ten years ago, they telegraphed to him that his mare Condonement, then first favourite for the Ledger, was lame, and he replied, 'She must run on three legs in the interests of the public.'"

"In fact, he's what you call a good sort all round. Bessie always says he has been a very kind friend to her; and, though

she has seen little of him, he has sent her many a bank-note and kindly letter. But is he a man with any Church interest, do you suppose ? ”

“ My dear Maurice,” rejoined Bob Grafton—as he emitted a wreath of tobacco smoke from under his moustache, and lifting his eyebrows in perfect amazement at his friend’s unworldliness —“ is a man of good county family, with the best of shooting, who has held a leading position in the sporting world, is a popular fellow, and has never wanted anything for himself, ever without influence ? Why, my dear Maurice, it would be hard to conjecture how many strings John Madingley could pull if he set his mind to it. I haven’t half your brains, old man, but I am three or four years your senior, and think, perhaps, I have seen rather more of the world than you have. One of those men who have a good deal to give, and never ask for anything, can lay their hands on a lot of influential friends if they will give their minds to it. There are fellows who have had good days amongst the pheasants at Bingwell ; there are fellows who have won money over his horses ; there are fellows who’ve ate their breakfast on a hunting morning at the rectory, and seen the parson set the field before lunch-time. It’s difficult to say what sways men on these points ; but, upon my word, I doubt whether about being the most deserving has much to say to it.

“ Well, Bob,” said Maurice, with a low laugh, “ you can give me a pretty good character to the Rev. John on some of these points, should you come across him. You know him intimately, I suppose ? ”

“ No, no, Maurice, pray don’t run away with that idea ; that’s just what I don’t do. I know him very well by repute, and I know him personally ; but remember that he is a man before my time ; that I am eight-and-twenty, and he’s a man hard upon seventy ; and that, consequently, I’ve only met him at rare intervals. You needn’t fear, old man, that I would neglect doing you any turn I could, but I own I don’t see much chance of my being of use to you.”

“ I had rather hoped you could,” rejoined Maurice, slowly. “ The fact is, that, though Bessie wrote to inform her uncle of her approaching marriage, we have never had a line from him since ; and we thought he was good for a cream-jug at least. Never mind, come upstairs and I daresay Bessie will give us a

song;" and as he spoke Maurice rose from his chair, pitched the cigarette into the fireplace and led the way out of the room.

They found Mrs. Enderby not a little bored in the drawing-room. These big hotel *salons* are wont to be somewhat dull unless you have your two or three intimates to associate with. That dreary waste of velvet chairs, sofas, and piled carpet becomes depressing as the Desert of Sahara when it contains nought but a few scattered Bedouins like yourself. Bedouins, I say advisedly, for in these hugh caravanserais every man's hand is against his neighbours. Is he not plotting for the first glance at *The Times*, for the warmest table in the coffee-room? or, if he be a frequenter of the *table d' hôte*, even for the first cut of the joint? Humanity has an instinctive tendency to selfishness, but for rapid fostering of that baleful frailty commend me to a long course of hotel sojourning. Poor Bessie! she could have amused herself quite well at the piano for an hour or two; she sang well, and the instrument was a good one; but she was actually weak-minded enough to fear to disturb some of the other denizens of the drawing-room—a thing that never would have entered a thoroughly-trained hotel young lady's head. It was the first evening since her marriage she had been condemned to so much solitude; and she welcomed her husband and his friend with a smile of intense relief.

"Dear me, Mrs. Enderby, I had no idea that you were a niece of the Rev. John Madingley's. You know, of course, that your uncle is quite a celebrity all round this part of the country? He is suffering from a slight accident now; but he's a wonderful man of his years, and, they told me, was going quite in the front rank when he came to grief. Whenever they talk to him about giving up hunting he always laughs, and says, 'What! give up; me? Why, I'm a mere boy compared with the Flying Parson, down in the Belvoir country. He is a good dozen years my senior; and, they tell me, if he gets a good start, there's very few of the young 'uns can touch him even now.'"

"He's more than a good sportsman, Mr. Grafton. I can vouch for his having always been the kindest and most liberal of uncles."

"That's his character," replied Bob; "he's straight and true as a die, and there's many a tale of his pluck and liberality in bygone days current in the country. And now, Mrs. Enderby, sing us something."

"Yes, indeed I will," replied Bessie. "After such a eulogium on my uncle you shall have a song after his own heart," and with a gay laugh Bessie sat down to the piano, and rattled off

"The day that we found him in Ranksboro' gorse,"

Bob Grafton was delighted. "Splendid, Mrs. Enderby," he said, as she concluded. "By Jove! Maurice, if the Rev. John only hears your wife sing that, I'd lay odds there's a codicil in his will very much to your joint benefit. He's one of the old sort, and wonderfully fond of a good hunting song. And now I think I must say 'Good night,' as I'm in for an early start to-morrow. Awfully glad to have met you, old man; and very, very pleased to have made your acquaintance, Mrs. Enderby. We shan't be long before we meet again. For the present, good-bye." And, having shaken hands, Bob Grafton once more adjourned to the smoking-room.

Arrived there, he extracted a solid cigar-case from his pocket, and, having ordered a portentous bucket of brandy and seltzer, proceeded to ignite what he termed a "roofer." "By Jove," he said, "poor old Maurice! He's got an uphill game before him; but he's just the fellow to pull through it. And, after seeing his wife, I can quite fancy his not caring about waiting. She's a clipper, that little woman; that's what she is! Still, a prospective curacy isn't much to start upon. However, the Rev. John Madingley, I should think, could give him a pretty good lift if he chooses. And if he only hears Mrs. Enderby sing 'Ranksboro' gorse,' there won't be much doubt about his doing his level best to help them; and, if that don't do, we must just let him see Maurice ride for once. They won't stand hunting parsons in these days. And therefore he mustn't go on with it, but just to show the Rev. John that he isn't a tailor. Just for once it would be good business. But what is the use of my speculating? Maurice is far cleverer than I am, and knows his own business, of course, best." With which sage reflection, Bob Grafton rose and departed in search of his bed-room.

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## CHAPTER III.

## THE WEDDING PRESENT.

"I was sorry not to see more of your friend Mr. Grafton," said Bessie, the next morning, as she and her husband dawdled over a latish breakfast. "I suppose there's no doubt that he did leave this morning?"

"Yes; I enquired; and he left by the first train for town. Here, waiter; has the post come in?"

"Not the London one, sir."

Maurice was getting anxious for an answer from an agent in town to whom he had written some days previously on the state of the curacy market. He had told this gentleman the localities he preferred, and had also given him to understand what emolument he would expect.

The reply had not come so speedily as he had anticipated. Maurice had yet to learn that what we desire in this world generally takes some waiting for.

On this occasion he was destined to be soon put out of his suspense, for in another few minutes the waiter announced the arrival of the London mail, and presented him with a letter.

Maurice tore it open, and was bitterly disappointed at its contents. The letter assured him the particular localities he had mentioned were extremely popular and much sought after, that curates at present were almost a drug in the market, that the salary he demanded was much in excess of that usually given—except in large towns, or in very out-of-the-way places, where either the expense of living, or the extreme dreariness of the situation, gave a claim to extra remuneration—that the profession was overstocked, and, like all other labour markets, suffered the usual consequences of the supply exceeding the demand; and finally wound up by suggesting two or three very ineligible curacies at what Maurice deemed very ineligible stipends.

Telling his wife that he had received a business letter, and would smoke a cigar and think over it before they went out for their usual lounge on the Spa. Maurice strolled into the town. It was a disappointment, and he was getting anxious on the subject of ways and means; but he was not a man to be cast down at the first rebuff. It was rather a bore for a man just married



to find the junior ranks of his profession so very poorly paid; however, he could doubtless do better for himself than to listen to his fellow's suggestions. Of course, it naturally was to his interest to get rid of his most unsaleable goods to start with. The chances were the agent knew that he was a man applying for his first curacy, and might, therefore, be probably induced to jump at the first thing put before him. No; he must try another—write to some old friends of his father's. And, having arrived at this conclusion, Maurice threw away the end of his cigar, and walked back to fetch his wife.

He found her already dressed, and waiting for him on one of the seats in the hall, much affected by visitors in the early autumn days; but there was a serious expression on Bessie's face which startled Maurice directly.

"Why, what's the matter, little woman?" exclaimed her husband. "You look as if the bank which contained all your savings had smashed."

"Maurice, dear," she replied, "I've heard from Uncle John."

"Well, what does he say? Is he very angry with you for having married without his permission, or has he sent you his blessing and a bracelet?"

Although Maurice made this inquiry in a light and jesting manner, he, in reality, felt no little anxiety to see what Uncle John had said. Uncle John was the one relation his wife had who could assist him in these early days of his career, and no one but a fool despises corks until he is convinced he can swim without them.

"No," said Bessie, "his letter is not at all unkind; but I can't understand it. I don't quite know what he means."

"Let me see it. It don't seem very long," he remarked, as she handed it to him.

"No; Uncle John is not much given to letter-writing at any time. And, of course, his broken collar-bone would make writing a little troublesome to him just now."

Maurice ran through the Rev. John's espistle in silence. "Well," he said at last, "I don't wonder you're puzzled; it bothers me. Let me read it again:—"

"My dear Niece,

'Pray accept my heartiest congratulations on your marriage. Your husband, from all I can hear about him, is a good fellow,

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and you will be all the better for having somebody to take care of you in this world. I should have written to you before but an awkward fence in the Holderness country brought me and old Bacchus to grief, and I don't fall so cleverly as I did some thirty odd years ago ; the consequence was I broke my collar-bone. It is getting all right again now, but it must be my excuse for cutting my congratulations shorter than I otherwise should. After all, when one has said 'Wish you joy' I don't suppose there is much more to be said on the subject. But there is a little more to do. I'm going to make you a present in my own way. I have got the sweetest yearling filly you ever set eyes upon. Her blood is undeniable. Now, Bessie, I intend to go halves with you in whatever this peerless flyer realizes. So next year your husband can follow the fortunes of 'the Wandering Nun' with considerable interest. Hoping to meet him soon, I remain your ever affectionate uncle,

'JOHN MADINGLEY.'

"What do you make of it?" asked Bessie, anxiously. "Uncle John don't keep racehorses, does he?"

"Certainly not. I never trouble my head about racing, though I've been very fond of hunting ; still I must have heard of it if he did, to say nothing of its being so very unlikely, in his position, that he would."

"Surely, from what Mr. Grafton said last night, he used to go to race-meetings and keep a good many horses."

"Undoubtedly ; but going to races and keeping race-horses are very different things," rejoined Maurice. "From what Grafton said he breeds a little, and, I suppose, sells his young things. I take it, whatever this prodigy fetches, he intends to present you with half of it. And though, of course, it is rather uncertain, if he is lucky it may turn out a very handsome present—as much, perhaps, as two or three hundred pounds—though, on the other hand, thirty or forty might represent its value."

"Then, even at it's worst, it's likely to be a very handsome tip. I thought I could count on a wedding present from Uncle John. I am glad, Maurice, that he has put it in that shape, instead of jewelry—it will be more useful when we come to settle."

"I tell you what it is, Bessie," replied her husband. "If he hadn't gone away, Bob Grafton could have told us all about this."



He goes in for it a bit, and knows lots of racing people. But I have no doubt my explanation is a true one—that he has bred a very promising filly and intends giving you half of whatever she fetches. And now come along for a blow down the Spa.”

As they strolled up and down Maurice turned Uncle John's gift over his mind a good deal. If it only came soon, and that cheque was for three hundred pounds, that cheque would be a great thing for him. His father had been a clergyman, and had died before Maurice went to the university, leaving his widow modestly provided for, and some two hundred and fifty a year to his only son. But Maurice, when he came of age, had dipped somewhat into his capital. Without reckless extravagance a popular man of his tastes had need to be a good manager to make this modest income suffice. And this was just what Maurice Enderby was not. He was the last man in the world to get twenty shillings' worth out of a sovereign. He had not that great and glorious faculty of “sticking to money.” The northern farmer's advice to “go where money was” would have been quite thrown away upon him. He was so much more likely to go where money *went*. It is so with some of us. Unlike the bees, we don't possess the gift of acquisition; and though, doubtless, we have parlous times, we have also in compensation far happier days, and yet these happier days are apt to have a sting in them. And Maurice at this minute is grievously troubled about his Oxford liabilities. What had been left of his capital, and he had not encroached upon more than a third of it, he had settled, upon his marriage, on his wife. But there were some six or seven hundred pounds of Oxford ticks still hanging over his head. And when—his university career over—a man marries and settles down, such creditors show a touching anxiety on the subject of payment.

“Should you mind very much, Bessie, if we cut off a week of our wedding tour, or rather finished it in London? You see, little woman, we are spending rather more here than I care about.”

“Oh, Maurice,” she said, pressing his arm, “I have been afraid so for some time. You have always told me we are not rich; and I am sure we are living at that hotel as if we had lots of money. I never see the bills, but I do know that much.”

“Yes; and what's more, I can't look out for employment by

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post. I must go up to London and see some of these people. I tell you what, we'll leave at the end of our week."

There were a good many admiring glances cast at the young couple as they strolled up and down the promenade. Maurice's tall lithe figure, bold dark eye, and resolute features, were such as women love to look upon; while Bessie, in her way, seemed to prove quite as attractive to the opposite sex. That promenade in the autumn season is a strange *melange* of visitors. Ladies of title, ladies of Southport and Manchester, theatrical ladies, and ladies of more notoriety than reputation, pass up and down in ever-varying procession. Ex-soldiers, idle men-about-town, country gentlemen, and scions of the peerage, all mingle in the throng that wanders up and down, ogling, gossiping, smoking, and drinking in the invigorating breezes of the North Sea, while the music of the band titillates their ears.

Sitting on one of the chairs just below the circular platform occupied by the band was a stout, pompous, prosperous-looking man attired in unmistakeable clerical garments. Bright beady black eyes and a face and figure that were always aggressively asserting the self-importance of their owner. A man sure to catch your eye. A man about whom you were certain to wonder who he was. He wasn't quite a bishop, that was evident by his dress; he might be a dean, or, in default of that, was clearly some well-known dignitary of the Church. He was nothing of the kind—he was only the Rev. Jacob Jarrow, Rector of Tunntleton, a small country town in the neighbourhood of the metropolis. Mr. Jarrow's bright eyes took in everything in an amused way. Up here in the north he could afford to enjoy himself. Anywhere in his own neighbourhood such little oblivion of his presence would have moved him to infinite wrath, but these poor benighted northerners could hardly be expected to recognize one of the leading Churchmen of the south, for such was the Rev. Jacob Jarrow in his own estimation. Mr. Jarrow had waged a fierce polemical discussion in the local news-papers, which, he believed, had arrested the attention of all the southern country. That how he had trounced his adversary in *The Tunntleton Chronicle* had been matter of derisive laughter for many miles round that town he believed firmly. He was right; there had been much derision on the subject, but it had been more directed at him than at his adversary; although one critic of these parts had pronounced it a case of two pragmatical

fools disputing about a subject which neither of them understood. Still the Rev. Jacob Jarrow was firmly impressed that, under the pseudonym of "Thomas Verity," he had acquired solid literary fame; that he was pointed out as the author of the "Verity Papers," and that it was a singular thing he never saw his photograph in the shop windows, nor was asked for his autograph outside the precincts of Tunnleton.

Tired of strolling up and down, Maurice and his wife sat down on the seats adjacent to Mr. Jarrow. That reverend gentleman, not wishing that any frivolous view should be taken of his character, had brought with him a number of *The Nineteenth Century*. The magazine had fallen to the ground, and Maurice, stooping down, courteously picked it up and returned it to him—a trifle, destined to play no little important part in the next year or two of Maurice Enderby's life.

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE REV. JACOB JARROW.

MR. Jarrow acknowledged the polite attention with a bland smile.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "The beauty of the scene, the soft strains of the band, and the invigorating sea-air, made me oblivious of my friend here. Very interesting articles to be met with in its covers."

The anecdote of the great statesman who, upon turning over the leaves of one of the heavy-metaled magazines in its early days, shrugged his shoulders and murmured the brief criticism, "Dolorous drivel," flashed across Maurice's mind; but he felt it behoved him to make friends with the dignitaries of the Church; and, though *The Nineteenth Century* was no particular favourite of his, he acquiesced in Mr. Jarrow's opinion.

"It's a glorious triumph, sir," remarked Mr. Jarrow; "it sends a glow of enthusiasm through your body, the power of disseminating your views in print. Your fellow-men who have read you cannot but look at you with admiration."

"Conceited fool!" thought Maurice; "he must surely know that his fellow-men take a very opposite view of the performance sometimes."

"More especially," continued the Rev. Jacob, "when, after a somewhat prolonged controversy, you've got your adversary in a particularly tight place. You can enjoy your laugh, sir, when you feel sure that your friends and neighbours are all laughing with you."

"You must be quite sure that they are laughing with you," thought Maurice; but all he said was, "I presume you yourself wield a pen pretty frequently, sir?"

"Certainly; I don't let my grey goosequill rust in the ink-stand, as I think they would tell you down in the southern counties. I think I have made my mark in my own part of the country. I am pretty well known down there. You may have heard, sir, of the 'Verity Letters.' I am Thomas Verity." And no words can describe the self-complacency with which Mr. Jarrow made the announcement. Maurice had a strong sense of humour, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he restrained his laughter.

"Everybody has heard of the 'Verity Letters,'" he rejoined mendaciously, "but I regret it has not been as yet my privilege to read them. However, Mr. Verity, now I have had the pleasure of meeting the author, I shall lose no time in repairing that omission."

"Perhaps you will do me the honour to accept a copy. It happen by chance to have one with me."

It would have been an extraordinary chance that found the reverend gentlemen without one; he always travelled with about half-a-dozen in his baggage, and presented a copy to any casual acquaintance he might pick up. He found it easier to dispose of them in this way than through the medium of the publisher.

"Thank you, Mr. Verity, I shall be very proud to have a presentation copy, and shall read the book, I am sure, with extra zest on that account. I daresay they made a great sensation at the time they were published."

"They did, sir; but you must excuse me. You doubtless know nothing about the customs of the literary world. 'Verity' is only my *nom de plume*. You are aware, perhaps, that we authors constantly veil our personality under an assumed name."

"Would it be indiscreet," inquired Maurice, once more struggling with suppressed laughter, "to ask Thomas Verity's real name? These things, you must know, speedily become such very open secrets."

"Too true, my dear friend," replied the Rev. Mr. Jarrow, who had a capacity for swallowing any quantity of oleaginous flattery, and already mentally pronounced Maurice to be a very clever gentlemanly young man. "If you once make a hit with the public they will know your real name and all about you. Anybody, for instance, at Tunnleton could tell you that Thomas Verity is the Rev. Jacob Jarrow rector of St. Mary's."

"I beg your pardon," said Maurice, "but I know Tunnleton a little, I suppose I ought rather to say *did*, for it's a good while since I've been there, not since my boyhood indeed. I had some friends there with whom I used occasionally to stay for the Easter holidays when I was at Harrow. My people, you see, live down in the west country, and thought it rather too far and too expensive to have me home for a week; it is quite possible, Mr. Jarrow, that I may have had the honour of hearing you in the pulpit, but however eloquent the divine may be it is difficult to make an impression on a school-boy."

"No, at that age you would hardly be capable of thoroughly comprehending a discourse of mine. I don't preach to babes and sucklings, sir, but to people of understanding; and I flatter myself they rarely forgot my poor efforts."

Mr. Jarrow's traducers would have emphatically endorsed that remark, and opined that he was usually remembered as what Baxter denominates, "A pious and painful preacher."

"May I ask," continued Mr. Jarrow, "the names of your friends in Tunnleton, and whom I have the pleasure of speaking to?"

"My name is Maurice Enderby," replied the young man smiling, "and this lady is my wife."

The rector raised his hat and murmured, "that he was delighted to make Mrs. Enderby's acquaintance."

"I ought further to observe," continued Maurice, "that I am entitled to add the prefix of Rev. to my name."

"What, my dear sir, a brother in the vineyard! Allow me to shake you by the hand. But you're young as yet, surely, to be trusted with the cure of souls."

"You are quite right," rejoined Maurice, laughing. "I am not as yet ordained. The cousins at Tunnleton with whom I used to stay are the Chyltons."

"Ah! I knew the old people very well," replied Mr. Jarrow, "but I don't know much of the present generation. They are

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not prisoners of mine. And now methinks the sea-breezes sharpen the appetite, and it is getting time to attend to the inward man."

"I quite agree with you," rejoined Maurice. "Come along, Bessie. You don't happen to be staying at the 'Grand,' Mr. Jarrow, do you?"

"No, no, Mr. Enderby," replied the rector, "that is rather too gay and rackety a place for a man holding my position in the Church. I am in lodgings; which are much quieter and less expensive. I wish you good morning." And, raising his hat to Mrs. Enderby, he took his departure. Suddenly he turned, and coming rapidly back exclaimed: "Don't be afraid, I won't forget the book. I'll send it round to you at the 'Grand.' As a clergyman's wife I daresay it will interest you, Mrs. Enderby." And with another flourish of his hat the rector wheeled about and sailed off in his usual stately fashion.

"Well," said Bessie, laughing merrily, "I always say there's never so great a fool but what he has a grain or two of common sense at the bottom of him; and after all the inflated rubbish he has talked to us this morning that was a sensible remark he made at the end."

"What do you mean?" asked Maurice.

"The lodgings are much quieter and less expensive than at the 'Grand,' my dear." And Mrs. Enderby looked archly up into her husband's face.

Maurice's only answer was an impatient "Pshaw!" and the pair went home to luncheon in excellent spirits, however uncertain their prospects.

There was a letter awaiting Maurice when he arrived at the hotel, an ominous looking document in a square stout blue envelope. The young man just glanced at it, and at once decided to put off the perusal of it till after luncheon. He felt sure its contents would be unpleasant, and like a true philosopher resolved that his digestion should not be interfered with. But his meal once finished, Maurice tore open the envelope, and found it a stern and very peremptory demand for his little account from Mr. Badger. Now Mr. Badger was Maurice's most serious creditor at Oxford. Mr. Badger was a livery-stable keeper, who supplied undergraduates with unlimited hacks and hunters during their University career. During that time Badger never troubled you for money, but, when the period of your academical



course was run, then Badger demanded his due, or, at all events, a pretty stiff instalment of it. Now there is no account a man can run that runs with the rapidity of this. Half-guineas and guineas for hunters, tandems, and items of different descriptions—all these gather with the rapidity of a snow-ball, and though Maurice during his residence at Oxford had more than once paid what he thought a stiffish cheque on account, he was perfectly aghast at the tremendous bill Mr. Badger presented him with when they wound up their dealings together.

Badger's was not quite such a lucrative trade as it appeared; if he charged very stiff prices he undoubtedly found good cattle, and in most cases had to wait a long while for his money, and sometimes failed to obtain it at all. He calculated that generally the young gentlemen's friends would pay up for them, but there were cases in which he was doomed to disappointment. Sometimes parents and guardians sickened at the young scapegraces' extravagances, in others there were no friends who could pay for them if they would. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mr. Badger should, in his vernacular, "put the screw on" as soon as his customers left the University. He was not merciless, but required to be propitiated by pretty frequent instalments, and, as he was rather hungry on the matter of interest, if the instalments were small, the bill grew at one end as fast as it diminished at the other. This unluckily was Maurice's case, and the interest on his debt at the end of the year usually amounted to over half of the sum that he had paid upon it. Mr. Badger constantly threatened severe legal extremities; he had times undoubtedly resorted to them, but he was a man wise in his generation, and as long as his victims submitted to an annual plucking he abstained from wringing their necks. It was no use, he argued; a good many of these suckling lawyers and parsons could not make the money to begin with, and that if he could grind the interest out of them, and a little bit off the principal to boot, he could afford to wait; but he kept his clients under the harrow while their debt lasted, and many of them bitterly regretted the first day they crossed a hack of Tony Badger's.

About Maurice Enderby he had made two mistakes. He was a man who made very precise inquiries as to the means of his customers. He had discovered that Maurice's money was in his own hands, but his informant had considerably over-estimated the amount of it. Mistake number two, though not

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of so much importance, was this, that it had never entered his calculations that Maurice Enderby would marry so soon. He knew that wringing the money from him just now, would probably be considerably more difficult than if he had remained single. Against that was to be placed the fact that he was more likely to set to work and make it at once than dawdle two or three years thinking about doing so. Still, Tony Badger kept to his old theory of dealing with such debtors as his. "Keep 'em under the harrow, sir, keep 'em under the harrow," was his advice invariably when talking over their out-standing accounts with some of his brethren at the Tradesman's Club—men who, like himself, ministered to the wants of the undergraduates in liberal and paternal fashion.—"What, not hunt, Mr. Enderby, with such hands and a seat on a horse as yours. Such weather as this and all, why it's a sin, sir. There's old Rockett, the best hunter I have in the stable, standing idle to-morrow. I shall send him on for you to-morrow, and you'll find a hack all ready for you as soon as you like to come down for it. Now, nonsense, Mr. Enderby, don't say you can't afford it, you can pay me when you're a dean or a bishop, or on the bench, or something or other. And mind, you won't be able to hunt in those days, or, if you do, your nerves won't be what they are now, sir. You'll go through a gate instead of over it, and never be in the first flight again. No, sir, have your fling while you're young, and pay off the score when hunting's no fun for you." That was the way the artful sophist tempted the poor stupid toad to first come under the harrow.

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## CHAPTER V.

### CURATES COME AND CURATES GO.

A pretty, pleasant, dear, quarrelsome little town was Tunnleton; situated in the prettiest county in England, within easy distance of the metropolis. It boasted a medicated spring and a pump room, wherein for a trifle waters of exceeding nastiness might be tasted. Tunnleton, indeed, in former days, had been a notable health resort, and fine folks had flocked thither to



drink from its hyssop-flavoured fountain; not because they required it, but because it was the fashion. Nowadays, the place was no longer fashionable. The pump-room bore a mildewed neglected appearance; and, except for some passing stranger, who, from idle curiosity, quaffed a breaker of its waters, the presiding nymph would have found her post profitless.

But, Tunnleton was far from admitting that its glory had departed. It still regarded itself as a supreme authority on taste and good style. Its citizens, on their occasional visits to the metropolis, regarded the pomps and vanities of London with a hypercritical eye. They were all very well in their way; but they would not quite do for Tunnleton. They were wont to admit, superciliously, that town was full; but implied at the same time that there was more going on in Tunnleton. They were quite of the same mind with that celebrated local patriot who said "London is all vary fine; but gie me Peebles for plaisir." They shut their eyes pretty tightly to the exceeding dullness of the dreary little place, and, by some pious stretch of imagination, persuaded themselves that life in Tunnleton was one delirious whirl of enjoyment. They spoke to each other in almost reproachful fashion about how very gay the season had been, as if it really did behove one to resist so much temptation, and to take a more serious view of life. "It won't do, my dear; it won't, indeed; I can't put up with it any longer," exclaimed the Rev. Jacob Jarrow, as he sipped his tea and crunched his toast, looking lazily out over one of the prettiest landscapes in England. "Mr. Lomax must go; he sacrifices all his parish duties to the pursuit of that idiotic amusement lawn tennis; and, instead of coming to church to say their prayers, as Christian young women ought to do, there's half the girls of Tunnleton come simply to make eyes at my curate. Can't you see it yourself, Mrs. Jarrow? When I preach in the morning, sermons too, mind you, full of pungency and erudition, why the church is half empty. When that young puppy preaches in the afternoon the church is crammed. No rational being can suppose that they come to hear him. No, Mrs. Jarrow, those misguided young women come to look at him; they work slippers for him furtively; and cherish secret hopes of becoming Mrs. Lomax, and sharing his penury. A pretty qualification for an eligible suitor that he hits a ball rather deftly over a net. No! he must go; and I'll take

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very good care that my next curate is either married or too old to play lawn tennis; or so hard-favoured that there is no feminine anxiety to be his partner."

"Of course you know best, my dear," said Mrs. Jarrow; "but I think Mr. Lomax does the duty very nicely, and he is very popular in the parish; and then, you know, he thinks so much of you," continued the good lady jesuitically. "I have heard him speak quite with enthusiasm about the 'Verity' letters."

Mrs. Jarrow might not be a very clever woman; but the dullest of wives are usually thoroughly awake to their husbands' weaknesses. She knew her spouse's vanity, especially on the point of that imaginary literary reputation, based principally on what he believed to be those famous letters. She was a practical, good-natured, motherly woman; and honestly liked the young curate. He was, as her husband said, popular amongst the people around, doing his work fairly, of irreproachable character, and always ready to make a fourth at lawn tennis, warble sentimental ballads in a mild tenor voice at afternoon tea, which the ladies pronounced "too awfully sweet," or join in the dissipation of a carpet dance with the accompaniments of negus and a piano. Mrs. Jarrow, to those unacquainted with the *menage*, appeared as wax in her lord's hands. She put in her mild protest, which was at once, apparently, overwhelmed by the blustering, arrogant, decision of her spouse. But Mrs. Jarrow was one of those quiet, pertinacious women that never abandon their point; returning to it again and again, with what may be described as placid obstinacy—a thing extremely difficult to cope with. The Rev. Jacob Jarrow was very apt to change his original decision before many weeks were over his head. In racing parlance, the lady "stayed" the longest; but there was a point against her this time that she rather overlooked, to wit, that the Rev. Jacob's vanity was wounded. To discover that his curate had more attractions in the pulpit than himself was excessive mortification to a man like the rector of St. Mary's, who considered that his windy orations were model discourses, and that his delivery was striking. He was, in the main, perfectly right, that Mr. Lomax's social popularity accounted for the good attendance at St. Mary's when he officiated, for the young man's sermons were composed for the most of those mild platitudes which have so often brought exceeding drowsiness to most of us; but, for all that, there was no denying the

fact that the parishioners preferred the milk and water of the curate to the windy garrulity of the rector.

For once in a way Mrs. Jarrow found her influence of no avail; return to the charge as often as she might, the rector was firm. Mr. Lomax must go. That gentleman was too fond of gadding about to attend to his duties properly, declared Mr. Jarrow; but, though he insisted vehemently on this to his partner, the rector knew in the bottom of his heart it was hardly the truth. No doubt Mr. Lomax might have been more energetic, more enthusiastic about his work, but to say that he neglected it was manifest exaggeration. He was a good-looking young fellow of whom Tunnleton Society had taken upon themselves to make much. Young men were somewhat scarce in the gossiping little town, and an "adaptable" cavalier willing to be useful all round was something to be made much of. Mr. Lomax was all this: of a cheery sociable nature, he gave a thorough *quid pro quo* for all the hospitality he received; and there was, perhaps, no more popular gentleman in all Tunnleton than the curate.

It's no use, oh ye heads of families, fuming at the airs they give themselves; you cannot get on without these nonchalant young men, who from necessity live upon mutton chops, or a cut off the joint, washed down by club St. Estephe, which sets one's teeth on edge, but who drink your carefully-selected champagne and abuse your cook, in their callous ignorance, when you entertain them. What judges of wine, women, tobacco, and horse-flesh most of us were before the down on our upper-lip was recognized as a moustache by any one save ourselves; and how diffident we become in our opinion concerning them at the end of another five-and-twenty years.

Mr. Lomax was very much taken aback when the rector broke to him that, at the end of the year, he should dispense with his services. He liked Tunnleton as well as Tunnleton liked him: and, till such time as a living might be offered him, was well content with his present position. He had always got on capitally with Mr. Jarrow, there had never been the slightest friction in their relations; and, therefore, the curate was most genuinely surprised upon receiving his *conge*.

"I trust," he said, "that you have no fault to find with the performance of my duties, Mr. Jarrow."

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given to tennis and such amusements than I quite approve, I shall be happy to give you excellent testimonials."

"But you surely can't object to my dancing, playing tennis, or mingling in the society of the place," urged Mr. Lomax.

"No; it is not exactly that. I am perfectly satisfied with you; perfectly satisfied, as I said before; but the fact is that, now my great controversy is over, and Thomas Verity has triumphed over his contemptible opponents, I really don't know that I am justified—in short, there is nothing to prevent me—in fact, I think I can do all the parish work myself."

Mr. Jarrow hummed and ha'd a good deal over this speech. He was conscious that he was indulging in "tarradiddles," but he could not confess that he was jealous of Mr. Lomax's popularity in the parish. Even to himself he scarcely admitted that, persistently thrusting the thought away from him as we are apt to do such secret motives when a little ashamed of them. There was no reason that Mr. Jarrow should not change his curate; it was equally natural that Mr. Lomax should wish to know why he was dismissed, and the consequence was inevitable; nothing was left for Mr. Jarrow but to equivocate. Civilization entails regard for the feelings of our fellows which naturally necessitates untruthfulness. Shall we have less regard for our own feelings than those of others? I trow not, whatever sentiment may say about it; at all events it is not so in my experience.

Mr. Lomax entertained strong doubts of the good faith of the rector's statement, but there was no more to be said, and undoubtedly it was possible for a man to do the work of St. Mary's single-handed if he choose to stick to it; still it was some years since Mr. Jarrow had undertaken it, and he had neither increased in energy nor decreased in love of literary warfare during that period. If the "Verity" letters had come to an end all Tunnleton knew the rector of St. Mary's was on the alert for some similar opportunity. Mr. Lomax saw no reason, now that it was definitely decided that he was to go, for keeping the thing a secret, and in a day or two all Tunnleton was aware that they were to lose their pet curate. Tunnleton were excessively wrath; what the matrons denominated useful young men were scarce in the little town, and Mr. Lomax was a decided acquisition at either dance or garden party.

Generals Maddox and Prawn, in their position of prominent leaders of Tunnleton society, curiously enough were particularly exercised about this news. The veterans you see had not much to occupy their minds in this place, and the satrap of an Indian province may in his declining years be absorbed in the battle of a country town. These were men who, far from making their mark, had indeed rather made a muddle of their opportunities, still they had in their day swayed the destiny of thousands, and yet as our sphere contracts so do our ideas. The petty gossip and caballing of an inland watering-place were more to them now than the news that the Mahrattas were across the Nerbudda.

Imbued with the old dictatorial instincts of their profession, the veterans occasionally forgot that they were no longer military despots ruling a district, and foolishly promulgated edicts or ventured upon expostulation for which they had no warrant. Triumvirates and consulates have never been a success, 'tis doubtful whether the two kings of Brentford worked well together, but where—as in the case of Tunnleton—the generals were as plentiful as shells on the shingle, there were not two but many claimants of the sceptre; and there was much jealousy concerning status amongst these grim old warriors. A dinner-party for instance in Tunnleton bore some resemblance to that famous congress of the last century which dissolved *because they never could settle the order in which to take their seats*. The gallant officers at length came to the conclusion that in the interests of Tunnleton it were well that they should expostulate with the rector on the subject, yet at the same time they knew from experience that this was a somewhat awkward undertaking; the rector was quite as pompous as General Maddox himself, and more obstinate than the two put together; still as Prawn said he must speak and he would, and that irascible gentleman had very little difficulty in churning himself up to that white heat at which when attained he felt capable of giving the Archbishop of Canterbury himself a bit of his mind. He had not long to wait his opportunity—ere forty-eight hours were over he encountered Mr. Jarrow on his promenade. General Prawn might not be a discreet man, nor yet a judicious one, but he could not be called an inert one. In those days when he occupied an office chair no staff officer ever penned such fiery diatribes at the shortcomings of his subordinates as he. When, unfortunately for his country,

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he changed the office-stool for the sword no leader ever delivered such hasty, ill-designed, and unfortunate attacks as the general. He was essentially an irascible man, and, to use a slang phrase, was always to be "drawn" in action, argument, or correspondence, and, like most of these hot-headed, bellicose natures, had considerably more fight than science.

"Good morning, Jarrow," he exclaimed; "the very man I wanted to meet. What is all this I hear about your parting with young Lomax?"

The rector drew himself up a little stiffly as he replied—

"You have been correctly informed, General. Mr. Lomax and I are about to part."

"Oh, that's all nonsense, Jarrow, you will have to reconsider that verdict; we can't spare him, you know; most popular young man in Tunnleton; most popular preacher we have had at St. Mary's"—and here the general pulled himself up abruptly, and manifested a severe affection of the throat, having suddenly become aware that he was putting his foot in it, and that his last remark was hardly complimentary to the rector of that church.

"I don't think, General Prawn," replied Mr. Jarrow, with much stateliness, "that Tunnleton has anything to do with my private arrangements with Mr. Lomax; suffice it to say that I think it desirable that we should part."

"The people about will regret it very much; and I suppose you have some regard for public opinion," replied the general, getting very red in the face.

"Not when public opinion is meddling in things with which it has no concern. The laity had nothing to do with things ecclesiastic," and the rector quite chuckled after the, so to speak, oily rotundity of his last remark.

"I can hardly call your parting with a curate 'things ecclesiastic,'" retorted General Prawn, hotly; "and I presume I have a perfect right, like all Tunnleton, to hope that it is not the case. Good morning."

A stately salutation was the sole response of Mr. Jarrow. He bowed to his equals, or waved his hand condescendingly to his inferiors; but the familiar nod was a thing that he never descended to; indeed, the man's pomposity and vanity precluded Mr. Jarrow's having any intimates.

## CHAPTER VI.

## TUNNLETON.

A LETTER from the Reverend Jacob Jarrow, after some days, found Maurice Enderby. He was living in very quiet lodgings in Margaret Street, and considerably exercised in his own mind on the subject of this curacy. It was not that curacies were not offered him, but they might be described as curacies of desolation. Framley-on-the-Marsh, for instance, in the far fens of Lincolnshire, was not the kind of thing that any one but a Diogenes would jump at. Slopperton-on-the-Sea was undoubtedly a very rising watering-place, but then it had, as yet, equally undoubtedly not risen; was crowded for a few weeks in the height of summer with ineligible visitors from the neighbouring towns, and was a place you socially shared with the doctor and coastguard officer during the remainder of the year. That employment of some sort he must get, and that speedily, was perfectly clear to Maurice; but that it would be very bitter bread if it was to be earned in such cures as had hitherto offered themselves to his acceptance was no less patent. Therefore it was with a perfectly jubilant feeling that he perused a letter from the Rector of St. Mary's which was forwarded to him.

Mr. Jarrow not only offered a more liberal salary than was proffered for any of the places before mentioned, but Tunnleton was in the world, Tunnleton was within fifty or sixty miles of London. From Tunnleton there was a chance of running up to town now and again, and looking out for something better. Besides there must be society of some sort at Tunnleton; considerably more than could be said of such places as Framley-on-the-Marsh or Slopperton-on-the-Sea. Maurice Enderby, after due confabulation with his wife, resolved to run down to Tunnleton, and have an interview with the Reverend Jacob Jarrow.

"Can't be very awkward to get on with," muttered Maurice to himself. "A gentleman with such an appetite for flattery is always to be kept in good humour. A dexterous allusion to the 'Verity' letters will, no doubt, always keep the pompous old humbug in an amiable frame of mind. One drawback—I shall really have to plod through those two awful volumes at once. I think, for my own comfort, it would be as well that Bessie knew a good deal about them too."

Mr. Maurice Enderby was a shrewd man of the world, and, albeit not cynical, had rather a quick eye for the weakness of his fellow-creatures.

It must not be thought that he was given to practise on them, but he could not help seeing their foibles, and did sometimes, in a social point of view, avail himself of this insight, to make himself pleasant to his acquaintances.

I don't know that there is very much harm in this. Upon the whole the world would perhaps be pleasanter if there were more people of the Maurice Enderby type about it.

Yes, he thought he would write to the Reverend Jacob Jarrow a letter of half acceptance of his proposition. It was not necessary to be quite conclusive to begin with, and then he thought it would be advisable—that letter despatched—to run down quietly to Tunnleton, and talk the matter over with his old friend Frank Chylton.

The young banker was a bit his senior, but still they had been friends as boys, and Frank certainly could tell him all about Tunnleton and its inhabitants, could give him indeed a rough graphic sketch of the society he was coming amongst; a social chart that would not only be invaluable if he did accept Mr. Jarrow's offer, but would also go far to determine him on the subject. It behoved Mr. Enderby to lose no time in taking action on the subject of employment. He threw two letters into the post that night; the one, while half accepting Mr. Jarrow's proposition, required a little further information before giving a decided answer: the other was to Mr. Chylton, mentioning the offer he had received and proposing to run down to Tunnleton and talk the thing over with him. Frank, no doubt, could give him some lunch and he should be able to get back to London in time for dinner. He received his answers by return of post; the rector expressed his pleasure at finding that there was a prospect of Mr. Enderby's taking service under his banner, answered his questions with considerable verbosity, trusted his replies were satisfactory, and wound up by saying that he hoped to see Mr. Enderby at Tunnleton with the New Year.

Frank Chylton's was the briefest:

"DEAR MAURICE," he said,

"Come down and lunch, and I will put you *au courant* with 'all the ropes.' I only hope to induce you to temporarily settle at Tunnleton. Of course, old man, I can't say I hope to keep



you ; we must all wish that you will fall in for something better than old Jarrow's curacy ere long, but it may do as a stop-gap. The Reverend Jacob told me in the strictest confidence that he intended to make you this offer, three or four days ago. And as you now, in the strictest confidence, tell me that he has made it, I suppose I ought to proclaim it openly in the market-place, that being the usual result of all confidential communications at Tunnleton. However, come down any way and see me, old man, as soon as you can. I will feed you with the greatest possible pleasure, and give you all the information about the place you can require. I am a native, and know Tunnleton thoroughly, and regret to say take a very much lower estimate of Tunnleton than Tunnleton takes of itself."

When Maurice had finished his letter, he threw it over to his wife.

"There, Bessie," he said, "I think that sounds promising to start with, but there can be no doubt that I had better run down for the day, and talk the business over with Frank Chylton. It's high time I got something to do, and this, really, is so very much better than anything that has been offered me as yet." And so Maurice, having scribbled a line to warn his friend that he was coming, put himself into the train next day, and ran down to hear what Frank Chylton might have to say on the subject of social life at Tunnleton.

Frank Chylton met him at the station, and, after shaking him cordially by the hand, hurried him off at once to be introduced to Mrs. Chylton.

Seen through the medium of Frank Chylton's home it was not to be wondered that Maurice took a roseate view of Tunnleton. Frank had not only a pretty house but a very bright, pretty, young wife, who welcomed her husband's old friend with hearty cordiality. It was very possible, after partaking of the good things at Frank Chylton's table and enjoying the good-humoured fun and talk of himself and his wife, to conceive that Tunnleton was an extremely pleasant place. We are all like that ; dull-headed in our generation and wont to conceive that, because we have found one country-house pleasant, Mudfordshire is the jolliest county in England ; that because we have lost both our head and our heart about Miss——well, never mind her name ; perhaps we have forgotten it now and she ours——at that

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dreary old fishing-village of Slocombe Regis, that it is a delightful watering place.

"Now, Frank" said the hostess, as she rose at the conclusion of the luncheon, "I shall leave you and Mr. Enderby to talk over Tunnleton. Don't pray let him disenchant you with it. There is no doubt that Tunnleton has its weaknesses. It is firmly impressed with the idea that it is a leading centre of fashion, and that the verdict of Tunnleton carries weight throughout the country. Don't laugh, Mr. Enderby; it is a very innocent weakness and really deserves no more than to be smiled at. Besides," she concluded, gaily, "you know you're going to be one of us, and the next time I greet you," and as she spoke she extended her hand, "I trust it will be as curate of St. Mary's," and Mrs. Chylton, with a bright little nod, took her departure.

"Have one of these, Maurice," said Frank, as he threw his cigar-case across; "there's no extra brand about 'em. I didn't pay three pound a pound for them. I can only say they're tolerably smokable. Now I really think you might do worse than accept Jarrow's offer; you have seen him, and no doubt taken tolerable stock of him. He's a pompous old man, with a very exaggerated idea of his position, both in the clerical and literary world; but he is a gentleman, and not altogether a bad fellow. I should think with a little tact you would have very little trouble in getting on with him, and if you really want an opening it's well worth your consideration; close to London, and all that, so that you're well in the way of hearing of anything better, and, as for Tunnleton society, I tell you fairly it is peculiar. I don't go much into it myself. I've a small circle of friends here and confine myself to them, as a rule. But my wife is perfectly right. Tunnleton society generally is like the frog in the fable, simply in danger of bursting with a sense of its own importance.

"We've a little knot of half-pay generals who know very much more about foreign affairs, military affairs, and political affairs, than the Ministry or the War Office. We have also got a pleasant little knot of retired Indians addicted to billiousness, highly-spiced dishes, and incessant perturbation about the Afghan frontier. A few more idlers, whose principal business is gossip—well, I suppose some people would call it talking scandal—tobacco, and billiards. There you are, Maurice, if you come here you're certain of one thing—you will be talked about. There is

no place in which a man who has done nothing can make so sure of that ; still, as I said before, old fellow, I think it ought to suit you. If it is rather a humdrum place, it is healthy, and the country around is lovely. As far as the shops go they really are good, and all the necessaries of life are easily to be obtained in Tunnleton. My advice to you is simply, try it. You are at all events well in the way of looking out for something better."

Maurice puffed silently at his cigar for some two or three minutes, and then uttered sententiously the single word,

"Lodgings."

"Both plentiful and good, and at all prices. You could, if you like it better, take a small furnished house upon reasonable terms. You will find no difficulties on that point if you make up your mind to accept Jarrow's offer."

"Yes, I think I might do worse. I haven't time to go and see him to-day, but I'll write him a line to-night, and propose coming down to talk matters over to-morrow."

"Halloa !" exclaimed Maurice, as his eye fell upon the clock, "my time is up ; I'll just look into the drawing-room and say good-bye to Mrs. Chylton, and then I must wend my way to the station."

"I'll walk down with you," said Frank, "it is all on my way back to business. You must be brief in your adieu to Laura, as we have not much time to spare."

A hasty shake of the hand with Mrs. Chylton, and then Frank and Enderby made their very best pace to the station.

"Good bye, old fellow," said the young banker, as his friend jumped into the train. "I look upon you as one of us now. Bound to remind us once a week of the error of our ways, and to be socially the good fellow you always were. Nobody will be more pleased to see you here than I," and with a hearty hand-grip the two men parted.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A LEADING CITIZEN.

THAT the Reverend Jacob Jarrow considered himself a leading star in Tunnleton society it is needless to say ; but no sky is known which is not illuminated by more than one planet. If the Reverend Jarrow, Rural Dean, Rector of St. Mary's, &c.,

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&c., was a great ecclesiastical fact, in Tunnleton society there were other social stars who arrogated to themselves quite as important a position. General Maddox for instance, chief of that little knot of retired officers congregated at Tunnleton, a leading member of the Tunnleton Club, and who, from the possession of a deliberate drawl and didactic manner of speaking, had gradually bored Tunnleton into the belief that he was a man of profound information, constantly disputed this position with Mr. Jarrold.

The General's military career had been chiefly conducted from an office-stool; he had indicated despatches from a desk; he had acquired, as men often have done, considerable renown from that position, and on the one occasion on which he had embarked on active service he had not altogether distinguished himself. His enemies said coarsely, that "He made a devil of a mess of that Barrapootah business." There could be no doubt it was not a success, but we smooth these things over pleasantly for some of our heroes; and promotion and a C.B. had been the outcome of what Bill Maddox's detractors alluded to as "a thundering good licking."

It would be difficult to persuade a member of Parliament that he was not fit for the part of prime minister. It is hard to persuade a man that he cannot ride. All men and women firmly believe they can write an novel, if they take the trouble. A great many men are firmly convinced they can write a play, and no actor ever walked the boards but was solemnly impressed with the belief that he could act Hamlet.

Perhaps it is as well in the days of our youth; confidence in our own powers is a mighty stimulus. It is very much better than that lack of nerve and belief in themselves which, singular to say, have characterised so many great geniuses. But General Maddox, his opportunities over and turned of sixty, ought surely to have known that he had failed to make his mark in this world. Not a bit of it! That grand old warrior walked down to the Tunnleton Club morning after morning and fumed and fretted and fidgeted and moved the pins stuck into the war-map and pointed out, "Begad, sir, absurd mistakes that fellow's making in . . . ." Afghanistan or Africa, or wherever our particular little fight might at that time be going on, and laid down the law as if it were a Wellington, or a Napoleon, or a Frederick the Great, or the whole three rolled into one; and they believed

him—the public always do. It is by no means the men who get the loaves and fishes that do the real work, and I fancy the recompense of our heroes of old would be something like a florin in the pound compared with what some of our later generals have succeeded in wringing from their hardly-taxed country.

General Maddox was emphatically a big man in Tunnleton. He was possessed of one of those slow, sonorous, measured, monotonous voices that from their steady persistency wear down the most irascible and energetic of speakers. We all know what the fiery and irritable man is when opposed to dull, phlegmatic obstinacy. He is invariably worsted; you might flare up, blaze up like half a dozen volcanoes round General Maddox's impassive head, only to be met by that quiet, measured, maddening monotone. What use was the irritable man against this? It was the angry waves of the Ægean lashing Salamis, and of course the dull, impassioned rock got the better of the tideless sea.

Now between the Reverend Jacob Jarrow and General Maddox there existed what might be termed an armed neutrality. There cannot be two kings, except in Brentford, though even concerning that dual sovereignty the legend is wonderously mythical. Now both the priest and soldier aspired to the kingdom of Tunnleton, and, though they were both no doubt people of very considerable weight in the place, it could hardly be said that either of them could positively claim the sovereignty—take one out of the way and either might have gripped the sceptre. As amongst the blind the one-eyed man is king, so lacking opposition the Reverend Jacob Jarrow or General Maddox might have seated himself on the throne without opposition; but as it was it was a species of dual government. Tunnleton indeed might be described as under the control of a rule analogous to that so beautifully described in the legend:

“The prince bishop muttered a curse and a prayer

Which his double capacity hit to a nicety;

His clerio or lay half induced him to swear,

While his episcopal moiety murmured Benedicite.”

Yes, Tunnleton could say with justice, that, if the Reverend Mr. Jarrow preached to them, General Maddox swore a good deal at them. That distinguished warrior, if slow and deliberate in his utterances, could garnish them with a strong expletive or two on occasion, and with that splendid idea of the political situation of the country, so aptly conveyed in Mr. Grain's song,

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"That the country was going to—he didn't know where;  
But he felt that 'twas going though he didn't know when;  
But it was; and he didn't know why."

was wont to give the Tunnleton Club the benefit of his extremely orthodox opinions in somewhat unmeasured language. That the service was going to the devil, in General Maddox's eyes, was a matter of course. Nobody ever met a retired general officer who ever took any different view of it. It is always the same thing: the veterans of the Peninsular no doubt had that opinion of their successors, and the Crimean men, in their turn, hold a similar opinion of those who have followed them.—*Laudator tempores acti*.

It is always the same. Oratory died with Pitt, Sheridan, and Burke; acting with Kean, Kemble, and Macready. Still we rub along, and as far as Parliament goes can fairly say, we may not talk so well, but by the Lord we talk more.

As may be naturally supposed, the rector and the general were, as a rule, antagonistic. They might combine upon occasion, but for the most part it was quite natural for General Maddox to feel that it behoved him to oppose either scheme or *protege* of the Reverend Mr. Jarrow's. Just now he really had his bristles very much up in opposition.

Mr. Lomax had been a considerable favourite of Mrs. Maddox's, had piped feeble, senseless little ballads in a feeble, tuneless little voice at Mrs. Maddox's dreary little teas. He had played lawn tennis and dispensed muffins with an alacrity worthy of a higher cause. These, poor young man, were the germs of his popularity; but there was no getting over the case, he was popular, and when you knock a popular favourite off his pedestal, you have to reckon with popular opinion about the doing of it. It may very easily be conceived, therefore, that General Maddox took up the cudgels in behalf of the discarded curate pretty strongly. He had no cause, no reason to do so. Mr. Lomax made no complaint of any kind against his rector, and when he alluded to the rupture of his engagement merely spoke of it as something that had come to a conclusion in the ordinary course of things. But it was hardly to be supposed that General Maddox was going to pass an affair of this kind over as lightly as that. If a leading denizen of Tunnleton had ventured to discharge either a cook or a butler the general would have had his say on the subject. But Mr. Lomax was a



leading fact in Tunnleton, a fashionable young clergyman who filled St. Mary's every Sunday afternoon. Why Mr. Jarrow should break with him was a thing not easy to understand.

"It is absurd, my dear," said the general one morning; "I don't know his name, but I hear Jarrow has already engaged a married man in the place of young Lomax. We know what that means—a poor, needy man who is socially no use whatever. A young woman, overflowing with children, and towards whose impoverished circumstances we are all delicately requested to minister. I know what it means," continued the pompous old officer, as he stroked his white moustache; "we shall be all expected to send them turkeys, sausages, port wine, etc. You know, my dear, the utterly impecunious man of that class who takes his place amongst us. We can't do what we gladly would do if we like him, double his salary and have done with it. There is always an undefined and indirect tax imposed upon us. Somebody is always elevating his eyebrows because you have not ministered to poor Mrs. So-and-So's necessities. You have to call, and see a dirty-faced drab of a servant-girl's hands coming off black upon your cards as you give them to her. A couple of children screaming up the stair-case and not a reliable chair to sit upon, even if it is your good, or rather perhaps evil, fortune to get in. No, no; what we require are unmarried curates, who can play lawn-tennis and dance with the girls, and afford a distant prospect of matrimony in the back-ground."

The general was not altogether a bad sort of a man, but he still laboured under his old military instincts, and could not quite divest himself of the idea that he was General-Commanding in Tunnleton. He could do a kindly action, and was a free-handed man, but it must be in his own pompous despotic fashion. It is probable that two more pompous numskulls than the Reverend Jacob Jarrow and General Maddox were never leading lights in a community.

"I am sure, my dear," interposed Mrs. Maddox, "that nobody can be more sorry to lose Mr. Lomax than I am; but all you say don't quite follow surely. The new man may be married, but it does not quite follow that he has a large family, and is in such a state of pauperism as you have so graphically depicted."

"Pooh! don't tell me! Curates who marry are like subalterns; they invariably have a large family and nothing to feed them on. When I married you, Mrs. Maddox, I was on the



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verge of being made a field-officer. And a curate has no more business to marry than commit any other crime, unless he sees his rectory at the end of the twelvemonth. Young Lomax suited us very well, and what the deuce made that obstinate old fool Jarro part with him I can't say! I shall give him a little bit of my mind about it as soon as we meet."

But General Maddox knew very well in his heart that that was sheer empty vapouring. He was quite aware that the rector stood no interference with his own affairs, and this matter of a change of curate was a thing most distinctly that could concern nobody but himself and the gentleman who was going to leave him. If Mr. Lomax had no cause of complaint—nothing that he, at all events, cared to appeal to public opinion about—then most decidedly was no business of anyone in Tunnleton. The general and the rector had been at loggerheads too often not to thoroughly gauge each other's character, and General Maddox knew very well that, whether wrong or whether right, Mr. Jarro was not the man to stand being called to account about a private matter of this description.

However, the general put on the rather curly-brimmed hat that he usually affected, slipped into his overcoat, drew on his dog-skin gloves, and, taking his Malacca cane in his hand, marched with a dignified gait down to the Tunnleton Club. He had digested the leaders in *The Times*, and it behoved him to acquaint the members of that community what he thought of the situation of the country. The General's "By Jupiter!" or "By Jove, sir!" boomed forth in sonorous drawl, were deemed oracular in the morning-room of that little establishment; and when he twirled his moustache and exclaimed with unctuous emphasis, "If this rush of Radicalism is not put down with a strong hand, by Jove, sir, there will be an end to the monarchy, to the House of Lords, and the Established Church," the members shook their heads solemnly.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

"SHALL WE CALL?"

BESSIE ENDERBY was simply delighted when she heard that her husband had got this engagement at Tunnleton. She was a sensible young woman, and knew very well that it was perfectly imperative that Maurice should obtain something to do at once. She was accustomed to manage with narrow means, and, though she had no accurate knowledge of her husband's income, was quite aware that it was very limited. Not the girl at all to flinch from this, Bessie Enderby could make bread and cheese go as far as anybody, by the aid of a bright smile and a clean tablecloth; but the girl promised to become a mother, and women in that state get anxious about their nests, as the birds do. She had hardly as yet, not even Maurice himself, grasped the very critical position in which they were placed; men never do realise, until the screw is turned on them with steady but relentless power, the reality of being deeply in debt.

The plunging into it is so easy, and when the time comes that creditors demand in stern inexorable language their just dues, the luckless delinquents are paralysed and astounded, and as the poet says:

"Sorrows come not as single flies, but in battalions."

If this is true of sorrows, it is painfully more so of creditors; on the heels of the baker come the butcher and the bootmaker. The first peremptory dun is but the prelude to the coming storm, and then comes the tornado of summonses, writs, and the deluge. Maurice Enderby was wilfully shutting his eyes to these facts, although perfectly cognisant of it; as for his wife, she had a sort of misty apprehension that something of this kind might possibly happen. But she did not, of course, know the extent of his liabilities, and was quite sure that since she had been at the helm of his affairs he had at all events incurred no debts.

But who can gauge the extent of a man's liabilities, or foretell what critical times may bring to him? Have we not all seen years like '66, in which banks and large business houses lay prostrate in the dust as the walls of Jericho. The blare of the trumpets that prostrated the walls of the great city was not more fatal than the whisper of suspicion as regards the financial stability of the large business houses. These years of storm and impecuniosity come round periodically, and then comes a struggle for existence. The luckless creditor can no longer show mercy. Like the shipwrecked mariner, he becomes relentless in his demands for the necessities of life—meaning in his case money—to avoid the bankruptcy which has overwhelmed so many of his brethern. Stormy times these financial crises! fatal alike to peer and peasant! Never make the mistake of believing that when the great land-owners or the great manufacturers are suffering from one of these depressions, as constant in the prosperity of a country as they are in the reading of the barometer, it does not extend to the lower classes. When the money-makers have little to spend, it is bad for those who have to work for their money. A political agitator, whose profession it is to live on the credulity of his fellows, steps in and makes capital of such a strained situation.

Bah! it should be patent to the most ordinary intelligence, that, when the big employer of labour is harassed for money, his *employés* wages are likely to shorten, and their number be reduced both in mill and factory. The less money that is made, the less there is to be spent, as the tradespeople in the agricultural districts have learned to their bitter cost of late years. Prosperous men who years ago ate venison and pheasants are now contented with beans and bacon, and the land goes out of cultivation.

There was much difference in the way Maurice Enderby and his wife regarded their new position. Maurice, sanguine, full of health and energy, saw nothing but a prosperous start before him, but Bessie knew better; already her mind was harassed with the subject of ways and means. She understood much better than her husband what settling in a new home meant. She comprehended in a way past his understanding what hard work it was to make the housekeeping money do; living quietly as they did now, and in the position he was

about to assume at Tunnleton, it would be, of course, requisite to live in a certain fashion, and she felt that it required all her management to do things in the way Maurice liked, and preserve a decent front before the world. Still the girl knew it was no use flinching the situation. If not Tunnleton it must be somewhere else; if Maurice was ever to get on in his profession it was time to begin. You cannot, in these times at all events, become a bishop without being a curate. Thomas a'Becket, it is true, arrived at the dignity of archbishop and also his doom without going through this preliminary, but it is not given to the priests of the nineteenth century to grasp the higher prizes of the Church without doing their work in the lower grades. A good way off even a living at the present moment was Maurice Enderby, and virulent Mr. Badger perpetually jogging his elbow about that little unpaid account for hacks and hunters.

Little account! It is always playfully called so, although perhaps every shilling the luckless debtor has in the world would not suffice to meet it.

And so it came to pass that everything was settled between the Rev. Jacob Jarrow and Maurice Enderby, and amidst a halo of sighs and meek lamentations Mr. Lomax departed from Tunnleton, and the new curate reigned in his stead. The advent of the Reverend Maurice Enderby immediately gave rise to that tremendous question that invariably ruffles the surface of the stagnant pool that constitutes provincial existence when a strange tadpole appears amidst its unruffled waters. Are we to call? Shall we call? Who has called? Who are they? And, as may be naturally surmised, these were points upon which General Maddox had much to say—as to who General Maddox was himself that was involved in the darkest obscurity. About his family nobody knew anything. His career was patent to every one. He had begun life in the Company's service, and worked his way up to his present position not by distinguishing himself in any way but simply by persistently hanging on. He had married a woman with some money, and that had helped him on not a little, as money always does help a man on in any vocation. There are probably people innocent enough to believe that the old East India Company's service was non-purchase. But the initiated know that in its own way money passed just as freely as it did

in the Queen's. Now the general had a strong idea that he was one of the safeguards of Tunnleton society. As before said, he by no means approved of the Reverend Jacob Jarrow. He had not much to say against him, but Mr. Jarrow was too self-assertive to suit the general. He presumed to have his own opinion and take up his own line of conduct, and this alone caused General Maddox invariably to differ with the rector of St. Mary's. It was not the thing or the idea so much, but if Mr. Jarrow had started a fancy fair, a school-feast, or what you will, it was quite enough to exasperate the veteran. It was the old story, both liked to be king of the community they lived in; and, when two men hunger for the social sceptre, we all know what comes of it. Bitter jealousy of each other's proceedings, and what the one calls black the other vows to be white, and each angrily demands that his friends should take his view of the question, and, as is the case with weak-minded vacillating humanity, they usually do so. But people who really form their own opinion are so very limited in this world, it is small wonder the general and the priest had upon more than one occasion divided the community into hostile camps.

Neither Maurice nor his wife had ever troubled their heads about any question of this sort. And they settled down in the small house that Maurice had selected with considerably more anxiety about ways and means than as to whether people would take notice of them or not. It would have amused Maurice immensely if he had known that it was a matter of much discussion among the magnates of Tunnleton as to whether he was to be taken up or not. Tunnleton was to him a mere stepping-stone in the ladder of life. He had no intention of staying there, nor did he look forward to finding the drowsy old place particularly amusing. It was simply employment till something better might turn up. Maurice Enderby must not be condemned for taking such a prosaic view of his calling. He was quite prepared to do his duty thoroughly and honestly in the life he had chosen, but a man, more especially with any one dependent upon him, cannot help putting the necessities of life prominently in the foreground in his view of anything. Fanatics and prophets of course cast all this to the winds, but poor Maurice was only an ordinary clergyman, wishing to do his duty honestly to his flock, and at the same

time to take care of his wife and that little addition to the family with which he was threatened. It was all very well for Mahomet to depart to the desert and live a bare and ascetic existence. But he made himself tolerably fair compensation for those dolorous days, if he only lived up to the precepts he laid down to his followers. If he preached a religion of fire and sword it can hardly be said that he held out a future of much asceticism to those who embraced his tenets.

"Four teas this afternoon, I declare," exclaimed General Maddox, "and yet there are people who will have it that Tunnleton is dull. I don't know what they would have. Now, my dear, we've got to consider what we are to do about these new *protégés* of Jarrow's. Tunnleton will look to us for guidance in this matter. Of course if we take them up all Tunnleton will take them up too."

"Well, my dear," rejoined Mrs. Maddox, "I think in his position as a clergyman of the Church of England we must call on Mr. Enderby and his wife."

"I don't know," answered the general, as he caressed his moustache. "Ever since Jarrow made a fool of himself in the local journals by those Verity letters he has considered himself one of the shining lights of literature, and is apt to take up with any one who has ever done a bit of scribbling. Dash it all now, I used to write to the papers myself when I was in India. They didn't always put it in, but they did sometimes, and I never gave myself the airs about it that Jarrow does."

"Well, he brings this young man here as curate, and that I suppose of itself is sufficient guarantee that they are people to be called upon."

"Oh! I don't know at all. We shall see. Remember, Emily, I don't want you to be in a hurry about committing yourself. Now, I'm off to the club to look at the papers, and see what's doing."

Rather a bootless errand this last, as there never was anything doing in Tunnleton, except in the eyes of its infatuated inhabitants.



## CHAPTER IX.

### BRIDGE COURT.

ONLY some six or seven miles from Tunnleton, and connected with it by rail, stood the thriving go-a-head little town of Bulsted. It was a contrast to its neighbour, insomuch that it neither affected fashion nor gave itself the airs of Tunnleton; but then, on the other hand, it went in a great deal more for the fun of existence than the more fashionable place. The Bulsted people were, for the most part, engaged in business of some sort or another. They worked hard, turned their money quickly, and spent it freely. They laughed at Tunnleton and its affected grandeur, and enjoyed themselves thoroughly in their own way with no atom of pretence about it. They danced, dined, or snatched a day for a gallop with the harriers in the season as they best could. It need scarcely be remarked that a little town with all these sporting attributes had its race meeting. The Bulsted races, if they had no extended reputation, were very popular in the county. The magnates in the vicinity usually filled their houses for the meeting. The leading people in the town did the same. There was always a good deal of lunching, a considerable amount of good fellowship, and very decent sport to be seen in the two days' racing that took place in the early spring. It consisted chiefly of cross-country events, although it boasted a flat race-course as well. You might not see there the great equine celebrities of the year, but the Open Chase, the Hunt Steeple chase, and the Gone-away Plate always evoked much local enthusiasm.

Standing somewhere about half-way between Tunnleton and Bulstead was Bridge Court, a grand old country-house, whose quaint gables dated from the days of Elizabeth.

Sir John Balders was the very type of a jovial fox-hunting squire. In his youth he had been looked upon as a fairish man in the shires; but free living and increasing years had told their tale; neither Sir John's nerve nor weight admitted of his attempting to ride to hounds now. But, on a stout cob,



he enjoyed meeting his friends at the cover-side as much as in days of yore. There, with a big cigar, a good story or two, and a kindly word and jest for every one, Sir John was quite in his element; the most popular man in the hunt. If they found and really went away, the baronet jogged placidly home to luncheon; otherwise he would trot about, gossiping with his old friends, and smoking incessantly half the day. He had never been a racing man, insomuch as he had never kept race-horses, or indulged in any gambling over them; but he had been very fond of Epson, Ascot, and Newmarket, in his day, limiting himself to an occasional wager on his fancy, but thoroughly enjoying a good race, and delighting to see a good horse win without its benefiting him a shilling. It was not likely that Sir John would neglect to fill his house for the Bulsted races, and amongst his guests this particular year happened to be Bob Grafton.

Grafton's father had been an old friend of Sir John's, and Bob had known the baronet from his schoolboy days; had indeed stayed at Bridge Court many a time before.

About this particular Spring Bulsted Meeting it is not necessary to say much. It went off with its usual *eclat*, and it occurred to some two or three of Sir John's guests, who had lingered on for an extra day or two, that the best thing they could do to get through a keen bright March afternoon was to take a stretch into Tunnleton, and amongst the party was Bob Grafton. That gentleman had heard no more of Maurice Enderby since he had parted with him at Scarborough. He had often wondered what had become of his old friend, and how he and his pretty little wife were getting on; but men drift apart in this world, and unless they belong to the same clubs, or happen to mix in the same set, lose sight of each other for indefinite periods. He little thought, when he started with two or three other men, and Katie and Florence Ealders, for that walk to Tunnleton, that he should meet the very man of whom he had so often thought of late, and the very strange question that man was to put to him.

A good bitter nor'easter, characteristic of the unpleasant month in the year; a wind that brought colour to the girls' noses and tears to their eyes, irritation to the men's throats, and a general perversity all round; that delightfully disgusting wind concerning which Kingsley penned his terribly sarcastic

satire ; about which nothing can be relied upon, except that it does

"Madden into hunger every angry pike,"

piques of the betting-ring, too, about this time more voracious than ever—a dead season just over, during which the miserable backer had ceased to dangle in sight of their insatiate maw. Whistling round the corners ; whistling through the windows ; sending the smoke back again down the chimneys, in manner most irreverent and disgusting ; spinning the chimney-cowls round and round, as if in ironical derision of any such imbecile attempt to control its vagaries, taking them off at times, as it did the hats of the passers-by.

With shrill shrieks of boisterous laughter at all endeavours to control or play with it, screaming wildly in the midnight, and smiling out in the noontide sun. With an affectation of being in the opposite quarter, this dreadful old foe of humanity was frolicking about in all the March exuberance of its ironical nature, as Bob Grafton and his companions doggedly drove their ways through its teeth into Tunnleton.

"Beastly day, Miss Balders," exclaimed Grafton, as they turned into the queer comparatively sheltered Tunnleton promenade. "All deuced fine, you know ! but a fellow feels quite relieved to find his front teeth left in his head after such a terrible spin as we have had."

"Yes, it is not nice," rejoined Katie Balders, "and I am not at all sorry the hounds met the other side of the county this morning. No doubt you do at times get a rattling run in this sort of weather, but it is very unpleasant to hang about in ; and you do that much more often than not. Of course, the weather don't matter when you are going, but it makes a considerable difference when you are loitering round the cover-side."

"Of course it does," rejoined Grafton, "all poets are frauds ; which means they claim poetical license—that is, the right to treat any subject from their own point of view ; generally being what suits their lines. There's Kingsley, for instance, should have written—

"Bitter black north-easter,  
Jove ! ain't you a twister ?"

"But then, you see, he's a poet, and has to conform to the rules of his fraudulent craft."

"Twister and easter are all very well, and very expressive; but there's no doubt, critically speaking, they don't exactly rhyme."

"However, hang the nor'easter! Sheltered here by the shops on both sides, and the old tumbledown houses of the early era of this century, we are quit of the north-east wind for a little."

"But, good heavens! Maurice Enderby, as I live! You must excuse me for a moment; he's one of my oldest pals; and talk to him, and ask him what he's doing, I really must."

And, so saying, Grafton dashed across the promenade and put his hand on the shoulder of a man who was idly looking at some photographs in the library window.

Maurice started and turned round, and his face lit up when he saw who it was that had accosted him.

"My dear boy," he exclaimed, "you're just the very man of all others I wished to see. However, first and foremost, how are you? and what brought you here?"

"Bulsted races," rejoined Grafton; "as for how I am, now what is the use of asking? When you see a fellow rollicking about in a bitter nor'easter in March, it's absurd to suppose that there is anything the matter with him. Now it is my turn; first, how is Mrs. Enderby? secondly, in the words of the poet--

'Why comes he hence, what doth he here?'

"Bessie is very well, thanks, while as for me, I have accepted the post of curate to the Reverend Mr. Jarrow, Rector of St. Mary's, Tunnleton, and am now duly installed as a subordinate amongst the ecclesiastical hierarchy of this town."

"Well, old fellow, I suppose I ought to congratulate you, you were anxious to get something of the sort, and, though it's a dullish little place, it is not an out-of-the-way one."

"But where are you staying?" inquired Maurice. "I can't give you an elaborate dinner, but if you can be content with a bit of fish, a cut of a joint, and a hearty welcome, we shall be more than glad to see you."

"Very sorry, indeed, old man, but I can't. A good talk and a smoke with you, and anything you choose to give me to

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eat, will be quite good enough for this child. But I am staying for the week at Bridge Court; I walked in to-day with a party from there, and must walk out again with them to dinner. But you said I was the very man you wanted to see. What help can I be to you? If it's a question of money. Maurice," he continued, lowering his tone, "don't hesitate to speak out. I'll do what I can."

"No, no, it's nothing of that sort, although I'm not overburdened with coin of the realm. I'm not driven to ask help from my friends so far. I want you explain to me what is at present an unsolvable conundrum. You are learned in all things racing and I am not. You told me a good deal at Scarborough about my wife's uncle, the Rev. John Madingley. Surely, as a clergyman, he don't keep racehorses?"

"Not keep racehorses! What, Parson Madingley! Why bless your soul, Maurice, he's had a few horses in training for the last thirty or forty years. As I told you before, there was a time when he was a great frequenter of the race course, but he got remonstrated with rather seriously by his bishop, and since that has seldom been seen on one. He was never, for all I've heard, a man who bet or in the least gambled about the thing. The few he had were always of his own breeding, and he had them trained, and ran them, from sheer love of sport."

"But I never remember to have seen his name in the racing returns," said Maurice.

"No; of course you wouldn't," returned the other; "although they were a good deal laxer about those things when he began, still, the Rev. John Madingley's this, that, or the other would not have looked well in the papers. He raced, like many other people, under an assumed name. His horses always ran as Mr. Brooks's. But why are you so curious about his turf career? It's not much in your line, surely!"

"But it so happens just now it is. Don't you remember my telling you that we were rather in hopes of a wedding-present from him? Well, it has come, and no doubt is a tolerably handsome one; the only thing is that it has taken a form quite unintelligible to us."

"Let's hear what it is," replied Grafton; "it is so very possible that what, looks like Dutch to you may be A, B, C to me."

"Well, my wife's uncle writes word to her congratulating

her on her marriage, and saying that his wedding-gift to her is this—she is to go halves with him in the most promising yearling he ever had.”

“I tell you what old man, that’s a thing may be worth a good deal of money. The Reverend John knows ‘a hawk from a handsaw,’ and has turned out a flyer or two from those little paddocks of his in his time. Now what’s its name? Has it got a name or is it not yet christened?”

“Oh, yes, it has got a name. It’s a filly called ‘the Wandering Nun.’”

“I know; by the Hermit, out of Restless. Why she’s talked about as one of the coming cracks of this year. She is alluded to a good deal in racing circles. As you know, all these promising young things are very deceptive, Like the infant phenomenons amongst ourselves, they go wrong in their legs, they go wrong in their temper, and after all, the one virtue they seem to develop turns out to be only a precocity which bitterly disappoints those who believed in it. Still, Maurice, though I recommend you not to be too sanguine, there are plenty of people who would jump at being in your shoes and standing in with the pick of Parson Madingley’s basket. And now I must say good-bye; my party threw out signals last time they passed significant that the blue peter is at the fore. I suppose anywhere in Tunnleton will find you. Wherever your house may be here they are bound to know at the post-office.”

“4, Belton Terrace, is my address. If anything brings you here again mind you come and look me up. And now, good-bye,” and, with a nod and a hand-grip, the two men separated.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE GENERALS TAKE UMBRAGE.

MAURICE ENDERBY as he walked home revolved in his mind what Bob Grafton had told him. He did not know much about racing, but the merest neophyte could understand that to be halves in the winnings of a promising filly might run in time to a considerable amount of money. He was quite aware of the home truths that Grafton had set before him; young stock, for which almost fabulous prices have been paid constantly, never realize the expectations formed about them.— This wedding-gift of John Madingley's he quite understood might turn out a veritable Dead Sea apple. Sanguine as the Reverend John was about it at present, it might fulfil the destiny of many another high-bred horse, whose original owners dreamed of Derbys, Oaks, and Legers falling to their prowess, but whose humble career terminated in a hansom-cab. One thing flashed across Maurice Enderby. Should he dazzle his wife with a glimpse of the possible El Dorado that lay before them, or adhere to his original opinion that it might by good luck represent two or three hundred pounds, but was much more likely to result in a cheque for thirty or forty? No! he thought, I'll say nothing about it; poor girl, she is facing our narrow means with the greatest pluck—woman-like she would build a good deal upon this dubious future; better she should exult in the surprise than suffer the anguish of the disappointment.

By this time he had arrived at his own door, and, passing upstairs to the drawing-room, said cheerily as he entered it—

"Now, Bessie, if you have got a cup of tea for me give it to me and tell me what you have been about the whole afternoon."

"Not very much; General Maddock and his wife called, but, Maurice, I really cannot stand this; the insufferable way in which they patronize me, and the pompous arrogance with which they promised 'to do their best to make things pleasant



for us' in Tunnleton, are really more than I can put up with. Did General Maddock ever distinguish himself in any way that entitles him to give himself all these airs?"

"Distinguish himself?" said Maurice, "old Maddox did a tranquil round of staff and garrison duty for thirty odd years in the East. He never had but one active command, so I hear; it wasn't a very big thing, but a precious mess he made of it. One thing is certain, there were neither medals nor C.B.s distributed for his little campaign."

"Then what does he take such very high ground about?"

"It's the old story, Bessie. Maddox, who is nobody, married a woman with a bit of money, and between his own pounds and what she brought him he is now a well-to-do man; indeed in Tunnleton he passes for more than that, is looked upon as wealthy. You can understand that an Anglo-Indian who has passed his life as a Jack-in-office cannot forego the custom of patronage. Here he is somebody, and aspires to be quite a leading magnate. Like the Tunnleton people generally, he believes the little place to be one of the world's centres, and further quite believes that he is one of its dictators. A case of Alcibiades' dog, my dear."

"I understand. I'm afraid in my capacity of the curate's wife I shall have to be civil, but I don't think I shall ever like either General or Mrs. Maddox."

"Not the slightest necessity you should; we must be civil to people who take the trouble to call on us, but there's no necessity for being intimate with them; as far as I have seen there is an amount of decorous dulness pervading the society of this place that must be endured, though it cannot be kicked against."

"Ah, well, never mind, Maurice; society is a very give-and-take game, and I have an idea that without the dull people it wouldn't knead together quite so pleasantly; clever men and women are a little given to want the whole platform to themselves. I once met a man with a great reputation as a conversationalist; he certainly was very amusing," continued Bessie, laughing; "he told some capital stories, and his remarks were brilliant and witty; but it was a monologue entertainment, very amusing for once, but it would become a little tiresome on repetition."

"We must make the best of things for the present; my in-

tention is to stick to Tunnleton till a more favourable opportunity offers itself; if the place is a little dull, it is, at all events, a very fair curacy, and I'm well in the way to hear of anything better. Your uncle and godfather, John Madingley, might perhaps give me a lift. Grafton told me that he was a very well-known man and on intimate terms with all sorts of swells. Your many-acred men and hereditary legislators constantly hold lots of Church patronage at their disposal, and I imagine that your uncle knows plenty of people of that sort."

"I'm sure I can't say," rejoined Bessie; "I haven't seen him since I was a little girl, but I am aware that he is a very well-known man."

"Yes; and, judging from what Grafton told me, an excessively popular one; he couldn't do much for me just now but in a short time it might be in his power to do us a good turn."

By this time Maurice had been duly elected a member of the Tunnleton Club, and at once made the mistake common to most young men—he presumed to have opinions of his own. Prudent young men do not indulge in such luxuries, and perhaps get on better in consequence; but the mere fact of his marriage has already shown that Maurice was neither prudent nor calculating. There were a good many retired warriors at the Tunnleton Club, veterans by compulsion, playing the *role* of Cincinnati, embryo leaders of men, whom the present military system had precluded from blossoming into Hannibals and Napoleons; but it was not to be supposed that for one moment caused them to doubt their capabilities upon campaigns in any part of the world; and these perforce idle warriors laid down the law with much vehemence, not to say violence.

Now if there is one thing that the public are, as a rule, ignorant of, it is geography; we don't usually know much about our own country, but when it comes to foreign climes a man's knowledge is generally limited to such particular places as he has visited. Maurice Enderby had committed the unpardonable mistake of presuming to correct a trifling geographical error of some few thousand miles that two or three of these great authorities had fallen into over one of the numerous out-of-the-way wars that France and ourselves have always on our hands; as for General Maddox he could scarcely believe his ears! to be contradicted upon any military point by a civilian was in his eyes a gross impertinence, but, when that civilian

was a parson to boot, it seemed almost incredible. From that out General Maddox and his great friend General Praun came to the conclusion that the Reverend Maurice Enderby was a conceited young prig.

"Wants taking down a peg or two, Praun ; and I'll tell you what," continued General Maddox, speaking in his usual slow, deliberate tones, "I shall do it. I'm not going to be put to rights by a whipper-snapper curate."

"Most disrespectful a young man like that venturing to differ from his seniors !" and mumbling something about its being subversive of all order, discipline, and the ties of society, General Praun growled himself out of the club.

Much giving to taking the chair at all sorts of meetings was General Praun. He dearly loved being in the chair, and no man more delighted in the sound of his own voice ; that was the real secret of his being so continually named as chairman of such meetings, it afforded him the opportunity of firing off a speech or two. He never had much to say, nor did he say it particularly well ; but nothing would ever convince a man with a *penchant* for speech-making that he was not an orator, so that almost from the very beginning Maurice Enderby had contrived to offend two men who were prominent actors in the social life of Tunnleton, however small their position might be in the world generally. A small thing this, but it had a curious effect upon the fortunes of Maurice Enderby, as the sequel will show.

Two very prominent sections of society at Tunnleton were the clergy and that military hierarchy of which I have already spoken. They may not like each other, in short they very often do not, but still there is a *camaraderie* about the service which makes them hang together even after the swords have been hung upon the walls, and their uniforms become the property of the Hebrew.

Maurice, unluckily for himself, not only continued to frequent the club, but happened to be a Liberal in politics. He more than once took up the cudgel in behalf of that party, and, as he possessed a clear logical mind, more than once left the veterans, whose arguments consisted of mere blatant asseveration, in a quagmire of confusion, reducing them indeed to wrathful silence, which relieved itself only by snorts of indignation. These men regarded society pretty much as a garrison, and deemed they were entitled to treat it as despotically as they had been wont

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to rule their regiments; old Indians especially are apt to forget they are no longer monarchs of the social jungle, and cannot resist roaring as they were wont to roar, albeit their voice has lost authority.

It is bitter in the mouth when the man who has been a satrap at Bangalore or Poonah discovers he is a nobody in London; and it is even worse for his feminine belongings. I was once made piteous plaint to by a woman on this very subject. Her husband had been Governor in one of our numerous dependencies, but the rule came to an end and his glories departed.

"It is a cruel change," she said; "last year I drove my own carriage, and was the leading lady in the island, now I go about in hack-cabs, and am nobody."

A tall, good looking young curate, with Radical tendencies, and the audacity to express his opinions, was such an anomaly in Tunnleton that the community stood aghast, but there was no denying that Maurice Enderby buckled down steadily and conscientiously to his work in the pulpit; even those most prejudiced against him were fain to confess he was quite the equal of Lomax, and that his discourses had far more stuff in them; one point, it was true, the feminine part of his congregation still seemed to his detriment—he was married.

Maurice Enderby was going through a new experience. He was discovering that in the *melée* of life he had exposed himself to his enemies when he took unto himself a wife. But a clever or vindictive man has but to bide his opportunity over such attacks, and remember that it is a simple matter of time to nail his adversaries to the barndoor in their turn, as keepers crucify the vermin they destroy. Neither man nor woman ever had a record in which retribution was not practicable, and, though Maurice's profession to a great extent tied his hands, it might not do those of his friends. Bob Grafton, for instance, was likely to be very unscrupulous and energetic in reprisal, and with little reverence for generals, senators, or any one else however distinguished, with the exception of a successful owner of racehorses, and no man more likely to make things unpleasant for the notables of Tunnleton all round than Grafton; a crowd man of the world with a certain command of money and men.

## CHAPTER XL

## THE TORRESLYS.

It was about a fortnight after he had met Bob Grafton that Maurice Enderby sat moodily smoking in his little dining-room. The morning had brought a threatening letter from Badger, who menaced all the pains and penalties if not immediately mollified by something on account. Badger's threats if pushed to extremity Maurice knew might utterly ruin him in his profession. The young man was grit to the backbone—a shrewd clever fellow with plenty of capacity for work in him. If he smoked somewhat moodily to-night, it must not be thought that it was the tobacco of despair with which, conjoined with copious draughts of alcohol and water, men stifle unpleasant circumstances. Far from it. He had a very uneasy corner in his life to turn, and he was thinking all he knew how best to compass it. There was no more money to be made as yet in his profession, let him work as hard as he will at it. Do not misunderstand me and think that Maurice Enderby was anything but a thorough, conscientious, hard-working man in his calling, but a clergyman may wish that the loaves and fishes could be multiplied by extra work when he had others depending on him, even when conscientiously discharging the duties of his trust. It is a profession, especially in its early stages, at which it is difficult to supplement the work with advantage to oneself. The only groove that occurred to Maurice was literature. Men of his cloth, he knew, had made much money by their pens, not perhaps in the first instance, but who at the bottom of the ladder does? yet in time their income from literature had far exceeded that from their Church preferment.

Yes, he would have a shy at that; there was no reason he should not spoil paper for two or three hours an evening. If nothing came of it, it was preferable to gloomy reflection, and at present he saw nothing better to turn his hand to, and it was part of his creed both as a Christian and a man to take such work as came to him. His rector, too, Mr. Jarrow, could prob-



ably be of some use to him in this respect ; but in this Maurice showed much worldly innocence. The Reverend Jarrow was a distinguished *litterateur* only in his own estimation, and that of a limited circle of Tunnleton friends, but the man's overweening vanity would never permit him to admit that he was not an acknowledged literary star in the metropolis itself ; and Maurice, though quite conscious the rector was possessor of no great talent in that respect, thought it quite probable that from his clerical position he commanded some influence amongst the more serious magazines. Not the man to undeceive him on that point is the Reverend Jarrow, but likely to foster false hopes and be profuse in his profession of assistance ; likely again to be severely critical and disparaging when such manuscript as was entrusted to him was rejected, or fulsomely patronizing should it achieve a success ; but all this is mercifully hidden from Maurice's vision as yet as from that of many another aspirant to literary laurels whose toilsome past would never be trod were he conscious of how stony the commencement of that way was.

Things, too, were not altogether pleasant for the curate and his wife in Tunnleton. One of the most redoubtable families in the place were the Torkeslys. It was not by birth or position they had made themselves prominent in the place, but by their number and volubility. It was always said that Colonel Torkesly really did not, within one or two, know how many daughters he had. They pervaded Tunnleton ; it was impossible to go out in Tunnleton without meeting a Torkesly, and to meet a Torkesly meant to hear gossip of some kind. Rumours excited that the family had talked themselves out of more than one such city of refuge. The new curate was safe game to fly at, for the Torkeslys could put the curb on their tongues when they deemed the quarry too strong on the wing, but Maurice Enderby and his wife had responded coldly to the enthusiastic rush of that family when they had called ; and the Torkeslys, whose life was spent in a struggle to assert their dignity, invariably resented their overtures not being met with equal warmth. People usually do, and yet it would be a weary world if we were forced to take to our bosoms every one with whom we chanced to make acquaintance : better to stand the whole gamut of proud, stand-off, haughty, no-manners, than sell ourselves body and soul to the vulgarians.



Yet the Philistines rule the social world, for the most part groveling before Dagon and the fleshpots, but consoling themselves by spitting at those not privileged to set foot within the outer gate of Dagon's temple.

Now, nobody knew anything about the Enderbys, who they were or where they came from—much exercised on the point of who Mrs. Enderby was; it is always the lady about whose antecedents the community are most disturbed, and, even if they had discovered that Mrs. Enderby was the niece of John Madingley, that fact would have conveyed no information to their minds. In London or the shires or in the county of the Ridings, John Madingley's name was well known. Amongst the lovers of horse and hound, his name had been a household word in the days of his youth, and amidst the votaries of the turf the marvellous successes achieved by his small stud were often talked of. Madingley was no better; he ran his horses—horses, bear it in mind, invariably of his own breeding—from sheer love of sport, and, though as a younger man he undoubtedly backed them for a modest stake, during these latter years he had never either done that or even witnessed their performances. He was a good specimen of a type now pretty well extinct. With the famous Devonshire "passon" who but so lately left us, the last of this famous gathering of black-coated sportsmen may be considered to have finally closed. They were men of another age—good parish priests in their way, usually with comfortable private incomes of their own, which enabled them to help the poorer parishioners substantially, and their admonitions and advice generally were practised. The new generation would shudder at these proceedings, and profess they could entertain no respect for clergymen who lived such lives. Perhaps not, but the round of civilization is a conundrum. Fifty years ago our ancestors, aye, the nobility and dandies of the London world, dined at what were designated as "sporting cribs," attended prize-fights, and were addicted to cockfighting. They drank more wine than was good for them, and we of the present day doubtless think they were coarse in their manners; on the contrary, I believe that they were much more polished in manner than ourselves; they certainly were more particular in their manner with regard to ladies and also in dress. There was a time when to smoke in the Row would have been deemed the acme

of bad taste: in the free-and-easy days we live in to leave a cloud of smoke behind you in a fashionable promenade is a bagatelle, to enter a drawing-room reeking of tobacco an everyday occurrence. All fashion, you say; men reeked of port wine in the early part of the century as they reek of tobacco in the present time.

Maurice Enderby himself had literally no other knowledge of the Reverend John Madingley than he had gathered from Bob Grafton. Bessie knew no more of her uncle than that he was a great sportsman, a wealthy man, and childless; and after he had made up his mind to try his hand at literature Maurice fell to musing—when he had obtained his title to orders and had been ordained priest, whether John Madingley could not be induced to assist him to some small piece of preferment. He did not like Tunnleton, nor apparently did Tunnleton like him; but that did not so much matter; he was young, strong, and at all events could see an end of life in Tunnleton. Two years he was bound to complete here, that was requisite as a passport to ordination, and, like it or dislike it, Bessie and he had—as he muttered—to worry through that in some way.

Then he thought of the old halcyon days when he had first met Bessie, and wandered with her through the shady glades of the Clipperton Woods, and finally told her his love-story; the undisguised indignation of Mrs. Marigold when she discovered that Maurice proposed to marry her governess instead of her second daughter. Dear Mrs. Marigold had her quiver full of these blessings, and like a wise matron, knowing that her daughters were but slenderly dowered deemed it quite admissible to shift the responsibility of taking charge of them on to any eligible young man who might frequent her sunny villa on the banks of the Thames. She had deemed Maurice Enderby a much greater catch than he really was, thought she saw a penchant on his part for Laura, her second, and had considered the whole thing would do very well, and when that young gentleman in his usual insouciant manner informed her of his engagement to Bessie Madingley, as the good lady expressed it afterwards, “you might have knocked her down with a feather,”—one of those oft-quoted illustrations for which there is no historical warrant.

But, if she might have been knocked down with a feather, she recovered herself with marvellous alacrity, and lost no time

in giving Miss Madingley her *conge*, both her adieux and congratulations bearing an unmistakable tinge of acidity. But Bessie was happy, and all smiles and laughter in spite of the ill-concealed bitterness with which her employer bade her farewell.

It mattered little after all—so thought Maurice at the time; out the world is small, the venom of an angry woman's tongue goes far, and is hard at times to contradict. Mrs. Marigold was neither sparing nor particularly scrupulous concerning the truth with regard to her late governess. Bessie, indeed, had always been a somewhat independent young woman. She had a slender income of her own, very slender it was true, but enough to make the fact of her losing a situation no matter of immediate dismay—and then Maurice told her she was to go out in the world no more, but become his wife as soon as they could get matters arranged. Yes, it had all been very sweet, those days of courtship and honeymoon, but he was face to face with the consequences of matrimony now; a small Enderby would be shortly added to the family circle, which meant a considerably additional expenditure. Maurice sent heavy clouds of smoke from his *brûle gueule*, as he thought over this, and the very slender balance there was lying at his banker's. Yes, there was no doubt he must at once hit on some plan to supplement his income.

So far the Rev Jacob Jarrow was very well satisfied with his new curate: if Maurice was a little argumentative and self-assertive at the club, he had the good sense to hold his tongue before his rector. He had some idea of discipline, and conceived that he was bound, at all events at present, to conform to the views of his superior in his profession, but when he found himself upon neutral ground, and upon subjects not ecclesiastical, he looked upon it that he had as much right to his opinion as any one else. Fatal mistake! as if any one can afford opinions of his own at the outset of his career. When your foot is fairly on the ladder it is time enough to air your opinions.

Maurice, poor fellow, had not as yet quite grasped that fact in social ethics, a want of knowledge of which is productive of a harvest of thistles, as a rule, to the luckless wight ignorant of the fact.

## CHAPTER XII.

## FINANCIAL TROUBLES.

THE storm-clouds are gathering fast round Maurice Enderby's head. Badger of Cambridge is showering threatening missives and threats of denunciation to every one, from the University Dons to the bench of Bishops, if that account of his is not speedily settled. The butchers' and bakers' bills are slowly but surely creeping into arrear, and money somehow seems to be waxing scarcer and scarcer. Once get a little behind hand with the world, and the first discovery one makes is that there are only eighteen shillings in a sovereign. Bessie, too, is unable to get about to see after things herself as well as usual; Maurice has no idea of grappling with the tradespeople, and therefore the probability is that his housekeeping is managed on a somewhat thriftless scale. His literary schemes, so far, have been profitless; he has written more than one thoughtful article which he had submitted to his rector, which the rector had honestly deemed to have good stuff in it, although carefully bearing in mind the pride an author is apt to take in his own bantlings. The Reverend Jacob, with all the proud pre-eminence of the man who *has* figured in print, has pronounced them in a patronizing manner "by no means bad, sir; very creditable to a young man fleshing his maiden pen:" has taken charge of them, and has promised to submit them to the editors of some of the heavy artillery reviews, with whom the rector makes Maurice vaguely to understand that he is upon more or less intimate terms; in reality, Maurice would have had every bit as good a chance had he quietly dropped it into the post-office on his own account, Mr. Jarrow's name being no more known to the Jupiters who sway the destinies of these periodicals than Maurice's himself. Editors may—or may not—read the effusions of unknown contributors; it is too often a search for the grain of corn in the bushel of chaff, and must consequently depend upon their time, patience, or lack of material; but most educated people think they could write a magazine article if they tried.

Tunnleton, too, generally was planting its darts in Maurice Enderby. Pin-pricks, if you like; it is not the banderillos that *kill* the bull, but they goad him to madness; and so it was with poor Maurice; accustomed to hold his head amongst the best men of his college, and with an acknowledgedly good head-piece, Maurice was fearless, frank, and outspoken in his opinions; he rather pooh-poohed and laughed at Tunnleton's old-world notions, and Tunnleton fiercely resented that one whom they designated "a mere unknown, penniless curate," should take this tone of them. He was stuck-up, said Tunnleton, and must be made to recognize his proper position. He ought to be very grateful for being taken any notice of, but Maurice Enderby utterly declined to be patronized; he accepted such attentions as were bestowed upon him as if perfectly his due, treated the *élite* of Tunnleton with courtesy, but completely as though he was their equal, and made not the slightest bones in differing from General Maddox, General Praun, or any of the other pillars of the community, upon any subject whatever; a shrewd, clever young fellow, thoroughly well-read, and perfectly conversant with most of the leading topics of the day, he was a terrible thorn in the side of most of the veterans of the club. The military experiences of Generals Maddox and Praun, for instance, were somewhat antiquated; Maurice had been a member of the University Volunteer Corps, and consequently his knowledge of the present system of drill far exceeded that of those gallant old officers.

In these days the interest in things military wonderfully exceeds that of thirty years ago. Before the Crimean war it may be doubted whether much more was known concerning soldiers than that they all wore red, had rather good bands, gave rather good dinners, and, the young ladies would add, were as a rule good waltzers. But the campaign of the Chinese changed all that. For the first time the vivid pens of Special Correspondents brought the daily doings of the soldiers under the eyes of their countrymen. Maps of the famous Black Sea Peninsula were published by the thousand, and the redoubts of the Malakoff and Mamelon, of Eupatoria and Batchi Serai, were as accurately known to hundreds of civilians as to the veteran warriors whose swords were hanging on the walls; indeed, judging by the joke of "*take care of Dowb*," probably better than by those on the spot. Then came the



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great Volunteer movement ; a knowledge of military science  
 spread rapidly. No men are more conservative as a rule than  
 soldiers, and the heroes of the Sikh campaign, who won their  
 spurs long before the appearance of arms of precision, would  
 doubtless deride any opinion on military matters expressed by  
 a civilian.

I am wandering away, apparently, from my story, but it  
 must be borne in mind, that well-known as these little *histori-  
 ettes* may be, they were anything but well-known to the school  
 of which Generals Maddox and Praun appertained. These  
 veterans formed part of that gallant old army that subsisted  
 on the traditions of the Peninsula. They had entered the ser-  
 vice before the days of examination and left it before the days  
 of breech-loaders. Warriors of a completely superannuated  
 time, but with as much confidence in their judgment as a  
 Waterloo veteran might manifest concerning the strategy of  
 the Crimea, which, as we all know, was still conducted on pretty  
 well the old obsolete principles.

Do you suppose a Crimea man, accustomed to see or hear of  
 far bigger record of killed and wounded weekly in a name-  
 less skirmish feels much respect for the battle of Tel-el-Kebir ?  
 It was ever so with these warriors of the olden times. They  
 didn't see much in results that were brought about with such  
 marvellously little fighting. I suppose it's all right, and that  
 our very modern generals are marvellous chess-plays, but when  
 he sees but very small sacrifice of the pawns and knights one  
 can but think there is a very weak player at the other side of  
 the board. Now this was just one of the things that Maurice  
 Enderby irritated these old soldiers about to an enormous ex-  
 tent ; not only was he Liberal in his politics but he stood up  
 stoutly for the triumphs of the great Liberal generals, that is,  
 those appointed by the Liberal administration, and against  
 which in good sooth his adversaries might have had much to  
 say had they only the wit to argue the question, but that was  
 just what they could not do ; the clever Oxonian knew much  
 more about modern military strategy than they did, and, to  
 speak figuratively, tripped up their heels and laid them on their  
 backs continually.

It can hardly be supposed that all this conduced to making  
 Maurice Enderby popular with the little military hierarchy  
 that somewhat dominated Tunnleton. That the veterans of



the Old Guard should be wrath with a curate who dared to challenge their military memories and opinions was but natural. Maurice Enderby was adding little to his popularity by his display of soldier's lore at the Tunnleton Club.

Things certainly were looking black for the new curate. To people like the butcher and baker he was somewhat in arrear, and these people were beginning to be respectfully urgent with regard to their money, when there suddenly occurred an event that took Tunnleton's breath away! General Praun's eyes nearly bolted out of his head, and, in that temperate and classic language for which he was distinguished, he exclaimed to his wife on going home to lunch, "By ——! what do you think, Jem" (short for *Jemima*); what *do* you think? I'm dashed if the Bridge Court carriage wasn't standing at the Enderbys' door as I passed it just now."

Likely to make a terrible stir this, in a tiny little fishpond like Tunnleton. The Bridge Court people did not fraternize with Tunnleton, and indeed were not upon visiting terms with anyone but Chyltons of the Bank and Dr. Rumney, and even with these the acquaintance was slight, and limited to a couple of formal dinners a year. The Balders were most decidedly not given to general calling in Tunnleton. They had never vouchsafed the slightest notice of General Maddox, General Praun, or any of those other military magnates as leaders of Tunnleton society. General Maddox—who mastered the fact about the same time—indeed, circumstances in Tunnleton were not very long in becoming town-talk—took the news home to his wife with the observation:

"Most extraordinary, my dear. By Jupiter! if the Balders haven't called on that stuck-up young Enderby! Where the deuce society's going to I don't know, but when country people call upon Radical curates and overlook general officers, there must be a pretty considerable screw loose in our social organization somewhere."

"Do you mean to tell me, Maxey, that the Bridge Court people have actually called upon the Enderbys?"

"Yes, by Jove, I do! and nothing has astonished me so much for a long time; if serving your country for close on forty years don't entitle a man to his country's respect, I don't know what does; and yet, here are the Bridge Court people calling on a whipper-snapper curate like Enderby, and, as you know, madam, they have never, as yet, called upon us."

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It was not likely that such an event as this would escape that keen sighted cohort the Torkeslys—difficult indeed to baffle the vision or ears of that vigilant little brigade of sharpshooters. Nothing much that went on in Tunnleton could escape their ken—it was difficult to imagine even a proposal of marriage taking place without a Torkesly looming in the background. You couldn't get away from that indefatigable family; some one or other member of them attended everything; and ball, birth or burial, feast or fast, wooing or wedding, there was ever a Miss Torkesly there to take keen and attentive note of the proceedings. No uncommon type this: you will always find a family or so of this kind in every provincial town, taking that diligent interest in their neighbours' affairs that is so delightful, and tends so much to universal love and good feeling.

Tunnleton, indeed, was much exercised in its mind about the fact of the Bridge Court people having called upon the Enderbys, and once more the question as to who the Enderbys were was fiercely discussed. To Maurice it was all plain enough. He knew very well that he was indebted for this courtesy from the Balders to Bob Grafton as an intimate friend of the family; he had doubtless mentioned his—Maurice's—name, and begged they would do the civil thing to them, and cheery, unaffected people like the Bridge Court family were only too pleased to extend the hand of fellowship to a couple whom they were emphatically told would prove a pleasant acquisition to their circle.

"You will do them, me, and yourselves a turn, Miss Balders, you call on them," Bob Grafton said upon the occasion of his last visit to Bridge Court. "He was not only in quite one of the best sets at Oxford, but about the best all round man in

He not only could beat us in the schools, but we couldn't catch him with the drag either, and as for his wife she is simply charming. They labour under only one drawback, and that is that you are not the people to care about—they are poor. As for Mrs. Enderby she is a niece of old John Madingley, one of the best families in Yorkshire."

"I shall not forget, Mr. Grafton; we would do a great deal more than that for an old friend like yourself; and if a little hospitality from Bridge Court can make things a trifle more pleasant for Mr. and Mrs. Enderby during their sojourn in Tunn-

leton, don't be afraid but what it shall be extended to them."

And the Maddoxes, the Prauns and the Torkeslys marvelled greatly at this new and extraordinary phenomenon in the social horizon, destined to be still more astonished before the erratic course of such a comet as Maurice Enderby was brought to a conclusion.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### LITERARY FAILURES.

THAT the Bridge Court people should call upon "those Enderbys" perfectly convulsed the minds of Mrs. Maddox, Praun, and those uncountable Torkeslys, but far from propitiated that great faction of Tunnleton already disposed to speak ill-naturedly of the new curate; it simply set their tongues running faster; apparently it seemed a piece of presumption in their eyes that Maurice Enderby should even be called upon at all. They could give no reason for this. Enderby was a gentleman who had received a university education, and came there unmistakably to take a gentleman's position in their midst. As for his wife, no one for one moment disputed the fact that she was a lady; it was not that, but the magnates of Tunnleton thought curates were to be patronised, and, lo and behold here was a curate who not only refused to be patronised but held strong opinions of his own, and, worse still, had the audacity to express them!

"Gad, sir!" said General Praun, "that young beggar Enderby at the club only the other day not only found fault with the Government but pronounced the chiefs of the Opposition a set of old women; besides it's all very well, sir, but you must have reverence something or somebody, and, as far as I can see, he has no reverence for anything or anybody; why dash it, sir, he simply pooh-poohed Maddox's views and mine about the Eastern question, and I flatter myself that, after the years spent there, we should be some authority upon what is like to occur there."

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A fatal mistake! As if there were not men who could live ten years in a country and not know more about it than the student who only gets his knowledge from books; as if time stood still; and the man who has spent half a life-time in a country but left it fifteen years ago can be the slightest judge of public thought or public feeling there in the present day. It has happened probably to most of us to go back to some place that we have known when young, and perhaps a score of years ago. Do not we all know what a miserable mistake it has been? We have seen more of the world since then, and the place looks dwarfed. It is so much smaller than we pictured it. The promenade we once thought so magnificent turns out to be a very small affair; the public rooms and public buildings insignificant; and what we have been trained to look on as the magnificent mansions of the place turn out to be very ordinary residences after all. Now, much as Generals Addox and Praun would have derided the idea, Maurice Enderby had really seen more of the world than either of these gallant officers. Their lives have been principally passed in India, when they did retire from the service they had settled in Tunnelton, and, though no doubt they occasionally visited the metropolis, their knowledge of London was very circumscribed. Tunnelton was the home of their adoption, and Tunnelton, after the manner of the citizens of Boston, U.S., they had elevated to the position of "Hub of the Universe."

In the meantime Maurice felt his life growing harder and harder; he lived in apprehension of what the irritable Badger might be capable of. This alone showed that he was no hardened offender; had he been more practised in debt and difficulties he would have known quite well that, whatever he might threaten, Mr. Badger would never proceed to extremities. Mr. Badger was no fool, and knew perfectly well that the settlement of his account depended entirely upon Mr. Enderby's doing well in his profession.

It is as well to keep the screw on 'em," Mr. Badger observed, when talking the matter over with one of his intimates; "it may be hard, but it's best to wring a bit out of them on account, even though you know there's no chance of a real settlement—keeps 'em lively like, makes 'em think of you, makes 'em bear you in mind because they know you bears them; it ain't to be supposed they likes it, but Lord love you,

nobody does like paying for the cakes and ale he eat two years ago."

Mr. Badger's business was peculiar; if he hadn't given a great deal of credit it would have been very much restricted, but he understood it, and he understood human nature. He might be a man of no education but he was a thorough philosopher, and if he bullied Maurice Enderby it was neither in a spiteful spirit nor from any personal feeling of animosity, it was in fact a mere matter of business. Maurice's, like many other such debts, was so much capital locked up. There was plenty of time to wait for a complete settling, but it was necessary to wring a certain sum per annum out of the luckless creditor to represent the thirty or forty per cent. that Mr. Badger considered his due on such transactions. But to the man relentlessly worried for money it signifies little whether it is a matter of business or a matter of malice. The finding of the precious metals is equally difficult, and the majority of humanity, recklessly though they may incur debt, pay when they can when dunned in earnest. It was a bold Hibernian plunger who, hardly pressed and even threatened with the penalties of an utterly unsettled Epsom account, I heard some years ago exclaim, philosophically, to his angry creditors, "Faith, you cannot get blood out of a stone." What became of that stanch backer of persistent losers I never heard, but my mind misgives me that his creditors very quickly realised the truth of his remark.

Maurice kept his trouble pretty well to himself. He was not of the kind that takes to begging and whimpering in their difficulties; like a game horse he "ran honest" in his distress and did his best to struggle home. It was no use vexing Bessie, especially now, with the stories of his debts and dun but for all that the story was one that promised to speedily publish itself. Live he must—at all events he saw the necessity, if nobody else did—and the butcher and the baker were necessary adjuncts to existence. Very prosaic this, no doubt; more prosaic still the quiet pertinacity with which those purveyors send in their weekly accounts.

Maurice Enderby thought anxiously over all these things he smoked his solitary pipe. They came between him and the paper—for he was still working steadily at literature, in the hope that the time would shortly come when he might sup-



ment his income in that wise. But literature is a slippery ladder to climb, and, in its earlier stages, one's work is by no means in much request. Maurice, too, was making a very bad start. Better to run on your own bottom than under the fostering wing of an impostor, who conveys to you an exaggerated idea of his power in the land of letters.

Maurice's stuff was, in the language of the profession, "by no means bad," but when it reached the hands of the editors recommended by the Reverend Jacob Jarrow they did not much trouble themselves to look at it. That gentleman was but little known, and his lucubrations were regarded much in the same light as the famous "Eatansville Gazette," which the irreverent Slurk pronounced "ungrammatical twaddle." Little hope that solid remuneration would accrue for some time yet.

Maurice from that quarter. Another singular thing that went against Maurice was his play at lawn tennis. There are some amusements at which you may become unpopular by being a little too good. Maurice had been one of the best players at the university, and it was objected to him at garden parties, when he joined at this diversion, that he "spoiled the interest of the game," as he played rather too well. It is easily understood; average players get a vast amount of amusement out of all games they may patronise, but the appearance of a past master invariably spoils their fun. People said unkind things concerning him. General Praun remarked that he must have dedicated his whole time at college to the acquirement of lawn tennis, which accounted for his ignorance of other subjects.

The attentions too of the Bridge Court people were gall and wormwood to Tunnleton. The Balders had undoubtedly been very civil to Maurice and his wife. They had not only called several times, but had asked them to lunch and spend the day at Bridge Court: and upon finding that Bessie was in delicate health, had sent her various contributions from the conservatories and fruit houses. All this occasioned much spiteful feeling in Tunnleton, where there were several families who rather looked down upon the Enderbys, and considered themselves far more worthy of such distinction. It is so at times. People constantly resent our knowing their superiors in the social scale. We may not be very proud of it; we may not brag of it; but by some accident we have achieved such



acquaintance, and the mere fact that it is so always irritates such persons when it comes under their notice.

Clouds roll up as well as roll by, and Maurice's horizon was getting more and more gloomy as the spring-time came. He was a happy father, and that event had not contributed to lighten his difficulties, although he pretty well held his own with his trades-people, and the irritable Badger still confined himself to threats. One morning he received an unexpected letter from Bob Grafton, which ran as follows:—

"DEAR MAURICE,

"How are Mrs. Enderby and the young one going on?—I hope well. I saw the birth of the son and heir in the 'Times' ('Heir,' muttered Maurice. 'Yes; to the inheritance of love'), and had a bottle of champagne on the strength of it. Put me down as godfather if you can't do better. Mind, a good godfather is like a good, though rather far-fetched, speculation, he may turn up trumps some day, 'more or less,' as the music-hall bard hath it. I might do as a second string, being good for a silver cup down, and a case of wine for keeping his early birthdays with.

"Now there's another of your family on the verge, I'm told, of distinguishing herself. 'The Wandering Nun,' I hear, is to make her *début* in the 'Woodcotes,' and report speaks highly of the young lady's charms and capabilities. I intend to have a pony on her myself, but, unless my memory—a pretty good one—plays me false, her triumph will mean something better than that to Mrs. Enderby. Don't be very sanguine about it. Young ones the first time of asking are seldom to be trusted on a racecourse, and the equine fair sex in the first part of the season are wont to be capricious in their behaviour. Have you seen much of the Bridge Court people? They are great friends of mine, as you know, and I hope you have seen a good deal of them. I'm afraid I shall not be down your way till the autumn, so with kind regards to the wife, and trusting that the 'wandering recluse' may distinguish herself at Epsom,

"I am ever yours,

"BOB GRAFTON."

Maurice received this letter in the early part of April, and that from this he should occasionally glance at the racing into

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ligence in the morning papers was only natural; but, of course, he found no allusion to the "Woodcotes," and easily ascertained that that race was not run until the end of May, and there was seldom any betting upon it till two or three days before the race. From that time he put it out of his thoughts, and it was not till the papers teemed with the accounts of the great Epsom carnival that he once more sought for information about Uncle John's wedding present. He read the account of the "Woodcotes," with great interest—interest which rapidly died out on his ascertaining that "the Wandering Nun" had not even started for that race.

"Ah!" he said to himself, "I'm afraid Bessie's wedding-gift is one of those will-o'-the-wisps that terminate in nothing. I don't know much about it, but every one has heard that very promising foals, like very promising boys, often turn out much below mediocrity. There is no more dependence to be placed on help from that quarter. Grafton was quite right when he warned me not to be too sanguine. My literature is coming to nothing—we can't live more carefully than we do, and yet we are drifting behind the world, to say nothing of my old Oxford liabilities looming in the background," and with this reflection Maurice Enderby threw down the paper and went for a long meditative walk.

"I must try and turn my hand to something else," he mused, "I work hard at my profession but I want something to supplement it; however, as I don't see my way to anything else at present, I'll just hammer along at the pen-and-ink work, and next time I'll not ask Jarrow's help, but run up to town and do what I can do on my own account."

## CHAPTER XIV.

RICHARD MADINGLEY.

BUT if the world was by no means a bed of roses to Maurice Enderby it was still less so to his wife. Bessie was a plucky little woman, out and about, and quite herself again now. Still she was fighting a hard battle in many ways; there was not only the endless struggle to make both ends meet on scanty means, but she had her own countless skirmishes with Tunnleton society to boot. Bessie was a quick-witted young woman, and with plenty of spirit of her own. And when Tunnleton commenced patronising her it quickly found that she was by no means disposed to accept the *role* of the meek curate's wife. She had more than once completely worsted the Torkeslys in their own house, and even Mrs. Maddox had been compelled to own that Mrs. Enderby quite knew how to take her place in this world. She was almost as bad as her husband. She smiled good-naturedly at Tunnleton fashions, and sometimes rather laughed at Tunnleton opinions, and it was a quickly recognized thing that Bessie could take her own part in the social tournament. Neither she nor her husband at all katooed to the magistrates of the place, but then on the other hand it was conceded that they were agreeable pleasant people, although they had the audacity to have opinions of their own—a thing preposterous in their present position. Still as the summer wore on, although it was rumoured that the Enderbys were dreadfully hard up, yet perhaps they had grown somewhat more popular. People do sometimes who pursue the even tenour of their way and don't trouble themselves about their neighbours. It was about this time that an event occurred in Tunnleton which was destined later on to agitate the little town to its very centre. A young gentleman of about five-and-twenty arrived in the place with two or three horses and as many servants, took one of the most suitable bachelor residences in the town, announced that his name was Richard Madingley, and that he meant to spend the summer there. He had taken a house with

a pretty garden attached to it, just the thing, he remarked, for garden-parties—put himself up for the Club, and let it be understood that he meant to entertain and go in for society generally.

Tunnleton voted Mr. Madingley an immense acquisition; the young ladies declared he was so handsome; the men were struck with his off-hand *bonhomie*; and then there was no deception about his hospitable intentions. As soon as he had felt his way he gave a correct little bachelor-dinner, and picked his guests with marvellous dexterity. He had not fallen into the mistake of asking a lot of young men of his own age, but bidden to the feast "the grave and revered signors," and had taken care that the palates of the veterans should be titillated. General Maddox pronounced him a fine young fellow, while General Braun declared that the evening brought back vivid recollections of the Byculla Club. There was only one member of the military hierarchy who was not loud in his encomiums of young Madingley, and this was General Shrewster. Shrewster was a man of the world, an ex-dragoon, a man who had lived all his life in the best society. He had been asked to the feast of young Lucullus, but had declined, and when pressed upon the subject of this self-denial had replied, tersely:

"I think you are all a little mistaken in that young man. I have nothing, remember, to allege against him. No doubt he is a popular young fellow, but he gives me the idea of not being quite a gentleman. I daresay I am mistaken, but at all events I generally stand to my own opinion, and have no intention of going on terms of intimacy with him."

General Shrewster was a slightly cynical man, unmarried, but well-off, and his opinion carried considerable weight in Tunnleton. He did not mix much in society, living rather a quiet and retired life, although entertaining occasionally in admirable taste.

"By Jove, sir!" General Maddox would say, "Shrewster may not do it often, but he does know how to do it." But the ex-dragoon was a difficult man to lure to other people's houses. Always courteous, low-voiced, and pleasant, when he did put in an appearance he was amazingly popular and especially with the ladies. A good-looking, thorough-bred man of fifty-five, young ladies particularly voted him charming, and the rarity of his appearance, as usual, enhanced his value.

Amongst one of his curious whims, at all events in the eyes of Tunmleton, was that he had taken a fancy to Maurice Enderby. He laughed at his Liberal principles, and as an old *militaire* naturally pooh-pooled the idea of his knowing anything about military matters, but for all that he bore an unmistakably kindly feeling towards the curate. When General Praun upon one occasion ventured to ask him what made him such friends with that bumptious young curate, between himself and whom there was not an opinion in common, General Shrewster replied, with a queer smile

"I like 'em well-bred, and that fellow's got good blood in his veins; he is the sort of young man I should like to have seen amongst my subalterns when I commanded the 7th Hussars; I daresay he can ride, and if he can't I'd bet a cool hundred he'd very soon learn; and I'll tell you what, Praun, a young fellow who has the pluck to hold unpopular opinions is seldom wanting in pluck about anything. There was a deuced good dragoon lost to the service when Enderby turned curate."

Maurice, from the first, had naturally been struck by the name of Richard Madingley; he had watched his proceedings with considerable interest, and, strange to say, he had come much to the same opinion as General Shrewster: when he questioned Bessie about this distant relative of hers, she simply made answer,

"That she had never heard of him; still," she added, "as far as I gather from you he is really only a second cousin of Uncle John's, and relations of that kind very often know nothing about each other."

"Still," rejoined Maurice, "I should have thought you would have heard who was the probable heir to your uncle's estates; when there is a rich man in the family it is generally pretty well known who will be, or at all events who is likely to be, his successor."

"I can only say," replied Bessie, "I haven't the slightest idea who Uncle John's heir is likely to be, I know he has no very near relations."

"Why? What do you call yourself?" cried Maurice.

"Well, I believe I am the nearest he has, but you don't for one moment suppose that he would think of leaving Bingwell to a woman."

"No, indeed, I didn't mean that," said Maurice, laughing,



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"I wouldn't give you much for your reversion of the property, to suppose this Mr. Madingley is in all probability his heir."

And with that the conversation on the subject dropped.

"Good morning, Mr. Enderby," exclaimed Maria Torkesly, meeting the curate in Tontine Street, the leading thoroughfare of Tunnleton. "Have you heard the news? Mr. Madingley is going to give a great garden-party on the 12th, and everybody is going. We have just got our card; are you going?"

"Well, Miss Torkesly, I have not got mine, so I suppose I may answer, no."

"Oh, I dare say they are not all out as yet. You are sure to receive one. You must come. Give my love to Mrs. Enderby and tell her I shall quite look forward to seeing her there."

Maurice raised his hat in sign of adieu, and Miss Torkesley hurried off to flourish her invitation before all her acquaintances. When she said that every one was going, she knew perfectly well that it was not to be a large party, but it was a customary fiction of the Torkeslys whereby they conveyed respect to their unasked neighbours that everybody that was anybody was going, and left them to the obvious inference.

Maurice, his morning's work finished, dropped into the Club to have a glance at the morning's papers before going to luncheon. He found that little community in a state of considerable excitement, and the military section (a somewhat large one) literally on the boil. Our troops had sustained a tremendous disaster on the other side of the Equator, and, let alone Tunnleton, all England was ringing with it that morning.

"What business had he so far from his base?" asked General Maddox, in those judicial tones of his; "tell me that, sir."

"He ought to be shot," rejoined the irascible Praun. "If they don't bring Lord Raggleton to a court-martial the Government ought to be ashamed of themselves."

"Gad, he does seem to have made a mess of it," said General Shrewster; "upon my word he doesn't seem to understand the use of cavalry at all. He's responsible for the whole business, and when I was in the service a man who had made such preposterous mistake as that would have thought himself lucky if his life had not been the penalty of it."

"I suppose the leader of an army is always liable to make a mistake at times," remarked Maurice, quietly; "don't you re-



collect Napoleon's dictum. Lord Raggleton has apparently blundered his time."

"But there are blunders a man ought not to escape punishment for," said General Shrewster with an amused twinkle in his eye.

"Perhaps not, but don't you think we are trying Lord Raggleton by a drumhead courtmartial with next to no knowledge of facts?" retorted Maurice; "the English public, like the Athenians, are swift, though not particularly just, in their judgment."

"You are hardly a judge of military affairs," snorted Praun; "a man like Raggleton ought to meet his deserts."

"Do you think a man fights best with a rope round his neck, general? I should think one would feel one's hands rather tied about fighting, if one knew the penalty for defeat were to be death. One does not require to be a military man to understand that."

"You see, Mr. Enderby," observed General Maddox in his most pompous tones, "a civilian cannot be expected to quite understand these matters any more than we can be expected to understand the intricacies of your profession."

"Well," rejoined Maurice, laughing, "I have heard some of you comment pretty freely upon the proceedings of my cloth before this, and now I must go home to lunch. 'Tis possible, gentlemen, you may alter your verdict when fuller details concerning this disaster reach us. Meanwhile I think it would be as well for Lord Raggleton that his court-martial should *not* be held at Tunnleton."

"By Jove!" said General Praun, as Maurice left the room, "that fellow Enderby is the most conceited young upstart I ever came across: there is nothing he refrains from giving his opinion about. What can he know, now I ask you all, *what* the devil *can* he know about campaigning?"

"Well," replied General Shrewster, laughing, "I don't suppose he does know much about that, but he is a little difficult to get the better of in argument. Carries too many guns for you, Praun, eh?"

"I hate fellows who are all jabber like young rooks," replied that irascible veteran, and turning abruptly on his heel he left the room.

General Shrewster gave a low laugh. It amused him very

much to see his ancient brethren in arms so utterly unable to cope in conversation with the young parson, but still he had quite as great a contempt for a civilian's opinion on military affairs as either General Maddox or General Praun.

When Maurice arrived at home he found Bessie waiting lunch for him with rather a troubled face.

"What's the matter, dear?" he asked, "I can see that something has gone wrong."

"Have your lunch first," she said; "nothing has gone wrong, still there is a little unpleasantness."

Maurice looked at her for a moment, and then as he sat down to his modest repast, said inquiringly.

"I suppose you want money."

"Well, yes, if you can find it," she said. "Rumford, the catcher, was up here this morning, and said he would like something on account; his bill has been running rather long, you know."

Maurice said nothing, but became plunged into deep thought. He must have a little money to go on with somehow; as to attempting a settlement with Badger that was out of the question, but the tradespeople were another matter; he must go to his wife's trustees, and persuade them to let him have a hundred pounds out of her settlement. They were not likely to object to this, more especially as this settlement was not good in the eyes of the law, it having been made subsequent to the large debt he had contracted to the livery stable keeper. He had vowed that nothing but Badger should ever make him break into that little fund. In this case if the man should proceed to extremities he was unable to prevent it, and to the extent of his due the livery stable keeper could compel him to dip into it. He sat ruefully thinking over all this, when Bessie, suddenly putting her hand on his shoulder, exclaimed:

"Don't look so sad, Maurice; I quite forgot to tell you I have a letter for you. Here it is. I think it is from Mr. Grafton, and have a presentiment it contains good news."

"Bob's letters, like your uncle's wedding present, are a delusion and a snare," rejoined Maurice, smiling. "He said we were to make our small fortunes in May, and that remarkable quadrupled, in which you are half proprietor, seemed to disappear below the horizon immediately afterwards. However, let us see what he says."

"DEAR MAURICE," so the letter began—"You must doubtless have wondered what has become of 'the Wandering Nun.' At Epsom she never put in an appearance, and I suppose had succumbed to the mishaps incidental in training; but I met a fellow the other day who knows all about the stable, and he tells me the only reason they did not run her for the 'Woodcotes' was that they did not consider her quite up to the mark.

"He tells me she is all right now, going on wonderfully well, and they expect her to run away with the 'Chesterfields' next month. As I told you before, she carries my pony whenever she *does* start, and I fully expect to have a good look at her at Newmarket, and I hope, a good deal for your sake, to say nothing of a little of my own, to see her win. My kind regards to Mrs. Enderby, and tell her that I think she will get the first instalment of Uncle John's wedding-present next month."

Maurice put this letter down on the table, and, throwing himself down in his chair, wondered if it would be possible to carry on till this race should be decided. If anything really came of it the meddling with Bessie's settlement would be averted; if nothing, it was only doing *then* what he thought of doing *now*.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE GARDEN-PARTY.

MR. MADINGLEY'S garden-party was a great success. It was undoubtedly well done. There was a cold collation laid out in the dining-room, on which lobster mayonnaise, prawns, chicken, and other delicacies were flanked by champagne cup, iced coffee, etc. Refreshments of a lighter description were handed freely about the garden, and the most had been made of the lawn-tennis ground.

The ladies were enthusiastic in complimenting their host upon the perfection of his arrangements, and that young gentleman could assuredly not be accused of being wanting in self-esteem. He replied that it was all very well in a small

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ay, "but then, Mrs. Maddox, you must remember what a box of a place it is."

"Why, it is one of the nicest houses of the size in Tunnleton."

"Perhaps so," replied Mr. Madingley, with an almost compassionate smile. "It is as much as I can manage at present. Between ourselves, my dear madam, I am at present only an heir-presumptive, and have not as yet come to my kingdom."

The young man lowered his tone as he made this latter speech as if taking Mrs. Maddox into his special confidence, and the good lady felt much flattered at the compliment. It was a way Mr. Madingley had, and it had stood him in good stead with middle-aged matrons many a time. His confidences were never of a nature that the violation of them would occasion him even a moment's annoyance, for he was a young man wise in his generation, and gifted with a cool calculating selfishness that was likely to stand him in good stead in his way through the world. Although but five-and-twenty Richard Madingley was already a keen crafty man of the world, thoroughly conversant with all its dark holes and dirty corners, with expereinces that would rather have astonished his guests had they been acquainted with them.

"Our host has got rather a bit of side on," observed General Praun to his particular crony General Maddox.

"Well, a good-looking young fellow giving a *recherche* entertainment of this kind to all the leading people in Tunnleton naturally has that."

"He needn't have quite so much of it though," replied Praun, testily. He was naturally of an irritable disposition, and had met with a disappointment regarding a second edition of lobster mayonnaise that still festered in his mind. "Halloa, Kinnersley!" he exclaimed to a young fellow who entered the dining-room, clothed in flannels and perspiration, evidently in search of a beaker of something cooling, "how are you getting on at the tennis ground?"

"Capitally, but there are too many candidates for the courts. The ground is strewn with Torkeslys, 'thick as leaves in Volombrosa,' and in their desire for a game they are insatiable."

"Or what might probably come of a game," muttered the inascible Praun, his mind still harping on that little matter of mayonnaise. "Ah, Jarrow!" he continued aloud, "glad to

see you ; glad you can escape from your literary labours to take part in an open air junketing like this."

"One cannot be always at the desk," replied the rector, with an unctuous smile ; "and just at present I am not engaged in demolishing a sophist. I have no doubt it will not be long before I am compelled to take up the pen again. The propagators of specious fallacies are manifold in the land."

"Have some chicken and cold tongue, Mr. Jarrow," interposed young Kinnersley, taking a practical view if not a particularly high one of the situation. He was always a little alarmed when, in his irreverent vernacular, the rector had got his literary stop on.

Mr. Jarrow yielded to the seduction, and, ceasing his literary pretensions, abandoned himself to the luncheon-table.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Maddox and Mrs. Praun were engaged in a real confidential gossip under a tree in the tennis-ground. Neither lady having daughters of her own, the overpowering presence of the Misses Torkesly did not occasion them much uneasiness. They had made a spiteful remark or two about it to each other, and then lightly passed over the subject.

"I see the Enderbys are not here," observed Mrs. Praun ; "I can quite understand a young man like Mr. Madingley not being able to put up with his conceited overbearing manner."

"Yes ; indeed, the General was quite against my calling on them, but I thought it right to do so. I have a great respect for the Church, and invariably stretch out my hand to welcome even its juniors when they come here ; I have always felt it my duty to be kind to the young people. In India, my dear, when the general was colonel of the district, I always called on all the subalterns' wives."

So she did, dear good lady, and mightily the subalterns' wives enjoyed it. She generally read them a severe lecture on economy, and doing their duty in that state of life in which they found themselves—winding up that their husbands might possibly become colonels in the course of years, and they themselves blossom even into such a one as herself. That visit completed, she seldom took further notice of them.

"There are rumours about the Enderbys," said Mrs. Praun ; "but I dare say," she continued, doubtfully, "you have heard them, my dear."



"I don't quite understand you," rejoined Mrs. Maddox, drawing her bonnet considerably closer to her companion's.

"You mean——"

"Just so," replied Mrs. Praun; "but you know they do say——"

"Exactly; there's nothing wrong about their marriage, is there?"

"No! no! my dear, it's not *that*. I thought you had heard—you know I'm not a tattler, and perhaps I ought not to tell you"—(what a provoking thing she is, muttered Mrs. Maddox, in a fever of curiosity)—"for it is whispered that Mr. Enderby is getting very much into debt in the town. I happened to hear that the tradespeople have great trouble in getting their money."

"Well, I always did say," returned Mrs. Maddox, "that they had no business to take that house; I always thought it was quite beyond their means, or that of most curates."

"Well, I'm sure I hope it won't get about; let us hope it isn't true. I know, my dear, I can rely upon your not mentioning it. And as for me, as I said before, I am no tattler."

It is to be presumed that the good ladies honestly meant what they said, and yet, strange to say, within eight-and-forty hours it began to be whispered through Tunneleton that Mr. Enderby was in difficulties. The tradespeople—to do them justice—said little about it, but these things generally leak out in some inconceivable manner. Two or three of the leading shopkeepers had, no doubt, called upon Maurice lately, and urged respectfully that they should like something on account, but Enderby adhered to his resolution and only said; "Wait till the end of next month." This was his invariable reply.

From that time Maurice began to scan the sporting paper with an eagerness somewhat unbecoming his profession; although he had never in the least taken up racing, it would be absurd to suppose that a University man of his stamp had never seen a Derby run, or was totally ignorant of horse-racing. There are thousands of Englishmen who never bet, who never go near a racecourse, and affect no knowledge of the Calendar, but who yet know the names of all the leading cracks of the turf, and take an interest as to what may win the half-dozen big races of the season.

We are a horse-loving nation and cannot help feeling a curi-



osity as to the deeds of our equine heroes remotely approaching to that which we feel in that of our soldiers and sailors. I suppose there never was a club in which a certain number of the members did not talk of horse-racing, and the Tunnleton Club was no exception. Maurice at first stood aloof from this section of the community, which as a rule haunted the billiard-room. He had, to begin with, not thought it quite right to look into that room much, and secondly their talk had little interest for him ; but now all this was changed, he was beginning to feel an absorbing interest in racing, and could not help listening to the lore that fell from the lips of these young gentlemen, although feeling in his heart that they knew little about it. You must not blame Maurice Enderby and argue that a man who had embraced his profession had no business to let his thoughts be absorbed about the turf, Remember he is a man sore beset for money, and who, by no act of his own, suddenly finds himself in the position of half-owner of what he is told is a "flying two-year old." It would not be in human nature to abstain from looking forward to the success of that filly as some relief from his necessities.

But gradually he got so accustomed to drop into the billiard-room and talk-racing, that it was no wonder the men with whom he gossiped forgot his cloth and offered to bet with him. It is true he always laughingly refused, but there were naturally other frequenters of the room besides the sporting knot of which we have been speaking. General Maddox and General Praun rarely unbent so much as to look in there ; but a rumour spread about the club, which of course speedily reached their ears, that Mr. Enderby took a strange interest in turf affairs ; then one or two of the staid steady old pool-players had heard Maurice *offered a bet*, and that this little bit of scandal should (in repetition) have been turned into *had taken a bet* was not very extraordinary. Before the Newmarket July Meeting took place, Maurice, little as he knew it, had achieved the reputation of gambling on horse-racing.

There are many quiet-going people, who regard a man who has made a small bet upon a horsesrace as going rapidly to the dogs, and it was not to be supposed that Tunnleton was not leavened by people of this description ; and when the rumour of Maurice's supposed misdeeds reached their ears the feeling against him would be likely to run very high in the town.

Young Madingley had rapidly constituted himself almost the principal figure in the sporting *coterie*. He had evidently been racing while most of the others only talked about it, and there was no doubt had considerable knowledge of the subject. He it was who had offered to bet with Maurice Enderby. There was an instinctive antipathy between the two men, and till Maurice got so anxious about the advent of "the Wandering Nun," they had scarcely exchanged twenty words, but now a common interest bound them together.

It was the Saturday before the July meeting, and Maurice could not resist dropping into the club in the afternoon to hear what might be the latest opinions and reports concerning the forthcoming week's racing.

The sporting papers had all arrived from town, and those that only appeared every seventh day had to sum up, and speak with authority as to what were to be the runners of the principal races. Most of these put down the "Chesterfields" to a very smart two-year-old called "Bajazet," who had been only just beaten for the New Stakes at Ascot, though some two or three of them asserted, "that there was a rumoured dark filly in Kilburne's stable that might take a good deal of beating." Those connected with the stable believed "the Wandering Nun" to be a veritable flyer.

Mr. Madingley pooh-poohed Maurice's suggestion that this might possibly prove the victor of the "Chesterfields," and Maurice for the first time betrayed his interest in a particular race. Hitherto he had talked over racing generally, but this time he had ventured an opinion, and what was more a tolerably decided one.

Richard Madingley noticed it quick as lightning, and turning to him, said,

"You seem interested in the 'Chesterfield's,' Enderby?—I'll make you a small bet, or for the matter of that a big one. I will lay you two to one in pounds or to money that 'Bajazet' beats 'the Wandering Nun' wherever they finish."

For a moment the blood rushed to Maurice's temples, and although he had never done such a thing before, a strange longing came over him to reply—

"Done in hundreds!"

It was not so much in words, as the contemptuous tone in which Madingley's speech was uttered, but he swallowed his anger with a great gulp, and replied coldly—

"I never bet, Mr. Madingley," and the strange inflexion on the "Mr." marked his resentment at that gentleman's familiarity in addressing him without the prefix. "Neither my profession nor my circumstances admit of such indulgence, and, had you reflected before you spoke, you might have known to offer a bet to a man of my cloth was as much empty bluster as calling upon him to fight a duel."

And with this Maurice turned abruptly upon his heel, and left the room.

"Rather rose the parson," said Dick Madingley. "Never bets indeed! Supercilious young prig! he has got a fiver or tenner on 'the Wandering Nun,' I'll go bail!"

His remark fell somewhat flat, and he could see, by the faces of his companions, that they looked upon him as very properly snubbed.

"You had no business to offer to bet with him, Dick," said young Kinnersley; "Enderby's a good fellow, and a straight one. I daresay he punted a bit when he was at college, and naturally can't help watching the old game a little in the papers, and likes to have a chat about it; but I certainly don't agree with you that he does anything of the kind now."

"Parsons are not all saints, as you will find out Kinnersley, when you have seen a little more of the world," rejoined Madingley, with an air of insufferable superiority; and from that out he honoured Maurice Enderby with a rancorous hatred.—From that out the curate carefully refrained from joining the billiard-room *coterie*. But it was too late; the scandal had gone forth, and slowly the story was permeating Tunneleton that Mr. Enderby spent the best part of his time at the club, talking racing, and unluckily, did not confine himself to merely talking, but was given to backing his opinion, which would easily account for his inability to pay his tradespeople.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## BITTER TONGUES.

THE rumour that Mr. Enderby had taken to betting, and that the money which should have gone to his tradesmen was being frittered away in turf speculation, having at length reached the ears of Generals Maddox and Praun, it naturally had come to the knowledge of those great conservators of the morals of Tunnleton, their spouses—and those two matrons at once agreed that it behoved them to take steps of some kind.—The only question was what shape should their interference be couched in. They talked this over between themselves for some time. Was it their duty to go direct to the Reverend Jacob Jarrow, and acquaint him with his curate's backsliding? or should they spare him in the first place, and content themselves with administering a lecture to Mrs. Enderby, which she could, and no doubt would, pass on to her husband.

This, after all, struck the two ladies as the more congenial form of doing their duty towards their neighbours, and so they resolved to call upon Bessy.

It was easy to time their call so as to find Maurice away from home. Tuesday afternoon, for instance, he was always engaged at the parish schools, and on that afternoon accordingly the two matrons laid hands on the Enderby's knocker.

"Yes, Mrs. Enderby was at home," replied the neat little servant-maid. "Would the ladies walk up?"

Bessie received her visitors with a gaiety she was far from feeling. She was, in truth, very uncomfortable about their increasing liabilities, although she endeavoured to show it even to her husband as little as possible. That story of the young Spartan with the fox beneath his cloak is an every everyday occurrence, as would speedily be made manifest were the cloaks removed. In the meantime society demands that we keep our troubles to ourselves, and look as if we had not a care upon our minds.

The usual formalities that form the preliminaries of a con-

ventional call were gone through, and then the two ladies exchanged glances, which, being interpreted, mean, which of us is to open fire? A significant nod from Mrs. Praun settled the question, and then Mrs. Maddox lifted her voice and spoke—

"We have got something to say to you which it is only right you should hear, Mrs. Enderby. It's a painful story to have to tell to a young wife, but Mrs. Praun and myself have come to the conclusion that you are sure to hear of it sooner or later and it would be kinder to break it to you at once."

"What is it? What do you mean?" cried Bessie, utterly bewildered, and dreading she knew not what.

"The fact is," says Mrs. Maddox, and here she paused impressively.

"Speak! Good Heavens? Can't you speak?" cried Bessie, excitedly.

"Your husband has taken to betting on horseracing!

"I don't believe it!" cried Bessie. He has never done such a thing since he was married; and I am certain he would not now that he has adopted the Church as a profession."

"I only wish it were so," exclaimed Mrs. Praun, "and it is because he indulges in this infatuation that he finds it difficult to meet his creditors' demands."

But the two ladies had a little over-estimated the weakness of the curate's wife. Bessie sprang to her feet, and said—

"Of course, I do not know where you have obtained your information; but I tell you the whole thing is most infamously untrue."

"I assure you, Mrs. Enderby, the rumour is all over Tunbridge."

"And I do not care if the rumour is all over England! it is still false—shamefully, disgracefully, untrue. You have thought proper, madam, to insinuate that we do not meet our liabilities. Our private affairs are, I presume, matters which in no way concern you. My husband, you may depend, will trace the falsehood to its originator, and make him answer for it in some wise!"

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Maddox, as she rose to her feet, her very skirts rustling with indignation, "if this is the way you treat friends, anxious to warn you of a coming peril, and who came here to beseech you to use your influence with your husband to turn him from his fatal courses——"



"Fatal courses!" cries Bessie; "I tell you this miserable story is untrue. My husband will know how to defend himself when the charge comes to his ears, as it will the moment he comes home. The originators as well as the disseminators of this scandal had then better look to themselves, for if I know Maurice he is far from being the man to rest quiet under an imputation of this kind."

"Oh, well," exclaimed Mrs. Maddox, with angry toss of her head, "if our motives are so utterly misunderstood I think we had better be going. It is evident, Mrs. Praun, that we are of no use here. Good-bye, Mrs. Enderby. I think when you have recovered your temper you will be more ready to appreciate our reasons for calling on you."

"You are not the first wife, Mrs. Enderby," said Mrs. Praun, "who has been deceived by her husband and awoke one morning to find him a very different man from what she imagined him. Good morning."

"We will make it good-bye, if you please," said Bessie, quietly, as she rang the bell for the maid to usher out her visitors: and if ever two ladies had departed from a house withuffled plumes it was now.

"A chit of a curate's wife!" exclaimed Mrs. Maddox, still almost snorting with indignation.

"She has actually had the audacity to close her acquaintance with us," said Mrs. Praun, in a voice that trembled with suppressed passion; "the little minx shall soon see what that means in Tunnleton."

Bessie threw herself back in her chair with flushed cheeks and heaving breast when her unwelcome visitors had departed.

"I didn't believe," she muttered, "that two women could have been so rude to me in my own drawing-room as they have been; as for their foolish charge against Maurice, thank Heaven I feel no anxiety about that; I know too well it is false. I wonder if it is possible to make a more spiteful remark than Mrs. Praun did as she left the room. However," continued Bessie, with a low laugh, "I don't think they are likely to trouble me again."

Maurice was very late returning home that day, and the reason of it was this; he had finished his work at the schools when he recollected that the July Stakes were run on that afternoon, and that there might also be some betting upon the



"Chesterfields" telegraphed from Newmarket. He determined to look in at the club and see what news the telegram had brought. It was the moth hovering round the candle. As he had walked home on the previous Saturday he had reflected with dismay that he was beginning to take an interest in horse-racing incompatible with his profession. He recognized that it was growing upon him, that it was absorbing him more and more; he could even imagine the fascination of the pursuit leading him at last to speculating in money on the correctness of his own judgment. He was a shrewd, clear-headed man, and since he had taken to the close study of the sporting intelligence it had interested him as men are interested by double acrostics or other ingenious puzzles. He had set himself to discover from their previous performances, and what he could pick up concerning them in the papers, which horse would be victorious in any important race shortly coming off, and, as is frequently the case with neophytes, had been rather fortunate in his predictions. It was true he had prudence enough to keep these mental speculations to himself, and the Tunnleton Club was quite unaware of the new prophet in their midst. It was well it was so; the interest he had avowed in turf matters had already done him sufficient harm, did he but know it. He had vowed to himself on Saturday to set foot in the billiard-room no more, but the telegram would be in the hall. There could be no harm in just looking at it: and, comforting himself with this little bit of sophistry, Maurice ran up the club steps.

Deviate a hand's-breadth from your good resolutions and you will find your evil genius with malignant grin prompt to take advantage of your frailty, and it was so upon this occasion.

In the hall, and gathered round the telegram-board, were Dick Madingley, young Kinnersley, and others of the sporting spirits of the Tunnleton Club, and naturally they were discussing the day's doings at Newmarket with no little animation. Maurice found himself in the middle of this group almost before he was aware of it.

"Well, *Mister Enderby*," exclaimed Madingley, who was one of those pachydermatous young gentlemen on whom sarcasm has no more effect than a shower of rain has on a duck. "I see they are backing your fancy for the 'Chesterfields' pretty freely; hope you'll have good race, which is at all events disinterested on my part, because if you do I shan't."

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"I told you on Saturday, Mr. Madingley, that I never bet on horse-racing, and I am in the habit of saying what I mean," and so saying Maurice, without even looking at the telegram, passed on towards the reading-room.

"All right, your reverence," retorted Dick, "mam's the word as far as I am concerned."

"You're too bad, Madingley. Your last speech was that of a regular cad," said young Kinnersley.

"If that's your opinion, Mr. Kinnersley, the sooner our acquaintance ceases the better."

"As you like," replied Fred Kinnersley, turning on his heel ; and the dead silence that fell upon the group suddenly awoke Madingley to the fact that he had gone a little too far.

As General Shrewster said, there was a cross-drop in young Madingley, and when that is the case with a man it never shows itself so conclusively as when he has a little drink aboard him.

He had been lounging in the hall, waiting for the telegram, and killing the time with divers sherries and bitters ; if it had not been for these, added to the elation of having won a bit of money over "the Julys," he would hardly have so forgotten himself as to make the offensive remarks he had to Maurice underby. But he had the wit to see that the feeling of his immediate coterie was all in favour of Kinnersley, and not of himself. The former was a straightforward, popular young fellow throughout Tunnleton, and that he was right in the slight altercation which had taken place between him and Madingley did not admit of a doubt. The latter said no more at the moment, but jumped off the table on which he had been sitting in arrogant indolence, and made his way out of the clubhouse without further observation.

"Confound that fiery sherry," he muttered, as he strolled homeward. "What an idiot I was to drink so much of it ! The committee ought to be indicted for keeping such atrocious alcohol on the premises. I shall have to tell Kinnersley to-morrow that I didn't mean what I said ; that it was all the sherry, and ask him to shake hands. I can't well afford to quarrel with him ; as for that clerical prig I hate him ! and what does he take such an extraordinary interest in turf affairs for if he don't bet ?"

Maurice in the meantime had gone into the morning room,

and was destined there to encounter that first straw which shows the way the wind is blowing. Old Praun was there, fussing and fuming as was his wont, but no sooner did he espy Maurice than a malicious twinkle came into his fishy grey eyes, and, rising from his chair, he began to sidet about with his papers. A few seconds, and he threw the "Sportsman" across to Maurice, saying—

"Dear me, I can't think what has become of the 'World.' However, anyway, I have found something in your way, Mr. Enderby."

"Thank you," replied Maurice quietly, "I'm sorry you should have given yourself such unnecessary trouble."

"Not at all! not at all!" returned the general, "but I understand that you are much interested in such matters."

Maurice made no answer, but took up one of the daily papers. In good truth he did not know how to reply to General Praun's inuendo: he was conscious that he had of late been manifesting an unseemly interest in horse-racing. The gibes of Dick Midgley in the billiard-room on Saturday had first opened his eyes to the fact that this hobby of his was exciting comment, and this mock courtesy of General Praun, whom he knew disliked him, showed him only too clearly that his eager reading of the sporting papers had attracted both attention and adverse criticism. He would have no more of it; from this time such papers should remain a sealed book to him; he would carefully eschew all conversation with the sporting *coterie* and content himself with an occasional peep at the racing intelligence of the "Times." Even that, he thought to himself, it would be better to pass over; but Maurice, although possessing plenty of determination, was conscious of human frailty. He knew to read the "Times" and carefully abstain from looking at the racing intelligence would be beyond him, and then as he sat there staring at his paper without comprehending one line of it another thought flashed across his brain. If this Mr. Madingley was heir to old John Madingley of Bingwell, it was very odd that he should not be more accurately informed about the presumed merits of "the Wandering Nun." In his position, and his evidently pronounced taste for the turf, it was singular he should not take more interest in his relative's stable. One would have expected to find him enthusiastic about her chances

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of success, instead of which he persistently ran down her claims. Maurice was older in thought than in years, and it struck him that few friends he had who possessed relatives that kept racehorses were wont to be over-sanguine about the prospects of those distinguished animals; and then he threw down his paper and started on his way home.

Bessie jumped up to welcome him as he entered the drawing-room.

"I am so glad you have returned, dear. My house has been invaded by the two most offensive women it has ever been my lot to encounter. I did not think it possible that two ladies could be so rude as Mrs. Maddox and Mrs. Praun were to me to-day."

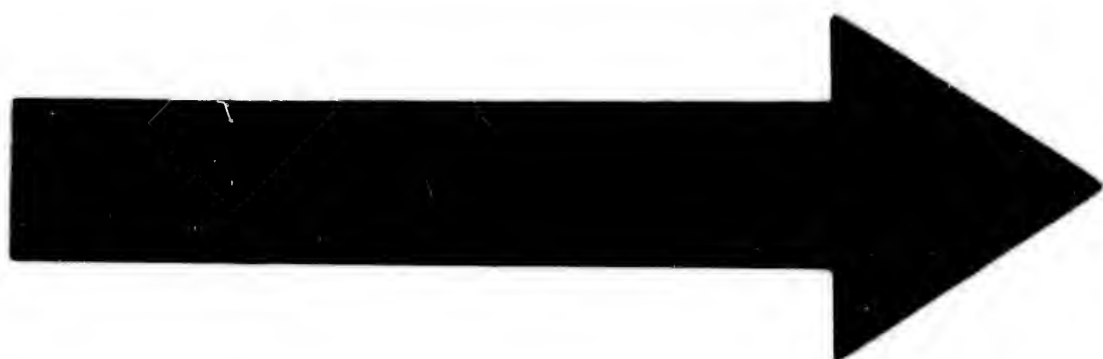
Maurice kissed his wife as he said, "Sit down, little woman, and tell me all about it."

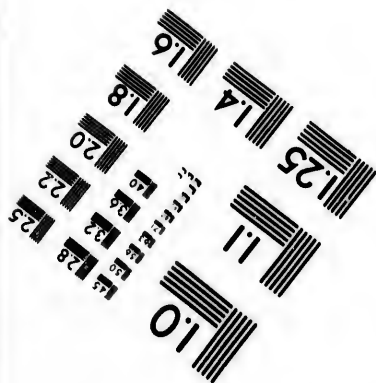
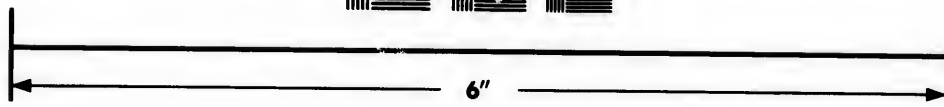
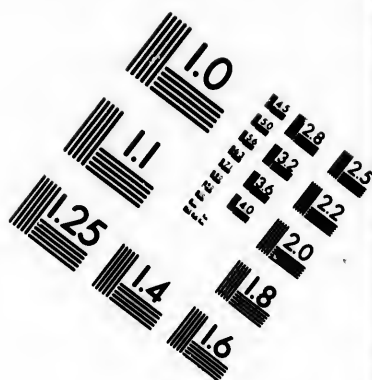
And then Bessie told him the story of her two visitors of the afternoon, and how they had dared to assert that he, Maurice, was behindhand with his tradespeople because he was frittering his income away in betting on horse-racing. "I told them," she continued, vehemently, "it was an infamous falsehood—a falsehood that you were likely to make those who propagated it to pay dearly for—of course it is not true, Maurice?"

"No, I have never bet on a horserace, Bessie, since I married you, and very seldom and in a very mild way, before. I have had follies enough, goodness knows, but that has not been one of them. Still, Bessie, I have been much to blame, I have given a handle to the scandal from my imprudent hankering after sporting news, arising from that luckless wedding gift of Uncle John's. The animal of which you are half owner is to run the day after to-morrow at Newmarket, and its success might mean two or three hundred pounds to us, and just think what a handful that would be under present circumstances."

"Yes, Maurice dear, but recollect you were just as sanguine in May, and nothing came of it. I am very grieved that you have given those women even a handle for their falsehoods. I wish Uncle John had sent me a hundred pounds instead of making me such an eccentric present."

"Perhaps it might have been better, and after this week I'll try and forget it."





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## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE CHESTERFIELDS.

BUT Maurice, though he might admit to his wife that he was in some way morally guilty of the charge preferred against him, was very indignant that Mesdames Maddox and Praun should have had the presumption to come down and lecture Bessie on the subject. He had quite made up his mind to submit to no comment on his conduct from anybody in Tunnleton but the Reverend Jacob Jarrow. If the rumour, as it infallibly would, reached the ears of the rector, and that gentleman deemed fit to speak to him on the subject, well, he would acknowledge that he had transgressed in some shape though able to give an emphatic denial to the direct charge. As for Bessie being preached to on the subject that he would allow from nobody breathing.

He avoided the club all the next day, and contented himself with such news as he could extract from the paper he took in. That morning brought a visit from Mr. Rumford, who, though quite respectful, was very earnest in his request for something on account, and retired evidently but half-satisfied with the promise that his account should be settled in the course of the month.

The next day was Thursday, and, as Maurice knew well, the Chesterfield Stakes at Newmarket were decided that afternoon. He determined not to go to the club, he would wait patiently and learn his fate from his own paper the next morning. That afternoon he recognized what the excitement of wagering on races was, and how it was growing upon him, as dram-drinking or opium-eating might do, although he was innocent of actual betting. He went about his daily work as usual and did it, but in preoccupied fashion, for his mind was all the time dwelling on that sunshiny meeting at the back of the "Ditch," and wondering what had been the result of the struggle for the "Chesterfields."

"It's terrible!" he muttered at last. "Do what I will I

cannot throw this thing upon one side; we may restrain our passions, but we cannot control our thoughts. I wish Bessie's uncle had given her some other wedding-present. I do believe—I do believe it will end in making the Church an impossible profession for me. I am getting so infatuated with it, that I could quite fancy my being so carried away as to resign my curacy, and actually take to attending race-meetings. I know—no one better—that it means nothing but ruin to a poor man! that scores every year perish under the wheels of the Turf Juggurnauth. Absurd! I *must* shake it off."

He struck across the common, turned down one of the innumerable country lanes all fragrant with the scent of the hay and the summer flowers, and stretched manfully away for a couple of miles or so; but it was of no use. All the way a friend seemed whispering in his ear "What has won the 'Chesterfield'!" He turned his face homewards, and still, as if keeping time with his footsteps, came the whispered—"What—has—won—the—'Chesterfields'?" All across the common it was the same thing. He had determined not to go into the club, but at last he told himself that it would be better to *know*, than to have this irritating question ringing continuously in his ears. He broke his resolution, turned into the club, and was a little disconcerted at finding the sporting *coterie* gathered together in the hall. He passed rapidly through them without glancing at the telegram-board, and made his way to the morning-room. There he sat down, and affected to read the papers. He had made up his mind what to do now. He would wait here for a bit. It was getting on towards six; a little later and the group in the hall would have doubtless dispersed, and he would then be able to look at the telegram-board unnoticed. For half-an-hour he fidgeted with the papers, and then taking his hat he left the room. As he had expected, the hall was now clear. No one was there to see him walk quickly up to the board. His heart gave a great jump as he gazed at the issue.

Wandering Nun	.	.	.	.	.	1
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Won in a canter.

He rushed out of the club and hurried towards home. What this meant to him? He hardly dared to think. John Mad-

ingley had distinctly said that Bessie was to go halves in all that accrued from "the Wandering Nun's" racing career. He knew that the "Chesterfields" was a good stake—did that mean that Bessie was entitled to half of it? If so this probably meant some three or four hundred. What a windfall it would be for them in their present circumstances; it would obviate the touching of that money which he had settled on Bessie; he would be able to pay off his tradespeople, and to give Badger something considerable on account.

"How late you are, Maurice!" exclaimed Bessie as he entered the drawing-room; "what can have kept you?"

"Well," he replied, "I felt I wanted a good long walk, so I went for a stretch out Blythfield way, and as I came back just looked in at the club; that remarkable filly of your uncle's, in which you are supposed to have a vested interest, has won a big race at Newmarket; whether that means anything to you or not, of course I do not know."

"I am sure I don't," replied Bessie; "but I should think probably it means a present of some sort; Uncle John is a man who doesn't talk at random, but always means what he says. But I wish, Maurice, you were not so interested in racing."

"I'm going to drop it from this out," replied Maurice, "but I could not help a feverish anxiety to see if 'the Wandering Nun' won to-day at Newmarket. Well, she has, and now I will shut my eyes to her further proceedings."

As might have been expected, the malpractices of his curate were speedily reported to Mr. Jarrold. To do that gentleman justice he maintained considerable incredulity.

"It may be as you say, General Maddox, and I shall regret very much if it is so, but I could hardly believe that a man of refined, cultivated taste, like Mr. Enderby, should fritter away his talents on such profitless and unintellectual pursuit as horse-racing. Mr. Enderby entered at once into all the incisive logic and satire of the Verity Letters, and has besides literary ambitions of his own. Some of his work which I have had the privilege of perusing is, I assure you, very passable indeed for a young hand. He is most attentive to his parish duties, and though he is certainly not so popular in the pulpit as Mr. Lomax, yet I think there is more stuff in his sermons. Of course I shall speak to him on the subject; it is only right that

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a man should have a chance of refuting a scandal such as this  
is, for a scandal it is to one of our cloth. He may not know  
that the report is afloat concerning him."

"I feel sure he is perfectly aware of it," replied the general,  
contentiously, "and he has taken no steps to justify himself in  
any way."

The Rev. Mr. Sparrow was a pompous and not particularly  
wise man, but one thing he was always quite clear about,  
namely, that the Church was not to be hectored over or dic-  
tated to by the laity. He was as arbitrary and jealous of the  
powers of the Church as Cardinal Wolsey, and tolerated no  
interference with his parish on the part of any of his parishioners.  
He was well to do, having a comfortable private income besides  
his living, and was no niggard with regard to the spending of  
money on his cure, but he invited no co-operation on that part  
of the wealthier of his flock that was not to be under his im-  
mediate control. He had spent and raised money to decorate  
his church and improve his schools, but he had steadfastly  
insisted upon dictating as to how it should be expended. He  
was sure to stand by any curate of his who was attacked by  
the laity, more especially when the charge was proffered by  
one of the chiefs of that military hierarchy at whose presence  
Tunntleton the reverend gentleman so persistently chafed.

It was the week succeeding the Newmarket races that Gen-  
eral Maddox spoke to Mr. Jarrow. The General was of course  
aware of what had taken place between his wife and Mrs.  
Enderby, and was quite as indignant on his part as Maurice  
was. He considered it a great piece of condescension that  
General Maddox should have taken the trouble to call upon Mrs.  
Enderby, acquaint her with her husband's iniquities, and im-  
plore her to use her influence to turn him from the error of  
his ways.

"I should like to know what more a kind-hearted woman  
could have done, and, by Jove, instead of being grateful, Mrs.  
Enderby actually flouts her, flouts her, sir, flouts my wife, Mrs.  
Maddox."

In fact, the two generals were both furious, and went about  
petting in their wrath like wild elephants. A version of  
the scene in Mrs. Enderby's drawing-room was all over the  
country by this time, and it was generally known that lady had  
dealt with extreme rudeness to Mrs. Maddox and Mrs.

Praun simply because they had endeavoured to persuade her to exercise her influence over her husband to induce him to refrain from speculation in horse-racing. The tide was running strong against the Enderbys. The Torkeslys and other members of the community expressed their opinion that there was nothing for Mr. Enderby but to resign, he could never hope to be of any use in his vocation at Tunnleton. Dick Madingley took advantage of the popular outcry against the curate to throw his stone at him. He had made up his difference with Kinnersley, and finding that he was a staunch believer in Enderby was careful what he said before him. But Kinnersley, not being present, he did not scruple to remark to that sporting *coterie*, of which he was the acknowledged oracle :

"He's a knowing shot the parson. I don't know where he got his inspiration, but Mr. Brooks's 'Wandering Nun' for the 'Chesterfields' was about one of the best things of the season. He don't bet, not he, oh no ! Quite right to say so in his position, and I was a fool to chaff him about it. All the fault of that confounded sherry and bitters. Dashed if I don't think they distil that sherry on the premises, it is so strong. But you can't make me believe that he hadn't a pretty good win over it, I've seen rather too much of life for that. It's not in human nature to have such a bit of information and not make money of it."

Mr. Madingley, I am afraid, had considerable experience of the shady side of life, and was far from placing a high estimate on the morality of his fellows.

But the Enderbys were by no means friendless, and the Chyltons, with whom they had been intimate from the first, stood gallantly by them now. Frank Chylton, when the rumour first reached his ears, said stoutly, he did not believe it, and then went straight to Maurice and told him what people were saying concerning him.

"There is not a word of truth in it," rejoined the curate. "I may have given some little handle for such a falsehood to get about by foolishly talking about racing to some of the men at the club, but I have never made a bet of any description since I left the University, which was before I was married."

"It is very odd that such a report should have got about," replied Frank, "but I felt it was false before I saw you, and



now I have your own word for it I shall give it the most unqualified contradiction whenever I hear it alluded to."

The Reverend Mr. Jarrow took an early opportunity of speaking to his curate about this unfortunate rumour, as he termed it, and Maurice answered him as frankly as he had done Chylton.

"Ah, Mr. Enderby, I felt sure I could rely upon you, and I shall have the greatest possible pleasure in requesting General Maddox not to intrude upon my valuable time with such idle *canards* in future. A venial imprudence you may have been guilty of, but that is a very different thing from the accusation they would fain lay at your door. I would recommend you to be a little more guarded all the same in future," and the rector departed, burning to tackle General Maddox and demand retraction of his charges on that gentleman's part.

A veritable storm in a teacup all this, no doubt, but it is precisely such little convulsions that constitute the salt of existence in small country towns. Questions of the kind are to them what a strenuous battle between the Government and the Opposition may be in the House of Commons, and Tunnleton was literally divided into two camps on the subject of Maurice Enderby's iniquities. Generals Maddox and Praun were the leaders of one party, who received the assertion of his innocence with polite incredulity, while the Reverend Mr. Jarrow and Frank Chylton championed him with perhaps more zeal than discretion. Singularly enough, too, there was quite a bitter feeling engendered on the subject amongst the community, for, while the one side held that if you believed in Mr. Enderby's innocence, well, then, you would probably believe anything, the other contended that you must be malicious, spiteful, and uncharitable if you doubted the word of a gentleman of unblemished repute.

Nobody, perhaps, contributed more to keep the scandal alive than Mr. Richard Madingley. He was a very popular character in Tunnleton just now, as a well-to-do young bachelor who entertained liberally might well be. There were very few young ladies in the town who would not have thought twice before saying no to an offer of occupying the top of his table for life. Dick Madingley was quite aware of this, and gave himself great airs in society in consequence, and society bore

with them as it usually does with the impertinences of young gentlemen of substance.

We have so far seen Madingley under rather unfavourable circumstances, but it must not be supposed that his manner was so coarse and obtrusive generally as it had been in the Tunnleton Club. *In vino veritas* is a very true saying, and it is probable that sherries-and-bitters or brandy-sodas had much to say to his want of breeding upon these occasions; still, upon this topic of Enderby's offending he had always something to say; he was as vindictive a man as ever stepped, and had never forgiven Enderby's rebuff in the billiard-room.

"My dear Miss Torkesly," he would say, "don't ask me what I think; as a man of the world, when a gentleman informs me that a horse, that has never run, will win a big race, I invariably conclude he is in possession of private information; when I see him feverishly anxious about the betting previous to that race, and about the result, I can only conclude that he has very naturally made use of his information. Whether that is the right thing to do for a clergyman I don't pretend to determine; it's a question I leave to older heads than mine."

This was the line that Mr. Madingley adopted.

"The evidence is all against him but still I will not say he is guilty."

It was two days after Maurice's interview with Mr. Jarrold that, upon coming down to breakfast, he found Bessie seated at the table, an open letter in her hand, and a face in which surprise, exultation, and dismay were strangely mingled.

"Maurice," she said, "I have got a letter from Uncle John, and I don't quite know whether to be pleased or sorry about it."

"From Uncle John? Let me see it."

She handed him the letter without another word.

"MY DEAR BESSIE,

"Our joint property has turned out a veritable flyer, and I honestly believe just now is about the best two-year old in England. 'The Wandering Nun' won her race last week at Newmarket with consummate ease, and there were some very fair youngsters behind her.

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—more years indeed than I care to think of. I recollect it  
very pretty but very quiet.

"I enclose you a cheque for your half of the 'Chesterfields,'  
and trust that if she goes on well the Nun will prove a gold-  
mine to both of us.

"Best love to yourself, and with kind regards to your  
husband,

"Believe me,

"Ever, dear Bessie,

"Your affectionate Uncle,

"JOHN MADINGLEY."

"And what's the cheque for?" asked Maurice.

"Here it is," she replied, handing it him.

Maurice quite started as he gazed upon it. "Five hundred  
fifty-seven pounds!" he murmured slowly.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

EDITH MOLECOMBE.

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WHAT did you mean by saying you didn't know whether to  
be glad or sorry?" asked Maurice, as soon as he had recovered  
from his first surprise.

"It looks rather as if the charge brought against you by  
those two terrible women was true, doesn't it?"

"It does rather," replied Maurice, smiling, as he dropped  
the cheque into his waistcoat-pocket, "but we know that it is  
so. I have a perfectly clear conscience on that score, and  
I think, Bessie, what we can do with the money. It will  
be perfectly straight with the Tunnleton tradespeople—no  
need about writing to your trustees now, my dear—enable  
me to stop Badger's mouth with a handsome cheque on account,  
and leave us a comfortable balance besides in the local bank.

"But what will Mr. Chylton think when you cash the  
cheque, Maurice? You know you have never told him any-

thing about Uncle John's wedding-present. He believed thoroughly in you, but the presenting such a big cheque as this on the top of this charge will look so dreadfully as if you had won the money by betting."

"What a clever little woman it is!" rejoined Maurice, admiringly. "You are right; it would. I will take it up and get it cashed at my bankers in town."

This Maurice accordingly did, but he then committed the strange oversight of paying two hundred pounds into his account at the Tunnleton Bank. This was even more likely to induce the people at the bank to put a false construction on his sudden acquirement of money than if he had put in John Madingley's cheque. The story of the sporting parson who had won such a good stake over the "Chesterfields" was by this well known to the inferior strata of Tunnleton; the bank clerks looked upon Maurice, not with the horror of Generals Maddox and Praun, but with no little admiration. The ostlers and the fly-drivers had by this time heard of Mr. Enderby as a rare judge of racing, and accorded him no little veneration in consequence. He had mounted a far higher pinnacle in the eyes of these godless understrappers of the stables than any eloquence in the pulpit could ever have placed him on. Sad to say, they took more interest in the ways of this world than in the preparing of themselves for another.

Mr. Rumford, the butcher, and his brethren, when they found all their arrears promptly discharged, were similarly convinced that the report of Mr. Enderby's racing proclivities was true, and these good people received it and looked upon it in very different lights; some of them laughed, and thought a sporting curate rather a joke than otherwise; but there were other more straitlaced who shook their heads at the idea of a clergyman dabbling in such a pursuit; the opinion of these latter some what mollified by the comforting fact that they had at the events got their money. In short, at the end of a fortnight from that Newmarket week Maurice Enderby might as well have endeavoured to convert the betting-ring as to induce the bulk of Tunnleton to believe that he did not bet upon races. Even his stanch friend Frank Chylton was staggered; he naturally knew that Maurice had paid in two hundred pounds to his account, and in face of the charge brought against him there could be no doubt that this was a most suspicious circum-

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tance; he was loyal to his friend as ever, but did think that out of consideration for those who were standing by him Maurice should be more prudent. Frank saw at once that the payment of this two hundred would be known to all the clerks in the bank, and, though his subordinates knew very well that keeping their mouths closed was rigorously exacted by their position, he had no doubt that with such a titillating piece of scandal flying about the town they would never be able to refrain from contributing their quota to it.

Maurice, in the meantime, pursued the even tenour of his way. He had laid out his windfall exactly as he contemplated. Mr. Badger was profuse in his acknowledgments, and his tradesmen were all *chapeau bas*, and that balance at the bank was a comforting thing to think upon; but for all that he could not disguise from himself that a considerable portion of Tuntontown society gave him the cold shoulder. Their greetings were chilly, and he was apt to find himself left out of the delicious gaieties of that centre of the universe. One of his enemies there was who certainly retired from the fray sore disappointed. In an ill-advised moment General Maddox took upon himself to read this contumacious young man a lesson on manners.

"I don't think the General ever forgot that fall, and, were I alive, I think, would even still give a slight shudder at hearing Maurice Enderby's name mentioned. It took place in the street, though not before witnesses. General Maddox was far too gentlemanly a man to have spoken as he did except in pri-

"Mr. Enderby! er, er! you'll excuse my mentioning it, but as a lady of Mrs. Maddox's position takes the trouble to call on Mrs. Enderby, with the kind view of tendering her some advice, I really think she is entitled to be treated with civility and consideration."

Maurice's face hardened, and there was a dangerous glitter in his eye as he replied,

"Mrs. Maddox, sir, entered Mrs. Enderby's drawing-room recently to malign her husband; she was ruder, as was also Mr. Praun, than I had believed it possible that any lady could be. I have further to point out that my private affairs are no business of yours, and I will trouble you not to meddle with them for the future."

"Sir!" exclaimed General Maddox, "do you mean to insinuate——"

"I insinuate nothing," interposed Maurice quickly. "I have said what I meant to say, and am now going to lunch, and have the honour to wish you good morning."

As for General Maddox, he sank back in an armchair, gasping with indignation. His usual portly presence was in a state of collapse pitiable to witness; it was probably a quarter of a century since any one had presumed to tackle the pompous old general in this fashion.

"By Jupiter! I'll have him out," he muttered at last, ignoring for the moment that the duel was as obsolete in England as the tiltyard, and that even in its most flourishing days the priest's cassock carried exemption. After a little he got up and as he walked home said, "No! there is only one thing to do, hunt the fellow out of Tunnleton; and, by Jupiter! I'll do it."

The glorious July days roll sunnily by, and the country around Tunnleton is in all its glory. The woods and fields are full of wild flowers, and the hedges thick with dog-roses and wild honeysuckle, the meadows alive with sturdy lambs, and the corn, though standing strong and green upon the ground yet here and there begins to show slight indications of changing to a golden hue.

The parade is deserted, and nothing but the severe exigencies of shopping bring the fair ladies of Tunnleton to the High Street. The hum of insects is in the air, the very birds give vent to low querulous twitterings as if entering their protest about the state of the thermometer. The cattle stand languidly switching their tails till the aggressive army of flies proves too much for their patience, when they stampede in wild ungainly gallops round their pastures. Tunnleton lies at the bottom of a basin, and consequently the little air there is barely reaching it. The shopkeepers stand sweltering in their shirt-sleeves at their doors; no one would think of buying and selling, save from dire necessity, in such weather. The dogs lie upon the doorsteps with their lolling tongues and panting sides, mute and appealing in their canine breasts against the irony of dedicating such days peculiarly to them. It is one of those glorious English summers such as are all but dim memories.

Tunnleton society has betaken itself to the open air. It is cricketing, lawn-tennis, picnicking, munching fruit and



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aming claret-cup. There were perpetual open-air gatherings of the sort or another, and Maurice Enderby could not but see that from a great many of these his wife and himself were excluded; there could be no doubt of it; people who had called upon them in the first instance, and who had appeared anxious to make their acquaintance, now neglected to ask them to such entertainments as they might be giving. It did not require much penetration to see that there was a hostile influence at work, and that he had made implacable enemies of the two generals he felt no doubt. Of course, the rector, his friends the Chyltons, and some others welcomed him as cordially as of old, but amongst the people who had not exactly dropped his acquaintance, but had apparently struck him off their invitation list, Maurice was a little surprised to find the Molecombes. Mr. Molecombe was the senior partner in Molecombe and Chylton's bank, and had, on Frank Chylton's representation, been one of the first people to call and offer civility to the Enderbys; however, of the cause of their defection he was destined to be speedily enlightened.

He was passing through the deserted High Street on one of his errands that formed part of his daily work, when he encountered one of the Miss Torkeslys; as before said, no one went out in Tunnleton without meeting a Torkesly.

"Good morning, Mr. Enderby," she exclaimed, with all the amiability characteristic of her race. "Have you heard the news?"

"No," replied Maurice, as he shook hands; "I was not aware there was anything stirring—not even a breeze," he added, smiling.

"Oh yes, I assure you, Mr. Enderby, a marriage—a real marriage. And I suppose it will take place in the autumn. She is such a nice girl and I am so fond of her. I am going up now to congratulate her. I am sure they must be pleased! A young good-looking husband with lots of money, what more could any one want. I don't believe she cares much about him, but I know. And I should think she is a good deal older than he, but it will do all very well no doubt, and I am sure I am delighted. And, you know, it really was getting time dear that was settled."

"Excuse me, Miss Torkesly, but I really have no idea of what you are speaking."

"No, I forgot you don't go about quite so much as you—I mean, that is, you gentlemen don't interest yourselves so much in marriages and engagements as we do."

"But won't you enlighten my ignorance?" replied Maurice.

"Of course, of course—you will be delighted to hear it, such friends as they are of yours, and you so intimate with the Chyltons, and all!"

Maurice said nothing. He felt that this feminine windbag must have its way.

Yes," continued the young lady, complacently; "Edith Molecombe has accepted Mr. Madingley, and, of course, the wedding will be a very grand affair when it does come off; and I do hope they will ask us to the breakfast. Good morning. I really have no time to stand gossiping," and with a gracious smile and bend of her head Miss Torkesly resumed her weary pilgrimage—for the Molecombes lived about a mile outside the town, and under that fierce midday sun the walk thither was really no small sacrifice at the altar of friendship.

"Yes," muttered Maurice, as he strolled on, "that would easily account for the Molecombes dropping me. I know Mr. Madingley has never forgiven me for putting him down, and, without knowing anything positive about it, I should guess he had the capacity of being what Dr. Johnson admired, 'a good hater,'" and then Maurice thought later in the afternoon he would stroll up to the Chyltons and have a talk with them. So when the sun waxed low in the heavens, dropping like a ball of fire into his bed in the west, Maurice and his wife started for the Chyltons. They lived in a pretty villa standing in the middle of a large garden. To say grounds would be a misnomer, it was really nothing more than an extensive garden—well shrubbed, well treed, and tastefully laid out. Sitting under a horse-chestnut on the verge of the flower-gemmed lawn was Mrs. Chylton, a tea-equipage at her side, and her two children at her feet.

"I am so glad to see you, Bessie," she cried, as she rose to welcome the new comer, "and you too, Mr. Enderby. How good of you to come up and lighten my solitude! I was suffering from a bad headache in the early part of the afternoon, and so gave up all thoughts of the Molecombes' garden-party. By the way, how is it that you are not there?"

"For the best of all possible reasons—we were not asked," rejoined Bessie.

Mrs. Chylton said nothing more, but she was a firm friend of the Enderbys, and resolved to take the earliest opportunity of favouring the Molecombe family with her opinion on the subject.

"I suppose you were very much astonished at the announcement of Edith's engagement?" said she.

"Well, yes; but, as I only know Mr. Madingley by sight, I was not likely to have any suspicion of what was coming."

"No," interposed Maurice, "and then, as you know, Mrs. Chylton, in consequence of my quarrel with Generals Maddox and Praun, a good many houses in the place are now closed to me."

"Yes, they no doubt have considerable influence in Tunnlopp, and a certain number of people would be sure to take their side, but after the shameful conduct of their wives I don't see, Mr. Enderby, that you could have done anything else."

"No, a man cannot allow his wife to be insulted. General Maddox further had the presumption to attempt to lecture me upon keeping my wife in order."

"What!" cried Laura Chylton.

"He had. That really was the gist of a conversation he thought proper to commence with me when he found ourselves left together the next day in the morning room of the club, but I don't think he is likely to try his hand at that again," and then Maurice gave Mrs. Chylton an account of that interview.

Mrs. Chylton burst out laughing when Maurice described with good deal of humour the conclusion of his passage of arms with the general.

"Oh, Mr. Enderby!" she cried; "did you really say that to him? He will never forgive you. I don't suppose his dignity has received such a shock for years; and General Maddox without his dignity is nothing. Frank must hear this—it will be nearly the death of him; he'll be home from the Molecombes about seven. If you can put up with cold lamb and salad for dinner, be good people and stop. It's not sermon night, Mr. Enderby, so you have no excuse."

"I shall be very glad indeed," said Maurice.

"Now that's neighbourly," replied Laura. "Smoke if you want to; you'll find the papers and magazines in Frank's room. Jessie and I are going to have a good long lazy gossip."

## CHAPTER XIX.

"WHAT A BORE I'VE BEEN."

FRANK CHYLTON came home to dinner, and, as his wife prophesied, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks at Maurice's account of his skirmish with General Maddox.

"I don't blame you," he said; "old Maddox richly deserved it, but it isn't calculated to quench the ill-will with which he regards you. No, depend upon it, he and his immediate friends will make the very most of this trumped-up story, and they can, to some extent, make the place unpleasant to you, no doubt."

"We must endeavour to bear his enmity with what resignation we can. If his friendship is to be burdened with a right to administer advice on the part of Mrs. Maddox, I infinitely prefer to be without it—eh, Bessie?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Enderby, laughing merrily, "I am quite content to figure as the bad child who wouldn't take its powder in spite of all assurances that it was for its good. I suppose they were very full of Edith's engagement this afternoon?"

"Yes, it was a perfect *feu de joie* of congratulations. She looked happy and conscious, and Madingley more at his ease and less of a fool than a man usually does under the circumstances."

"Is Mr. Molecombe very pleased, Frank?" enquired his wife.

"Very, I should say—'Very satisfactory, good county family heir to a nice property—yes, thank you, it will do, Chylton,' he replied, when I congratulated him. You know his short jerky manner of talking."

"Well, I suppose it is a good thing for her," rejoined Laura, "though personally I can't say I ever quite fancied Mr. Madingley—I can't tell you why, but it is so."

"I think I can, Mrs. Chylton, but pray put no particular stress upon my opinion, as I'll admit to being somewhat prejudiced against him. What you are conscious of is this—that Mr. Madingley is not quite a gentleman."

"You are right, Maurice," replied her husband. "He opened a very liberal account with us when he first came, and, as far as money is concerned, there is no reason to suppose but that he has plenty; but you're right, it crops out whenever you have much to do with him. Once get through the French polish, and you'll find an arrogant cad at the bottom of it."

"Come, Bessie," cried Laura Chylton, laughing; "when the gentlemen get so very pronounced in their opinions, it is best to leave them to themselves 'ere worse comes of it."

"Now, Maurice," said Frank, as soon as the ladies had left the room, "I've something on my mind concerning you. I hate mysteries and therefore I'm going to out with it at once. I don't want in the least to pry into your private affairs, but what induced you in the face of this scandal to pay 200*l.* into your bank last week? Of course, Molecombe knows it, and, forgive me if it sounds like an impertinence, it is a big sum for a man in your position to lodge to his account, and I need hardly say gives additional handle to the story of your having lost money by horse-racing."

"Stupid of me!" exclaimed Maurice, "I wanted cash to draw against, to satisfy my tradespeople; I came unexpectedly to some money, and, never thinking of the construction you have put upon it, paid it into your bank."

Frank Chylton said nothing, but he looked uneasily at his companion. Maurice caught the glance, hesitated for a minute or two, and then said,

"You've been a staunch friend, Frank, and are entitled to know the whole story, and, providing you will give me your promise not to open your lips without my permission, I will tell it you."

Chylton readily gave the required promise, and then, without further preamble, Maurice related the story of Uncle John's eccentric wedding-present, and what had come of it far.

Frank listened attentively.

"I don't know anything about such things," he said, when Maurice had finished, "but how it led you to take an interest in racing matters is very easy of comprehension. In that respect it has been perhaps an unfortunate gift but, so far as to understand things, from a money point of view, it is



likely to be very profitable. This successful filly has only just started on her career, and will probably win several more valuable races before she has done. I have only one thing to say, don't think that I'm preaching, but for heaven's sake don't place reliance on big cheques like this tumbling in. That would sap the marrow of any man's character, and it is after all the hazzard of two or three years. It's moral gambling, Maurice, and your uncle had better have written you a cheque for five hundred right off than made Mrs. Enderby such an ill-omened present. Forgive me, old man. What a bore I have been! Come and have a cigar on the lawn before you trot home."

It was a very pleasant hour that, in the garden, in the bright light of the full moon. Frank and Maurice strolled up and down enjoying their tobacco, and talking over their old boyish days, when Maurice used to come down to spend his Easter holidays at Tunnleton; while the ladies interchanged those confidences which it is seldom the sex has not at command. Ah, those boyish days! I am not quite sure whether we ever experience the same pure, unadulterated enjoyment afterwards. I am not talking of school-days, in which there was more to loathe than to like, but of those holiday times when we were permitted our own sweet will, and were up at daybreak to take up the nightlines. Then there birds' nests and wasps' nests to be taken in the morning, countless occupations for the afternoon if our restless energies were not expended, and rabbits to be potted with the old single barrel we were allowed in the gloaming. That grim piece of irony, the holiday-task, did not exist in those days, or if it did was a little joke between master and boy, supposed to pacify parents in wet weather, when their progeny made themselves more objectionable than usual in consequence of enforced confinement, but never to be seriously alluded to on returning to school.

As they walked home Maurice said to his wife,

"I have had it clean out with Frank Chylton, Bessie, and told him the whole story. He a little staggered me; he seems to regard your uncle's as the gift of the wicked fairy, and is a little disposed to take your view of it."

"Oh, I hope not, Maurice. I own I was afraid at first it was leading you to take an interest in matters that would be destructive, to say nothing of disgraceful, to your professional career. But you have given that up, have you not?"



"Yes, but I'll admit the poison is hardly out of my blood. It is with great difficulty I abstain from the sporting papers and in our own daily I never can resist the sporting intelligence. Is there inflammatory action in money that comes to me in this wise? On my word, I am half tempted to believe so. Bessie, Bessie, I am afraid this fatal present of Uncle John's will be the ruin of me!"

"Nonsense, Maurice, dear, you're excited to-night and taking too strained a view of things. I know I took the theoretical and high-toned view at first, but, oh, Maurice, when it comes to the practice, there is no denying there's a comfort in money that's not dishonestly come by. To walk into Rumford's shop now is so different to what it was a fortnight ago. Take Uncle John's present, as we should take it, as windfalls by no manner means to be reckoned on. Don't trouble your head about the Wandering Nun,' and then, dear Maurice, no harm can come to you."

Poor Bessie! She spoke as a woman will speak, or, for the matter of that, men too, about a thing outside her experience; if nine men out of ten, who have made a tolerable bet on the Derby or drawn a prominent favourite in a Derby sweep, do not, more or less, speculate upon what they will do with those imaginary winnings. They may deny it, but I know better, and we even had many invitations to dinners from sanguine backers, dinners which, sad to say for their sakes, were never celebrated. When the Enderbys reached home they found a heap of letters on their table; of these, three only have anything to do with this story, but with these three it is necessary a reader should be acquainted; one was to Maurice, the others to his wife; we will take Mrs. Enderby's first.

MY DEAR BESSIE,

"You and I are halves in the greatest flyer of the year. There will be another sugar-plum fall into our mouths, I think, Goodwood, and perhaps something more later on, though you know racing is both, like like, uncertain and desperately wicked. You must forgive an old man, my dear; people were wiser in their ideas when I was young, and I am too old to change; I've done and do my duty conscientiously in my own way, but my ways, I know, are not in accordance with the times.

"What I am writing to you chiefly about is this. Can you put up with an old, somewhat irritable, old man after Goodwood? I am ordered change and quiet, and, though I have no business to be seen on a racecourse, must go there to see my favourite run. Tunnleton suited me years ago, and the doctors tell me will now, and that the iron-water is just the tonic I require. They must say something, but of course what I do require is the hands of the clock put back a quarter of a century.

"Drop me a line to the Bedford, Covent Garden, and tell your husband he's not to fidget about wine; I am peculiar in that respect, and my own wine-merchant will send down what is good for me, or at all events what I take. If you can't take me in, get me comfortable lodgings near, and, upon second thoughts, perhaps that would be best, though I should like to dine, etc. with you for the sake of your society. You have a baby, you know, and the most estimable babies will give vent to screams and wailings, which no bachelor, much less an old one, appreciates.

"Kind regards to your husband.

"Ever, dear Bessie,

"Your affectionate Uncle,

"JOHN MADINGLEY."

"We can't well take him in, Maurice. He will require a couple of rooms to make him thoroughly comfortable; besides, I should be on tenterhooks every time ——"

"Baby lifted up his voice and wept," interposed Maurice, laughing, "and it is not to be supposed that young autocrat is going to change his habits to accommodate a great uncle. No. No, Bessie, I'll get a comfortable bedroom and sitting-room at Bevan's close by. He can lunch, dine, and spend as much of the evening as he chooses with us, and will have his own rooms to retreat to whenever he wants to be quiet. It will all work very well, only, little woman, don't spare the table money while Uncle John's with us."

"Never fear," replied Bessie, merrily, "we will go in for riotous living, which will probably throw out his gout, and bring down a solemn anathema on your devoted head."

"Who is your other letter from?"

"This," said Bessie, as she tore it open, "is from the Bridge Court people. They really are very kind—read it."

DEAR MRS. ENDERBY,

"Will you both come and spend next week with us? Your husband's old friend Mr. Grafton has promised to pay us a visit, and I am sure you will enjoy a talk over old days with him. Pray tell Mr. Enderby I can take no refusal. If his duties require his presence in Tunnelton, he can walk over after breakfast, and be out again easily in time for dinner. I guarantee that his days shall be at his own disposal if necessary.

"With kindest regards from both myself and the girls, believe me,

"Sincerely yours,

"LOUISA BALDERS.

Bridge Court, Tuesday.

"P.S. Let us know when I am to send the carriage for you on Monday."

"It is very kind of them, and would be a very pleasant change, I should like it immensely, but I suppose it cannot be managed," said Bessie.

"Why not?" rejoined her husband.

"Well, you see, Uncle John is coming; it is impossible we can go away for a week under those circumstances."

"Nonsense! this is for next week; Uncle John is not coming until the week after Goodwood—three weeks hence. No, it will all fit in very well, write and say we shall be delighted to come; as Mrs. Balders said, I can easily walk over and do my work."

"But who is your letter from, Maurice?" replied Bessie.

"Oh, I had quite forgotten all about that. In the excitement produced by Uncle John's determination to visit Tunnelton, I might well forget everything else; you seem to forget that I have never seen this mysterious uncle, who, like the uncle of the old comedies or the beneficent genii of fairy tales, showers his gold upon us. My letter? why it's from Bob Grafton; let's see what he has got to say."

"46 Half-Moon Street.

DEAR MAURICE,

"No end of congratulations on the result of the 'Chester-beds.' Mr. Brooks, there is no doubt, possesses a real clinker 'the Wandering Nun.' I remember a wily old racing-man

once said to me, 'There is no much better chance for a backer of horses than the getting knowledge of a good two year old and following it steadily all through the season.' Now that is exactly your position. You are following what I firmly believe to be the best two-year old we have seen, with the additional advantage of not risking a shilling."

"I wish Mr. Grafton wouldn't write in that manner," interposed Bessie.

"Don't interrupt," rejoined her husband.

"John Madingley's was an eccentric wedding-present, but on my word it promises to turn out a very profitable one, and a very useful one, no doubt in these early days of your career, when a few extra hundreds naturally come in handy. The Ham Stakes at Goodwood lie in her mercy, and I can't see what is to beat her in 'the Campagnes' at Doncaster, and, to wind up with, she has several engagements in the October meetings at Newmarket, though what she will be slipped for one can't tell at present. She is likely anyway to prove a vertible good-mine to Messrs. Enderby and Brooks. I was going to volunteer myself as a visitor for a night or two next week, but I have had a letter from Mrs. Balders asking me to Bridge Court, and assuring me that I should meet you both; so we will have our gossip there, and I will describe the 'Nun' to you. She takes after her sire, and gallops like a piece of machinery.

"Good-bye for the present. Trusting to see you next week, and with regards to Mrs. Enderby, believe me ever yours,

"ROBERT GRAFTON."

"I shall be very pleased to meet Mr. Grafton again" said Bessie, "but Maurice, dear, don't be angry if I give one word of caution. I know you will have some racing talk with Mr. Grafton; but please don't talk about it in public. You know what a scandal is already raised here, and, though the Bridge Court people are not so particular, yet it is wonderful how things get round, and it really is calculated to do you harm in your profession."

Maurice made no reply. "Do him harm in his profession!" Suddenly it flashed across him whether he had not made a mistake; whether he could ever be fitted for the high office he had taken on himself; or whether it would not be better to pause before seeking to be ordained priest.

## CHAPTER XX.

## BITTEN OF THE TARANTULA.

HAVING read the papers, and pronounced his views on the political situation in those grave, sonorous tones to which the club morning-room was so well accustomed, General Maddox shouldered the white umbrella, and made his way home to Incheon. He saw as he entered his dining-room that Mrs. Maddox was evidently in what he termed a state of fuss.

"General," she exclaimed, "I have had one of the Torkeslys here this morning, and you will hardly believe it when I tell you, that, in spite of all that has passed, the Enderbys have actually gone to stay at Bridge Court."

"No, you don't mean it!" ejaculated the general, for once surprised out of his customary phlegmatic manner.

"Indeed, I do; Clara Torkesly saw it with her own eyes. They got into a Bridge Court carriage at their own door, and drove off with the boxes and portmanteaus outside."

"It is very odd what made the Balders take them up," said the general meditatively.

"I presume you will think it your duty to interfere?" remarked the lady sharply.

"Me! interfere?" said the general; "why how can I interfere?"

"I presume you will write to Mr. Balders and explain to him that he is entertaining a gambling clergyman who ought to be unfroked——"

"Nonsense! I haven't met Mr. Balders half-a-dozen times together, and our acquaintance is of the very slightest. I don't interfere about whom he may think proper to entertain at Bridge Court; but my opinion is unchanged about Mr. Enderby, and I shall certainly recommend all my friends in Incheon to keep clear of him."

"You contend, general, if you did your duty you would write to Mr. Balders at once."

"Then for once, my dear, I shall not do my duty. I am not

going to run the risk of being snubbed for such uncalled-for interference in an almost stranger's affairs as that would be. When I conclude I am entitled to speak I shall do so."

"And I tell you, general, you're not only entitled to speak now, but you're not doing duty by society if you do not," retorted Mrs. Maddox, with all the obstinacy and steady adherence to her point that a vindictive woman usually displays under such circumstances. Mrs. Maddox was quite conscious that she had had the worst of her skirmish with Mrs. Enderby. It was more bitter than the case of those, who, seeking wool come home shorn. She had gone forth to patronize and come back "snubbed." There was no other word for it, and when that happens to any of us, reprisals, if they cannot be made on the offender, must be made upon somebody else. Did not the veracious legends of the house of Ingoldsby remind how a great warrior of the Louis Quatorze times

"Had just tickled the tail of Field-marshal Turenne,  
Since which the Field-marshal's most pressing concern  
Was to tickle some other chief's tail in his turn."

Mrs. Maddox could not retaliate directly upon Bessie, but she could through her husband, and she meant to do so.

Before the general could reply the door opened and the maid servant said, "Mr. Jarrow is in the drawing-room, and says he is particularly anxious to see you, sir."

"Say I will be with him immediately, Williams. Now what can Jarrow want? I should think he has come to admit that he can defend Mr. Enderby no longer."

When the general entered his drawing-room, he found Mr. Jarrow distended with importance on the hearth-rug. Now the general was pompous in his manner, but if there was one man who, so to speak, "overflowed and drowned him" in particular it was the rector of St. Mary's. The Reverend Jacob Jarrow was continually, when upon his travels, mistaken for a high ecclesiastic in consequence of his extremely patronizing, condescending manner, and General Maddock had always an uncomfortable feeling of being defeated at his own game when thrown, as had happened more than once, into collision with the rector. There was nothing much in either man in reality. Both depended upon this imposing grandeur of manner, and that proving ineffective had nothing left but to retire from



ray discomfited. But the credulity of mankind is such that they were wont to be regarded as distinguished members of their respective professions, although their records afforded no grounds for such belief.

"Good morning, Mr. Jarrow," said the general, as he entered the room; "charmed to see you. As the servant told me you had something particular to say, I am afraid I owe this visit more to business than sociability."

"Yes, general," returned the rector; "it is my duty as one of her principal sons in Tunnleton to repel all attacks made against the Church. Sir, you ventured to bring a charge against the curate, which, had it been true, would have amounted in my eyes to immorality in a minor degree. I have inquired into that charge, and find it to be utterly false. I shall call on you now to retract it, and to express regret that you could ever have permitted yourself to have made it."

The general drew himself up to his full height before he replied, then he said slowly but firmly:—

"I regret to say, Mr. Jarrow, that I can do nothing of the kind. What evidence have you of Mr. Enderby's innocence? Nothing, I presume, but his own word. The bare denial of an accused hardly holds good in a court of justice. I have sat in court-martials in my time."

"The decision of which," interposed Mr. Jarrow, pompously, "is given to understand is usually in defiance of all evidence."

"You are speaking, Mr. Jarrow," said the general, flushing slightly, "of a court of which you have no knowledge. The accumulation of evidence against Mr. Enderby is very strong. He has been perpetually discussing racing for some time past. It takes an extraordinary interest in a particular race; shows a British interest to know the result of it, and, whereas before the race he had been—I am told—in difficulties about money, he displays great command of that essential a few days afterwards, and finally lodges a good round sum to his credit at the bank."

"Then, General Maddox, I am to understand that you desire to withdraw the accusation you have made?"

"Certainly I do," replied the general, "until I am convinced it is unfounded."

"And that, sir," said Mr. Jarrow, swelling like an outraged

turkey-cock, "you will speedily be convinced of in a court of law if Enderby follows my advice. How you have picked up all this information about his private affairs I don't pretend to conjecture, but it displays a curiosity about your neighbours' affairs which I should hardly give you credit for taking. If Enderby follows my advice he will bring an action for libel against you. Good morning, General Maddox!" and Mr. Jarrow fumed out of the room.

The general felt not a little discomfited. He felt as unforgiving as ever towards Maurice Enderby, and moreover he still firmly believed that he was guilty of the charge preferred against him, and only aggravated his offence by solemnly denying it, but he was conscious that he had had considerably the worst of the argument with the rector. That taunt about prying into his neighbours' affairs had gone severely home to him. It was not the man's nature to do so, but the idle gossiping life of an inland watering-place eats into the bones, gets into the blood. Life is so circumscribed that we take an unnatural interest in the doings of those around us. He did not much believe in any action for libel being brought against him, although he was fain to confess it would be deemed unpleasant if such a thing did take place. He could see already from the final taunt that Mr. Jarrow had thrown out that a sharp cross-examining barrister could at all events give him a very unpleasant half-hour in the witness-box.

At this juncture he was joined by his wife, and no sooner was that lady made acquainted with the object of Mr. Jarrow's visit than she at once proclaimed no surrender, and expressed her intention of nailing her colours to the mast.

"Mr. Jarrow, indeed! A pompous, meddling priest, who, upon the strength of having written some stupid bombastic letters in the local journals, believed himself a literary man and a great controversialist. Pooh! a fig for the Rev. Jacob Jarrow! He was always fussing about something! Let him fuss about this, and if Mr. Enderby was fool enough to listen to him he would see what good he got out of it. If Mr. Enderby chose to invite the public to inspect the quagmires of his career he could do so; wiser men boarded them over and kept silent about them."

Maurice and his wife, meanwhile, were thoroughly enjoying their stay at Bridge Court. The rector, with all his failings

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was a good-natured man, and had conceived a real liking for his new curate, and, hearing where Maurice was going, he at once proposed to take a considerable portion of his, Maurice's, duties off his hands for that week, so that he was left pretty much his own master at Bridge Court.

Bessie thoroughly revelled in the complete freedom from all household affairs, and enjoyed the fruit, the lounging in the grounds, and the lawn-tennis. The Miss Balders, too, thoroughly frank, unaffected English girls, made a great deal of her, and she got on capitally with them, while, to Maurice, chattering over old times or things generally with his friend Bob Grafton, was a quiet luxury which he fully appreciated.

"It's a rum start, old John Madingley's coming down to Tunnleton," said Grafton, one evening in the smoking room; "you've never met him, you say; well, it is good you should know so, and whoever recommended him to nurse his gout here did you a good turn."

"Yes; but there is one very singular thing about it. He writes to me to get lodgings for him close to my own house, and proposes to live with us. Now Richard Madingley, his brother, has taken a house in Tunnleton and entertains a good deal. He has a very nice house, and could have put his relations up without any trouble. Curious rather he didn't write to him, isn't it?"

"Yes, I never heard of Richard Madingley, and I never heard where John Madingley's money was likely to go, but, though he's a wonderful hale, hearty man for his seventy years, at last is a question that we shall probably have answered for us before long," said Bob, musingly; "so the fellow gives up that he is heir to Bingwell? He must have done or the whole here could never have arrived at such knowledge."

"Yes, it is owing to his own volunteer information on the subject that Tunnleton is aware of the fact. My wife never heard of him any more than you, but she owns to being very ignorant about her cousins generally. She lost her father when she was young and has never known much about his family, with the exception of Uncle John, the elder of the brothers." Bob Grafton looked up suddenly and said, although in careless tones,

"Does this newcomer know that your wife is a Madingley?" "I should think not; but Bob, I want to speak to you

about something else ; I am afraid I have made a grave mistake in the profession I have selected. I begin to think I am not fitted for clerical life."

"Can't say I ever thought you were," rejoined Grafton, sententiously, as he emitted a cloud of tobacco from under his moustache, "you ride too straight and are too fond of sport generally to sober down into a parson of these days. Forty or even thirty years ago you might have done, but you're too late, my boy."

"Why didn't you tell me so before?" said Maurice, somewhat bitterly.

"My dear fellow, what business had I to intrude such advice upon you ? It is one of those things that a man must think out for himself."

"I don't know what to do, but I think I shall throw it up."

"Well," said Bob, "you're not ordained priest as yet, and therefore you have plenty of time to think the matter over. Now I'm going to volunteer my advice. Your chance has come to you ; think it seriously over, and when your mind is clearly made up unbosom yourself to John Madingley. He's in great spirits just now at the running of his pet filly, is evidently very kindly disposed to your wife, and, I should think, would be disposed to assist you in any career you may determine to embark on ; only remember, make up your mind and know what you want him to help you in. You can't be such a fool as to think of the turf."

"No," rejoined Maurice ; "I'll admit Uncle John's legacy has made me think much more about it than I ever did previously, and I in my dismay upon finding how absorbed I was getting in its doings, on one occasion actually pictured myself as perpetrating that folly, but I need scarcely say that is by no means my view of 'a career.' I sometimes think Uncle John's wedding present has been a very dubious benefit."

Grafton looked at his friend for a few seconds with no little astonishment, and then, with a shrug of the shoulders, rejoined quietly,

"Well, it's a dubious benefit I only wish some one would confer upon me. My dear Maurice, don't build upon it, but without your bothering your head about it, your wife's eccentric present ought, in the course of this year, and the next, if you

have any luck, to be worth not hundreds, but some few thousands, to you, a comfortable sendoff in any new line you may strike out."

"You are right, old man," rejoined Maurice, "I shall follow your advice to the letter. I shall think well over what I am going to do, and put racing away from my mind as much as possible. By-the-way, I think you said the Ham Stakes at Goodwood was the next event 'the Wandering Nun' started for."

A tremendous guffaw from Bob Grafton roused Maurice to a sense of the absurdity of the question on the top of his previous protestation. It was well the pair had the smoking-room to themselves that night or the room would have rung with laughter.

"Hold me! hold me!" exclaimed Bob as soon as he could control his merriment, "if ever there was a man badly bitten by the turf tarantula, you are the party. Bless you, I can understand it, I have dabbled in it all my life; used to bet in saveloys and pounds of raisins when I was a small boy. The complaint's old and chronic with me, but you have got all the early and inflammatory symptoms."

"Nonsense, Bob. I'll admit being betwitched by the 'Nun.' I told you the present was a dubious benefit; but don't think I mean to carry my racing experiences further; however, after such a piece of inconsistency as I have just been guilty of, I don't think I can do better than be off to bed."

"Good night," rejoined Grafton; "if you think a laugh will do Mrs. Enderby good before going to sleep you had better recount that speech to her. I shall just finish my cigar and then follow your example."

"He is right about one thing," mused Grafton as he smoked on after Maurice had left the room; "he is not fit for a parson, and what the deuce he is to turn his hand to I don't know. I fancy he would have made a good soldier, but I suppose the time has gone by for that; I'm afraid he is too old."

## CHAPTER XXI

## THE WIRE FROM GOODWOOD

BUT the stereotyped parson's week came to an end, and the Saturday saw Maurice and his wife back in their little house at Tunnleton. Bob Grafton, in a spirit of sheer good nature, volunteered to telegraph in order to assuage that feverish curiosity which Maurice admitted feeling when he knew that Mr. Madingley's flying filly was to run.

"Now, don't you go fidgeting about, I shall be at Goodwood, and will send you a wire from the course. Don't you go into the club to look at the tissue, you shall have the news before they get it there, you bet. Good-bye, Mrs. Enderby, don't let your husband read sporting intelligence, and give him a dose of chloral whenever he manifests a proclivity to talk racing."

Bessie laughed as she stretched out her hand to say good-bye, but it was rather an anxious little laugh all the same, for she was seriously uneasy about this unfortunate interest which her husband took in the affair.

They were destined to have speedy evidence of what Mr. Jarrow's partizanship brought upon them. General Maddox, rather appalled by the fierce front displayed by the rector of St. Mary's, had strolled disconsolately off to confer with his great friend General Praun, and that irascible warrior, who was as hot, not as an *Indian*, but as an *English* curry, at once took the fierce and furious view that might have been expected of him.

"Bring an action of libel! He should like to see Jarrow bring one! he should like to see Enderby bring one! upon the whole it would seem that he preferred all Tunnleton should bring actions for libel! He would teach them he was not to be bullied. He had met traders in India under the guise of missionaries, and had never failed to denounce them. He had met a betting-man in Tunnleton under the guise of a parson, and he *had* denounced him. He had never been afraid of doing his duty, and wasn't going to flinch from doing it now. Let



them bring their actions for libel ! let them put him in the box and listen to what he had to tell them, Messrs. Jarro and Enderby would be very sorry in half-an-hour that they had invited his revelations !”

A great man Praun no doubt ; had gone through life under his delusion, and been accepted as such by numbers of his acquaintance, chiefly on account of an irritable temper and natural combativeness. But he was no judge of what constituted evidence ! and what he termed his revelations would have been pronounced mere hearsay and gossip and no evidence at all by a court of law.

Now the next week was Goodwood, and, do what he would, Maurice could not abstain from further glances at the sporting intelligence in his own daily paper. It is useless to rail against the infirmity of human nature, but it is scarce in accordance with our common frailty not to manifest curiosity at what may be the result of a lottery or raffle in which we have taken tickets. Still Maurice manfully refrained from entering the club, or throwing himself in the way of its sporting frequenters. He contented himself with slowly gathering the news of the Goodwood doings in his paper next morning ; but on the Wednesday afternoon came an end to this. Between four and five a boy arrived with a yellow tissue, and need scarcely be said that a Miss Torkesly happened to be passing and witnessed its delivery. The telegram was of the plainest, it was simply this—

“Congratulations ! ‘the Wandering Nun’ won easily by a length.—R. GRAFTON. Goodwood Racecourse.”

A thrill of exultation ran through Maurice’s veins. It is no disputing it ! To nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand the acquisition of money is inspiring, let their position be what it may. Maurice did not know exactly what winning of the Ham Stakes meant, but he had little doubt that it represented two or three hundred to his credit at his banker’s.

He sat with the telegram in his hand, musing over several things in the way of furnishing that Bessie wanted. He thought also of the pony-carriage of which they had indulged in many dreams ; a pony-carriage with its etceteras that they had

pictured as coming within their reach, when editors should at length awaken to a proper sense of the value of his—Maurice's—contributions; and here was this money coming in without his lifting a finger (so he admitted with a half sense of shame) to earn it. Granting he was a popular contributor, Maurice could not but think how many articles he must need write, how many weary hours he must need pass at his writing-table, before he could hope to make that sum of money! It was demoralising—he knew it was. He was conscious that, despite all his struggles to the contrary, he was becoming to all interests and purposes a gambler. He did not *actually* play, he did not *actually* bet; but, for all that, he was watching the racing reports as men do the spinning of the ball or the fall of the card at Monte Carlo. However he soon shook off his reverie; none of us wax solemn for long over the winning of money, more especially won from neither friend nor acquaintance, and it was with quite a gay countenance that he left his study and ascended to his wife's drawing-room.

"Well, Bessie," he exclaimed, "I have just had a telegram from Grafton to say that your uncle's filly is victorious again. I really am glad that he is coming to us next week. He cannot surely mean to keep on presenting us with hundreds. When he good-naturedly said you were to go halves with him in what the 'Nun' might win, he probably thought she might pick up one decent stake, but could hardly have supposed that he was the owner of the very best two-year old of the season—a filly whose winnings are likely to be computed by thousands."

"No, no," rejoined Bessie, "I agree with you, I don't think that could have been his intention; but Uncle John is a man of his word, and sure to stick to it. Still his coming here will give you an excellent opportunity to release him from what he has already done; and tell him that we really expect to participate no further in 'the Wandering Nun's' successes."

"You are quite right; I have got a capital first floor for him just over the way, and as soon as he has settled down I'll explain this to him. He has been very loyal to his promise; many men would have considered a cheque for a hundred quite sufficient redemption for such a pledge."

"He has been very good to us, Maurice. I am no purist, as you know, but Uncle John's present to some extent repre-

sents dabbling in the turf. I know, dear, you don't actually, but morally it is otherwise. We will thank Uncle John and have done with it."

Maurice stirred his tea and quietly assented to his wife's proposition. He meant it thoroughly; he wished to disentangle himself from the meshes of the turf; but the abandoning that fascination, except under compulsion, requires rigid resolution, as many a moth who has scorched his wings past redemption at the fatal candle has sadly owned, through many succeeding years of exile or poverty. To Maurice it was so easy to continue his interest in it; he could always calm his conscience with the assurance that he never actually staked money on the result, but the excitement of watching what to him was really speculation on its chances was one he would be somewhat loth to forego when it came to the point.

Mr. Richard Madingley had given a great garden-party, which was followed up by a dance in honour of his engagement. The greater part of Tunnleton society was present at this *fete*, and the Enderby scandal, as it had come to be called, was a prominent topic of discussion. The adverse party were much in the ascendant, indeed Maurice could count few friends in that assembly, but he had one powerful one in the person of the Reverend Jacob Jarrow, who had no idea of a curate of his being found fault with by any one but himself.

Mr. Jarrow was a person formidable to combat; his very failings tended to make him an awkward antagonist; his pomposity, self complacency, and obstinacy were hard to contend with. You can't convince a man who starts with a steady determination that he will not be convinced; ridicule he was impervious to, and, in the matter of words, both ponderous and voluninous, you could no more have talked the Reverend Mr. Jarrow down than his church steeple.

General Maddox, after his last week's experience, kept clear of him, but the irascible Praun could not refrain from dashing in to rescue his wife from a pretty sharp lecture on want of charity towards her neighbours, which, without exactly mentioning Maurice's name, evidently had his story for its text.

"It's all very well, Mr. Jarrow; we all know that you consider a curate of yours can do no wrong; that you decline even to listen to the evidence against him; but you can hardly expect that the unsupported word of the Rector of St. Mary's

will whitewash Mr. Enderby in the eyes of men of the world. I'm told that you counsel him to bring an action for libel against some of us ; I can only say, let him, let him, sir, as far as I am personally concerned ; he will find that more complete exposure is all he will take by that move ! ”

“ I have not only counselled him to do so, but I shall urge him still more strongly to persist in such resolution. People who calumniate their fellow-creatures find themselves mulcted in serious damages in these days ; you will perhaps discover, General, that mere statement doesn't constitute evidence,” and with this the rector walked away, with the air of a man who has completely crushed his opponent, most maddening to witness.

“ Evidence, forsooth ! ” exclaimed the enraged general to his wife ; “ the idea of any parson telling *me*, a man that has sat on hundreds of court-martials, that I don't know what evidence is ! ” and the general walked off, fuming and muttering, I am afraid, words not altogether complimentary to the clerical profession generally, but he was soon destined to receive consolation, and, ere he had gone far, he came across his host, who was being excitedly appealed to by some of his fair guests on the subject of Maurice's iniquities.

“ You see, you know all about these things, Mr. Madingley ; you oughtn't to, and of course you'll give it up when you're married, but you really should be a judge of whether Mr. Enderby really is guilty of gambling.”

Dick Madingley, who was by nature relentless in his vengeance, had steadily adhered to his *role* of Iago ; he had nothing to say to it ; he knew nothing about it, it was no affair of his, but, if you asked him as a man of the world — well, Mr. Enderby had endeavoured to make the most of his information.

“ Ah, I am afraid so. It is very sad that a clergyman should give way to such madness,” observed Angelina Torkesly, with a deep sigh ; “ but after what I saw yesterday, I am afraid there can be no doubt that Mr. Enderby has yielded to temptation.”

And then the fair Angelina, in all the glory of contributing a fresh sauce to the highly-spiced dish of gossip they were discussing, narrated her story of the yellow envelope and the telegraph boy.

Dick Madingley said nothing, but in the eyes of the audience this evidently was an important fact that admitted of no rebutting, and they were expressing their opinion to that effect freely when an unctuous voice boomed upon their ears.

"I would recommend you to be a little more reticent of your opinions, my good people. This accusation is about to become the subject of an action for libel, in which one or two of the leading personages of Tunnleton will figure prominently, and several more have the privilege of entering the witness-box."

A sudden shower could not have more effectually washed out the conversation than the rector's announcement. It was the first society had heard of such a thing as an action for libel be contemplated, and society has a hazy idea of the pains and penalties connected with that style of prosecution, but Tunnleton was prompt to recognize that it was a very unpleasant affair to be mixed up in. The Reverend Jacob Jarrold had taken up the cudgels with such good will for his curate, that he had quite persuaded himself that this action should be and would be brought, although Maurice had never for one moment hinted at such a course. However his speech had the effect of dispersing the little knot, and Mr. Jarrold found himself face to face with his host, and with General Praun as the sole auditor of what might pass between them.

"It is very good of you to stand up for your curate, Mr. Jarrold," remarked Dick Madingley, suavely, "but if you have any influence with him, you had best counsel him to drop this action for libel. He is no friend of mine or you would see him here to-day, but I don't like to see a man make a fool of himself. I'm the last fellow to find fault with any one for having sporting tastes, but if a man does have a little flutter over a race it's no use telling lies about it. I don't pretend to be a censor of morals at my time of life, but, Mr. Jarrold, if it is wrong for a parson to bet, I can't see that he mends things by denying his having done so."

"You had better be very careful how you reiterate that clumsy," said Mr. Jarrold, pompously.

"Had I?" replied Dick Madingley, with an evil gleam in his light blue eyes. "Good! next time you see your model assistant, just ask him this question: 'Did the telegraph bring you good news from Goodwood on Wednesday?'"



"Good gracious, what do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Jarrow.

"Nothing more than I say. Simply ask Mr. Enderby if the telegraph brought him good news from Goodwood on Wednesday. If his answer satisfies you I am willing to retract my recently expressed opinion."

It was a bold coup on Richard Madingley's part, for telegrams refer to many other things than racing, and Dick had no idea of what Enderby's telegraph was about really. Still he knew that it was the Goodwood week, and had managed to wring from the telegraph clerk, with whom he was on intimate terms, that it did come from the ducal gathering.

As for the Reverend Mr. Jarrow he was fairly taken aback, and left, to use nautical parlance, "in irons," and ere he could recover himself his host was gone.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

JOHN MADINGLEY.

EARLY in the following week John Madingley arrived in Tunnleton. There had been no flourish of trumpets announcing his arrival, the Enderbys had mentioned it to no one, and the quiet, countrified, old-fashioned clergyman who stepped into the very-well known lodgings that Maurice had secured for him attracted no attention in the first instance. But in a few days Tunnleton awoke to the fact that Mrs. Enderby had got an uncle who had arrived within its gates, and that the name of that uncle was Madingley, and then the gossiping little town literally ran wild with boundless conjecture. What relation was the new-comer to Mr. Richard? How extremely odd, if he was a relation, that Mr. Richard had never alluded to his expected arrival; and then Tunnleton remembered that Richard Madingley had run up to town, on some lawyer's business it was said, and presumably connected with the marriage settlement.

Tunnleton felt mystified, and if there is one thing a provin-



cial town invariably resents and places the worst construction on it is this. An uncle of Mrs. Enderby, then why did the Enderbys keep his approaching advent a secret? Mr. Enderby's ways apparently, like those of "the Heathen Chinee," were peculiar, and once more society shook its head over Maurice's iniquities and came to the conclusion, that, as far as Richard Madingley was concerned, despite the uncommonness of the name, they were namesakes but not relatives.

However there were two people in Tunnleton who did not accept this view of things. Mr. Molecombe the banker, whose daughter was betrothed to Dick Madingley, thought it behoved him to call at all events on one who might prove to be a somewhat important relative of his future son-in-law, and, to say the truth, was not quite so well satisfied in the matter of settlements as a staid-business man should be before he surrendered his daughter to a comparative stranger. Mr. Molecombe came to the grave resolution that he would call. He had sounded his junior partner Frank Chylton pretty severely on this point, but Frank was so indignant at the omission of the Enderbys from the Molecombe garden-party of some few weeks ago, that he steadfastly withheld the information he possessed, and there was growing up gradually, in Frank Chylton's mind a doubt as to whether Richard Madingley was quite what he professed to be. He had never even hinted such a thing to Maurice, but it struck him as curious that Richard Madingley seemed quite unaware that Mrs. Enderby's maiden name had been identical with his own, and that she was a niece of the man whose property he professed himself heir to. It had occurred to him of late that Mr. Richard Madingley was perhaps drawing on his imagination when he described himself as heir to that Yorkshire property, and that the succession to it might be more matter of hope than a declared intention on the part of the present proprietor.

The Reverend John Madingley of Bingwell might be a pronounced fact in his own country and in many other places, but in Tunnleton he had been a mere palatable shadow in which they took no sort of interest till the arrival of his related heir, and even then that Mrs. Enderby was also a relation of the Yorkshire square and rector had been quite forgotten by the few people who had known it, with the exception of the Chyltons.

Mr. Molecombe in due course presented himself at John Madingley's lodgings, and in response to the conventional "not at home," desired to see that gentleman's valet, and explained to him that he did not come within the catalogue of ordinary visitors, as his daughter was engaged to be married to Mr. Richard Madingley.

The valet's face was immovable, and his manner most deferential as he listened to the banker's story, but he firmly though politely reiterated that his orders were imperative, that his master was in delicate health, and regretted that he was unable to receive visitors.

Mr. Molecombe retired considerably disappointed. He thought, considering the circumstances, the rector of Bingwell might have made an effort to see him.

There is a great resemblance between humanity and sheep. Despite their first impressions, no sooner was Tunnleton aware that Mr. Molecombe had called, than it occurred to several of the prominent members of Tunnleton society, who had profited by Richard Madingley's hospitality, that it would be perhaps advisable to call upon the new comer. Mr. Molecombe had, of course, satisfied himself of the relationship before committing himself in this wise. But the same answer was invariably returned which had met the banker on his visit—"Delicate health, and deeply regretted he was unable to receive visitors."

Not reckoning the Enderbys, John Madingley made but one exception in this rule, and that, to the unfeigned astonishment of Tunnleton, was General Shrewster. That he was a self-contained man, and not given to slopping over like a full pail when jogged against, his acquaintances were aware. Still it is very odd that he had never mentioned his acquaintance with the master of Bingwell, whom he must evidently know intimately or he would scarcely have been admitted when he called.

It is quite true, General Shrewster, although near a score of years younger than John Madingley, had been a contemporary of his upon the turf. It was many a year ago since the general had abandoned that fascinating pursuit, but there were plenty of old race goers even now who could recollect how Captain Shrewster used to "shake the ring." How he would dash in at the last moment, in the days when men really did bet, and write down three or four pages of his betting

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book in about the same time as it has taken the writer to scrawl this paragraph. "It's a treat," an old trainer once remarked, "to put the captain on a good thing, he's the pluckiest better I ever saw! and when he goes in he fairly makes the ring daze before he snaps his betting-book to again. He has had them so often and so heavily, they are a bit cowed now when he puts down the pieces in earnest."

Yes. General Shrewster's has been the fate of many another who had started in life with a good property and plenty of ready-money. How many thousands he had run through on the turf was a matter only known to his bankers and his solicitor. The large sums that he won by day on the Heath were more than swallowed up by the reckless play he indulged in, at the rooms at Newmarket, at night. He had wonderful information and was a most successful speculator, but reckless after-dinner play at the gaming-table would easily dissipate such successes, and the gambling-houses of Brighton or the rooms at Doncaster easily swallowed up the winnings of the ducal gathering or successful days on the Town Moor.

It was in those early days that John Madingley had known young Shrewster. It is hardly worth going into, but in those days the then captain had intimate relations with the great Northern stable in which John Madingley trained, and the doctor had been attracted towards him from the audacity with which he was wont to back any promising horse of his. They had become great friends, Shrewster had more than once been down to stay at Bingwell. Then came his smash. He had nothing for it but to exchange to India and leave the settlement of his affairs to his solicitor. The result was, a fine fortune became a moderate competence; still upon that and his pension General Shrewster as a bachelor was passing rich in unnnleton. He never spoke of his past, and that complacent little place, which believed that its knowledge was universal, was quite unaware that the grey-haired veteran, who read the morning papers so placidly, who was never seen in the billiard-room, and rarely even in the cardroom, was the Captain Shrewster about whose wondrous turf successes and mad doing all London had rung a quarter of a century ago. You may think yourself a big man you may flatter yourself that you have made your mark, but to bring yourself to a proper sense of the insignificance of all human ambition there is nothing like a

visit to one of those pulseless provincial places. Except you are royalty or the Prime Minister, there will be slight curiosity regarding you. Swinburne, Wilkie Collins, or Mil-lais, run no risk of being mobbed in such towns.

It was not long before Tunnleton arrived at the fact that General Shrewster was admitted by the recluse of Bevans, as the somewhat ostentatious private hotel where Mr. Madingley had taken up his abode was called, and about this the inquisitive little town marvelled much.

Not an easy man to question, this General Shrewster ; could be curt and sarcastic, as more than one social dignitary had discovered, somewhat to his discomfiture. Still, Generals Maddox and Praun, after some talk between themselves, came to the conclusion that Mr. Madingley's eccentric seclusion was a thing to be inquired into, and that the information they sought could only be obtained from General Shrewster. But from the latter the two *gobe-mouches* could extract nothing. General Shrewster told them briefly that he had known John Madingley intimately many years ago, that he had come down to Tunnleton for his health, and was not equal to receiving visitors or making fresh acquaintances.

Even General Praun admitted there was no more to be said ; it certainly was open to a man to choose whom he would receive in his own house. Still, as the uncle of Dick Madingley, Tunnleton, he did think, had clams, etc., etc., which only went to prove that "there was no more to be said," by no means, as a rule, closed discussion, there being generally plenty more of inaccurate talk to follow that brief announcement.

Maurice and his wife got on capitally with Uncle John. He looked more like an old-fashioned country squire than a clergyman, although his dress was sober enough. He was generally attired in a single-breasted pepper-and-salt coat of slightly sporting cut, drab kerseymere breeches and leggings, and invariably wore a white scarf of matchless fold and immaculate purity. He was evidently fond of Bessie, and no sooner did he discover the fascination the turf had for her husband than he unfolded the lore of past decades for his edification, and about the last fifty years of turf history John Madingley was a combination of racing calendar and biographical dictionary very interesting to listen to for any one whose tastes lay that way. One thing Maurice remarked as strange was that he made no allusion

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Richard Madingley, and at first seemed a little taken aback to find that he was established in Tunnleton ; afterwards he appeared to have heard all about it, but to take very little interest in Richard or his proceedings.

The following conversation would have created no little excitement in Tunnleton could it have been heard :—

"Good morning, Shrewster ! It's very good of you to come and cheer up an old friend who has got very near to the end of his tether. I like a gossip with you over the old times of five-and-twenty years ago."

"Yes, Madingley, but it's ended the same way with the lot of us. We plunged and won ! We plunged and lost ! and the losses always exceed the winnings by many thousands. My lot was only that of a score of others ; you can recollect. You, like a sensible man, raced solely for sport, and when you did bet it was to an extent that never caused you a moment's uneasiness. However, never mind these bygones. I am glad you like young Enderby. He is a good sort."

"Yes, he is !" returned John Madingley. "He is a very good young fellow ; but I tell you what, he is in the wrong groove. That chap will never do any good as a parson. They can't stand parsons of my stamp now-a-days, and Maurice is no more fitted for the profession he has chosen than I am, though the same I have been more conscientious than the world gives me credit for."

"You are quiet right," rejoined Shrewster. "Enderby would make a rattling good dragoon, but he will never do any good in his present vocation."

"Well," interposed Mr. Madingley quickly, "he is not committed to it yet, and he is young enough to change, and I shouldn't mind helping him a little in some other line if he liked."

"And what would your heir say to that ?" inquired General Shrewster, slyly.

John Madingley threw himself back in his chair, and burst out in a roar of laughter.

"Ah !" he said at length, "what a commotion there will be in Tunnleton when they come to the rights of that story ; in the course of a few days Scotland Yard will no doubt have summoned this gentleman up for us ; but, as I told you before, for his being my heir, why I never even heard of the fellow



before. He may have a right to the name of Madingley, but he is most assuredly no connection of mine. You tell me he is engaged to a girl in this town, a daughter of that banker fellow who called upon me. I don't mean to see him, but I shall certainly before I leave Tunnleton let him know that his intended son-in-law is flying false colours. But in the meanwhile, Shrewster, not a word to any one. I know I can trust you."

"Yes, I know how to keep my tongue between my teeth, and now I am going to say good-bye. You look tired, and will be all the better for a snooze before dinner. Good-bye." And with a warm pressure of the hand the two old friends parted.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### AT THE "BRISTOL" RESTAURANT.

If there was one man at Tunnleton who felt uncomfortable about the position of things it was Mr. Molecombe. His daughter had heard several times from her *fiancé*, but Richard Madingley always wound up by regretting that well-known dilatory ways of solicitors still detained him in town. That was nothing compared to a rebuff he had received from John Madingley. Not content with that gentleman's "not at home," he had thought fit to write to him to explain Richard Madingley's relation to his daughter, and the rector of Bingwell's reply had thrown the banker into a cold perspiration. John Madingley had curtly answered that his health precluded his receiving visitors, and that he had nothing to say to Richard Madingley's matrimonial arrangements.

A more uncomfortable answer it was scarce possible to get from a man who stood *in loco parentis* to that of a proposed son-in-law. A second letter elicited no answer whatever, and, though Mr. Molecombe as yet kept his own counsel, he was nevertheless seriously discomposed about the aspect of affairs. It was a puzzle beyond his comprehension. His intended son-in-law had vanished from Tunnleton simultaneously with the advent of the relative from whom he professed to expect his



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heritage; that might have been accident, but it was singular that he should not return nor apparently have been aware of the Yorkshire rector's coming. Then, again, John Madingley's note, and the ground he had apparently taken up, were by no means reassuring. Elderly gentlemen invariably expected to be consulted and deferred to about their heirs' matrimonial intentions, more especially when such elderly gentlemen's property was entirely at their own disposal. Mr. Madingley apparently did not. One solution only of this was possible to the banker's mind, namely, that the rector of Bingwell most thoroughly disapproved of the whole affair and intended to countenance it as little as might be. This would account for Dick Madingley's apparent embarrassment about the settlements. There were difficulties probably between himself and his uncle's lawyers, for, despite the fact that Richard Madingley had only given himself out as a cousin of the well-known Yorkshire "Squarson," Tunnleton, from the moment they had grasped the fact (rather late in the day) that the owner of Bingwell was to some extent a man of moneyed notability, had insisted on that relationship, and their disgust when this cleryman of the north declined to appear and be worshipped was considerable. Still, let Tunnleton think what it liked, there were two points which there was no getting over. The Reverend John Madingley adhered strictly to his determination to see nobody—while, curiously enough, his relative and heir was apparently unable to return from London. Mr. Molecombe was much too prudent to show any concern about this, but at the same time both he and his family felt extremely uncomfortable about the turn things had taken. Edith Molecombe, indeed, shrank as far as possible from receiving visitors of any sort. She could say with truth that she heard nearly every other day from her *fiancé*—that his letters were dated from the Bristol Hotel, but that he was still detained in London by those bothering lawyers; all very well this on the surface, but Mr. Molecombe could not but see that within such easy distance from town as Tunnleton was, it was very possible for an enamoured young man to run down for a day or so to see his sweetheart, more especially when such an opportunity of presenting his bride-elect to the man who stood to him in place of a father had occurred. It would almost seem as if John Madingley had run down to Tunnleton for that express purpose, and yet Richard seemed to have disappeared as if to controvert it.

Could Mr. Molecombe have looked in at the Bristol Restaurant one evening, his eyes might not only have been opened, but have been fetched pretty nearly out of his head. Trifling over his dessert with a still unfinished bottle of dry champagne at his right hand, was a slight, wiry, dark-faced, clean-shaven man, allowing himself only the smallest modicum of mutton-chop whiskers. A man about whose age it was hopeless to conjecture. He might be either prematurely old or extraordinarily young for his time of life, but he was at all events eating the best hothouse peaches and drinking the best Brut brand the Bristol could furnish, with a *nonchalance* that betokened the most perfect indifference to the amount of his dinner-bill. While he was leisurely picking his teeth, a man clothed in faultless evening attire, with immaculate white tie, who had been apparently so far condescendingly superintending the other waiters, approached his table with a deferential bow and said,

"I hope, Mr. Pick, I hope your dinner has been satisfactory."

"Hallo, Dick! I thought you had made your pile and started something of this kind on your own account."

"Well, Mr. Pick, I did get a tidy lot together, and I undoubtedly had a very good time last year, still I did not think it quite good enough to cut this place; my berth here, as you know, is an exceedingly good one; they are excessively liberal in the matter of leave, in fact really three days a week is as much supervision as they demand from me. I have been in the country a bit for the benefit of my health."

Mr. Pick received this statement with a low whistle and a closure of the left eye that might have been deemed almost insulting by sensitive people.

Richard Madingley continued in the same unmoved tone,

"Things haven't been quite so rosy this season so far; you have always been very good to me, Mr. Pick, and I thought I could rely upon you thoroughly for information about the north country stables."

"So you can, Dick; you have always known all I know."

"What about this 'Wandering Nun' then? You never gave me a hint about *her*, Mr. Pick."

"No," replied the saturnine gentleman irritably. "Dash it, how could I? Those cursed Kilburnes kept the thing so con-

oundedly dark that there wasn't a soul in the north knew anything about her except perhaps old Madingley and one or two of his cronies. They never let you know, and old Kilburne and his son think a deal before they lay out a pony between them; but they have got a flyer, no mistake about it. I have learnt it much too late to collar the loaf; but you had better follow my lead and go in for the crumbs."

"My expenses have been very heavy this season, Mr. Pick."

"Your expenses!" retorted the other contemptuously, "your expenses be damned! Look here, Dick Bushman: I promised your mother to give you a hand, as far as I could, before she died, and I've done it. I'm not particular. No man who makes the turf his vocation can afford to be mealy-mouthed, but you certainly have no call to heave rocks at me. I got you your appointment here, better than that of most clerks in Government offices as far as money and work goes: I've given you the office whenever I've been in the swim myself, and you come here whining to me about your expenses and not being advertised of 'the Wandering Nun.' D——n you, sir, live on the two pounds a week you will probably command if they turn you off here without a character, and don't trouble me any more!"

"Pray don't mistake me, Mr. Pick. If you would allow me to conduct you to a private room while I explain, and condescend to except a glass of champagne and a cigar from me, you will be quite satisfied."

"Well, Dick, I could do another pint of 'pop' and a tidy cigar. You ain't a fool, and if you don't rough me up the wrong way I'm good to stand to you still, but that 'Wandering Nun' is a devilish sore subject; there hasn't been such a good thing as that come out of Yorkshire in my time without my knowing all about it: but the Kilburnes, having no real speculators connected with them, had no trouble about keeping their hands dark; a few hundreds would represent the investments of Mr. Brooks, his friends and his trainer. But come along and you shall tell me what you have been doing."

Mr. Pick, now a notable member of the ring, had begun life as a footman. The antecedents of the knights of the pencil are mysterious as those of the members of the Stock Exchange; they have their ascension, culmination, and decline, their

zenith and their nadir; comet-like they cross the sky and disappear into the obscurity of poverty or sparkle with the temporary effulgence of wealth. Mr. Pick at present gravitated between these points, but he was a philosopher, and, when he could not afford the tariff of the Bristol, was content with a cut off the joint at a luncheon-bar, though, like most of his vocation, he always lived luxuriously when in feather.

Dick led the way to a snug, disengaged dining-room, in which one of his subordinates was already busy manipulating the cork of champagne bottle.

"Well, I haven't seen much of you lately," remarked Mr. Pick as he sipped his wine with infinite gusto; "what have you been doing?"

"I've been doing the swell and setting up as a gentleman of property: never mind where, but not very far from town."

"Yes, you're good at that game, as I know from experience; you can do the pretty and put the side on, Dick, so as to pass for the real article, unless the liquor gets the best of you, and then, like the rest of us, you are apt to display the weaknesses of your past; you've a command of strong language which you're a little disposed to make use of when you're sprung—that's injudicious. Well, did you have a good time? Did you make it pay?"

"Not quite: but if I could have raised a few hundreds more I should have made a good thing of it. I was fairly established as one of the swells of the place and engaged to the daughter of the leading banker there."

"What, you, to a real lady, with money?"

"Just so," rejoined Dick rather sharply; "there's nothing very wonderful in that; I'm not bad-looking, you know; they all think I'm comfortably off and that I'm a gentleman."

The other ejected a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and then, with a significant wink, observed,

"Right you are; a real out-and-outer; but you've a past, Master Dick, that respectable people would look upon as somewhat dubious."

"When the respectable people don't know it that matters little," replied Dick Madingley; "but I wanted to see you, and that is the principal reason that brought me to London."

"Campaign not been profitable as yet, eh?" rejoined Mr. Pick

"No; but just on the point of becoming so."

"Like 'em all, like 'em all," replied the bookmaker softly. "Like myself, like the beggars who are always on the verge of discovering how to make gold or diamonds, or their fortune. We're always pounded for that other five hundred or so. If we had had that odd hundred or so to plunge with, what a lot of us would be driving in carriages instead of wearing our soles out. The end of your moving history is, you want money and can I find it."

Dick nodded. He knew his man, and, though Mr. Pick might philosophise himself, words were quite wasted upon him as a matter of business. He would never have attained the very tolerable turf position he held had he not been both hard-headed and practical. The advancing of a little money where he saw his way to tolerable security, for exorbitant interest, was quite within his province.

"You know I have been doing tolerably well, or you wouldn't see me here; but you also know I'm the last man to go into a speculation blindfolded. You'll have to show your hand, my boy."

"And that is none so easy to do. You would want to know what the young lady's fortune was to be."

"Naturally. I've to recover my money and be liberally compensated for the accommodation," rejoined Mr. Pick, gravely.

"That's just the rub. My proposed father-in-law is somewhat anxious to do the same thing with regard to myself."

The bookmaker gave vent to a low whistle.

"Under those circumstances," he said, at last, "I think I may say this match won't come off. At all events, it don't sound good enough for this child to risk money on."

"It will come off fast enough if I am not stranded for a few hundreds of ready coin. They all believe down there I'm of a good Yorkshire family, and heir to a nice property."

"A rather credulous population down there, wherever it is," remarked Mr. Pick, with a sneer. "And now, before we go any further, where is it?"

"Time enough for you to know when you tell me you're good to advance me four or five hundred to carry on the war."

"It's no use, Dick; when those parliament swells come to



the House for supplies, they have to condescend to particulars, and so will you before I part with a 'mag.'"

"I must have the money or chuck the thing up," replied Dick Madingley. "You would have to know it sooner or later, and, as I can't well play the game without a confederate, perhaps the sooner I take you into my confidence the better. I am down at Tunnleton, and living at one of the best bachelor residences in the town."

"I say, isn't that risky? Weren't you afraid of being spotted?"

"No, the Bristol is a little above Tunnleton form, and, as for racing, well, Tunnleton talks a good deal about it, but, bar Epsom, don't know its way to a racecourse."

"Any crumbs to be picked up there?" inquired Mr. Pick.

"No; it's not worth while exposing your game at sixpenny pool, nor your knowledge of whist at shilling points—besides it would have been all against the game I was playing to be counted anything but a fair performer in those lines."

"Good, very good!" remarked the bookmaker. "There's nothing like understanding when one's little talents are best kept in the background. Or else, Dick, amongst yokels, you're likely to do well at those amusements."

"Well, you agree with me," replied the other impatiently; "fishing for gudgeon is waste of time when there are salmon in the pool. Will you stand to me?"

"I'll come down and have a look at the thing, anyway. You can put me up for a day or two?"

"I'll put you up for a week or two, if you will make up as an old-fashioned sporting pastor and call yourself my uncle."

"What, the fellow with the property in Yorkshire?" exclaimed Mr. Pick.

"That's it. I want you to represent old John Madingley of Bingwell. He's an old man who never goes out of his own county, and they know nothing about him in Tunnleton."

"Never goes out of Yorkshire, don't he? By Heavens, Dick! I saw him at Goodwood last week. The old man came all the way to see his 'Wandering Nun' win the 'Ham.'"



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## MR. MOLECOMBE GETS UNEASY.

MR. PICK listened to the further evolution of Richard Madingley's scheme with considerable interest, but not altogether with enthusiasm. No man keener than him to turn five hundred pounds into a thousand in a few weeks, and that he computed was about the price he ought to receive for his assistance, pecuniarily and otherwise. But then Mr. Pick had a whole-some dread of placing himself within the clutches of the law, and he had a vague idea that the personation of a well-known personage would come under the head of fraud or conspiracy, or something of that sort. Moral scruples the bookmaker had none, still he had escaped once or twice by the skin of his teeth; and indeed once left the dock under the lash of the judge's tongue, and had to listen to the regrets of that functionary that his wrong-doing had been so skilfully planned as to just defeat the administration of justice. No, Mr. Pick did not approve of the bill of fare at Millbank. No, the bookmaker, although he had embarked on some very risky enterprises in his early career, was too substantial a man now not to weigh possible results, however profitable the game might appear to be, and anything that looked like ending in a law-court he shrank from. He was not quite clear whether the personation of somebody else was not an indictable offence. He rather thought it was, he had hazy ideas of "conspiracy with intent to defraud" being a transgression that carried severe pains and penalties. His mouth watered at the idea of the sum he might demand for his help, but he had no idea of burning his fingers in pulling Jack's chestnuts out of the fire.

"I've been thinking this out," he said, slowly, after a silence of some moments, which the other had taken care not to interrupt. "It's rather a risky business, and if I go into it you'll have to pay pretty smartly for my help. I tell you what I'll do. I'll come down and look at it, and that's as much as I'll promise just now. If I fancy the spec. well and good, if not, there's no harm done."

"You will come back with me to-morrow ; remember it is important that I should produce the relation from whom I have expectations as soon as may be. I never saw John Madingley, but you have, and well know the sort of line to take up—country parson with sporting tastes."

"I can't personate him to any body who has ever seen him," replied Mr. Pick, "but the chances are nobody in Tunnleton ever has. I'll be ready to-morrow ; you wire and order dinner," and, so saying, the bookmaker rose to his feet and, nodding good-night, left the room.

Could the precious pair have overheard a conversation at Tunnleton, the going down there would have been deemed inexpedient by both of them.

"No, Madingley, I ran up to town and did what you wished, but you had better, at present, let things take their course. At all events there is nothing to be done with your namesake till he returns. They know nothing about this young gentleman at Scotland Yard, and pooh-poohed the whole business. Said that he very likely had a right to the name, and had only exaggerated in claiming relationship with you. In short," concluded General Shrewster, "they decline to interfere at present in any way, and I suppose they're right. This fellow would probably declare he only claimed to be a distant connection of yours, and that the rest was merely Tunnleton gossip."

"Yes," replied John Madingley, "it is always open to a man to claim that sort of kinship, and he does himself little harm even if the other side disavow it."

"Yes, a cool hand like this young gentleman will get out of it easily enough. He does not want money apparently, and is certainly not deficient in cheek."

"I know the sort," rejoined Madingley, laughingly, "plenty of bounce and swagger till they're collared. We'll leave the fellow alone, and only give Mr. Molecombe a hint in case his daughter's marriage with my namesake becomes imminent. It will be for him then to discover whether Mr. Richard Madingley is sailing under false colours or not."

"Yes," replied Shrewster, with a quiet smile, "and it will be a terrible shock to Tunnleton should he turn out to be a rank impostor."

"Yes," rejoined the master of Bingwell, "the idea that he has been regularly bad rouses the bile of the Yorkshireman and I don't suppose the southerners take it more kindly."

So, it having been settled between them that for the present they would merely watch the course of events, neither John Madingley nor his old friend troubled themselves any more for the present about the doings of this new star that had suddenly risen above the town horizon.

But if they did not trouble themselves about Dick Madingley's proceedings Tunnleton did; and the Prauns and the Maddoxes and the Torkeslys shook their heads, and agreed that there was something excessively odd in the newly-engaged man's persistent absence. Mr. Pick had suddenly found that his own legitimize business would detain him some time longer in London, and with the somewhat hazardous game that Richard Madingley was playing he did not consider it advisable to reappear upon the scene until his pockets were replenished. On that point Mr. Pick was very decided—he would advance no money until, as he expressed it, he had been "to look at the speculation."

Mrs. Maddox said boldly that the young men had changed a good deal since her time; and if Maddox had treated her in such *monchalant* fashion after they were engaged he would very soon have "had the mitten."

Mrs. Praun opined that there was no standing the youth of the present day, they really seemed to expect the young ladies to do all the love-making, to which her irascible husband responded, "And by gad, madam, they are not disappointed," which produced one of those Mediterranean squalls wont to disturb the even tenour of the Praun's domestic life—a hot tempered couple who not only indulged in volcanic explosions at home, but combined in volcanic irruptions abroad, and were a terror and—metaphorically—a very lava-flood to any weak-kneed society they might get into. As for the Maddoxes, they never boiled, but persistently gurgled, like the steady, monotonous wash of the sea against the shore; dangerous in their very persistency in any view they might have taken up. But there was one very curious thing in all this which wrought very much to the *soi-disant* Richard Madingley's advantage. Influenced considerably by their enmity to Maurice Enderby, still further stimulated by the Rev. John Madingley declining to make their acquaintance, the two generals gradually worked themselves into the belief that John Madingley was an impostor.

It's astonishing how it is possible to persuade one's self to a belief in accordance with one's wishes, albeit we have no facts whatever to justify that opinion, and the Maddoxes and the Prauns were not at all people to keep what they thought to themselves. The consequence of all this was, that, far from suspicion falling upon the impostor, there was a lurking misgiving that the Rev. John Madingley was not what he represented himself to be ; in the eyes of the Prauns and the Maddoxes, a clergyman like Maurice Enderby, who "dabbled in horse-racing," would be capable of almost anything ; they would hardly have hesitated at almost openly insinuating that the whole thing was a fraud but for one fact : there was no getting over that : General Shrewster knew and visited the Reverend Mr. Madingley, and he was not only above suspicion but carried far too many guns to be assailed with impunity ; he might have been imposed upon, but it was not likely, nor did even General Praun feel that he should care about hinting that to him. Shrewster's social position was beyond dispute, and he had more than once shown that he could say very bitter things when provoked. Tunnleton had long ago come to the conclusion that Shrewster was a man to be let alone.

But a man who was made wonderfully uneasy by all these varied rumours was Mr. Molecombe. He was pledged to give his daughter to this young man Richard Madingley. Here was his kinsman, from whom, according to his own account, he expected to inherit this Yorkshire property, and that kinsman firmly but politely refused to see Mr. Molecombe ; although the banker had written and explained the peculiar relations under which he stood to Richard Madingley, the recluse of Bingwell, although actually residing in Tunnleton, kept his doors resolutely closed upon him. Then these sinister rumours reached his ears that the Rev. John Madingley was an impostor, and this, with the prolonged absence of his son-in-law that was to be, still further increased the banker's uneasiness. It was difficult for him to get—not at the real state of things, but even at what people thought ; it was not likely that men like Generals Praun and Maddox would confide their suspicions to him and a wholesome respect for General Shrewster made them rather shy of expressing their opinion publicly. The banker was much attached to his child, and that he should feel uncomfortable about her engagement was only natural, and there

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ould be no doubt about it, that just at present Mr. Richard Madingley's real *status* was under suspicion. General Shrewster was the only man behind the scenes, for John Madingley had not even confided to the Enderbys that he knew nothing whatever of this young gentleman who had thought proper to claim kinship with him. Shrewster was, what we would have termed, watching the match with great interest. "Madingley's quite right," he would mutter to himself, "in waiting for this imposter to show his hand; unless he has heard of John Madingley's arrival, and got scared, he is bound to make the first move, and then it will be a case of checkmate almost immediately. The Scotland Yard people are right; we must allow this young gentleman a little more rope in order to make his discomfiture a certainty. However, if he should come back to Tunnleton there will be no doubt about that, and in any case it is clearly John Madingley's duty to interfere, and prevent Edith Molecombe being married to this man."

Mr. Pick's business being at length brought to a conclusion, it was settled that he should run down to Tunnleton that evening in the assumed character of Dick's uncle, and see what he thought of things. Madingley at once telegraphed to his servants to have dinner and a spare bed made ready, and a little before six he and Mr. Pick settled themselves comfortably in a first-class carriage and started for their destination.

There was only one other passenger, and he was apparently absorbed in his cigar and evening paper. Dick cast one long keen glance at him, and then, coming to the conclusion that he had never seen the stranger before, began conversing in a desultory way about the past Ascot and Goodwood. Bob Grafton, for he was the stranger, pricked up his ears, as he always did when the talk ran in that groove, but refrained from joining in it. Suddenly he became haunted with the idea that he had met the elder of his companions before, and yet for the life of him he could not recollect where or who he was. The man was like a dim shadow of the past connected in Grafton's mind with some unpleasant incident. Ever and anon he stole furtive glances over his paper at Mr. Pick, but it was of no use; the bookmaker was to him like the blurred photograph of some one he had known, but now failed to recognize.

On arrival at Tunnleton Bob got out, for he was on his way



to Bridge Court, and proposed taking a fly from the station to convey him thither. Rather to his astonishment his fellow-travellers followed his example, and as they drove off Grafton asked the porter, who was busied with his luggage, whether he knew them.

"The young un's Mr. Madingley, sir, but I never saw the other gentleman before."

"Madingley!" exclaimed Grafton, as he jumped into his fly. "I have it—that's the fellow who found out John Madingley's mare was lame at Epsom, and got such a lot of money out of her for the Oaks—Pick, the bookmaker, and, if all that was said about it was true, nobody was more likely to have early information inasmuch as he was accused of causing it. What can have brought that precious scoundrel to Tunnleton?"

"All right, Phillips; here we are," said Dick Madingley, as his well-trained servant opened the door the moment the fly stopped. "Take my uncle's things up to his room; dinner in a quarter of an hour; and where have you put my letters?"

"You will find them on the mantel-piece in the drawing-room, sir," and as he spoke Dick fancied Mr. Phillips eyed Mr. Pick with no little surprise and curiosity. But apparently the man saw he was observed, for he turned hastily away and disappeared to attend to his duties.

"All fancy, I suppose," muttered Dick, "there's nothing remarkable in my having an uncle. Most people have till stricken in years, and yet somehow that beggar Phillips struck me as looking astonished. Now for my letters: hum, small tradesmen's accounts, a tea at the Torkeslys, will I join a house dinner at the club, an invitation or two for garden-parties, and, hum! a note from my papa-in-law as is to be. 'Will I call as soon as I return?' is most anxious to see me on a matter of great importance.' Now what maggot has he got in his head? However, I don't mean to see him to-night, to-morrow will do for him. Dinner and a bottle of wine's the first thing anyway."

During dinner young Madingley kept up the farce and was extremely civil to his apocryphal uncle. Phillip's face gave no sign, though nothing escaped his keen eyes, and some of Mr. Pick's *gaucheries* might have put a less thoroughly trained servant off his balance; that gentleman, indeed, was not about



carpooning anything he fancied with his own fork, and utterly ignored saltspoons while his knife was in his hand, plunging the blade in freely when wanting that condiment. The meat, however, and Mr. Pick having pronounced it a very pretty notion for a feed, the bookmaker settled down to a cigar and brandy and water. Champagne he understood, but the best of claret had no attractions for him.

"Look here, old man," said Dick, "you've got all you want the way of tobacco, etc., and there's books of all sorts on those shelves. I just want to slip down to the club for an hour, and hear what's been going on while I was away. Necessary, you see, in the rather ticklish game I'm playing to have the gossip of the place at my finger-ends."

"Quite right. Don't you mind me. I've a shrewd suspicion you're out of your depth already. You can't keep too close an eye on the current. Let it once turn against you, and the sooner you slope the better."

"You're right. Shall see you when I come back;" and, with a nod to his friend, Dick took up his hat and sallied out to the night-air

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE GAME ABOUT UP.

MR. PICK, left to his own reflections, began in his parlance to reckon up the trumps in their hand. "Yes, this sort of a and turn-out looks like money, and, as for Dick's name, it's always gone under that of Madingley, and that he's no reason to old John is no fault of his. He's quite willing to go to the family if they'll let him. It was a very good thing to come down here and look out for a wife with money, and, according to Dick, it looks like coming off if he can carry it a little longer. But there's one very awkward corner to be rounded. These swells always go in for what they call amusements—means, I suppose, putting down your picture-gallery and showing what money you've got and where you keep

it. Now Dick must come to grief over that. He's only one chance, to run away with the girl and trust to the old man coming round afterwards. It's a risky game, and I shall charge pretty high for what I put into it."

Then Mr. Pick selected a novel from the bookcase and sat down to enjoy for the twentieth time the account of the great "Oriel" trial in Digby Grand; for, like most men, Mr. Pick enjoyed the description of life and scenes within his own immediate experience. But he had not been reading long when the opening of the house-door announced the return of Dick Madingley.

"It's all U P," exclaimed that worthy; "and the sooner you clear out of Tunnleton the better."

"Why, what has happened?" inquired Mr. Pick.

"John Madingley is here, and has been for the last week. All Tunnleton knows it."

"Whew?" whistled Mr. Pick. "Yes, you're right—you are knocked out of time. Now the next thing is to get out as easy as we can."

"I don't know about *easy*," replied Dick. "I should think we had better get out as quick as we can."

"Now, look here, young man," replied Mr. Pick, impressively. "you can't be said to have my experience of tight places, and there's many an awkward circumstance in a man's career may be got over if he'll only just *brass it out*; now, I have no intention of putting myself in a bustle, I can tell you."

"Why, good gracious!" exclaimed Dick; "you come down here as John Madingley, and here's the very man himself in the town. What the deuce are you thinking of?"

"Never mind what I came down for; no one has heard you call me anything but 'uncle' as yet. Can't you have an uncle on your mother's side as well as your father's? Bless you, my boy, I'm your Uncle Popkins, or anything else you like to call me—bar Madingley—as for that 'uncle,' you must stick to it that they misunderstood you."

"But you don't suppose that will satisfy old Molecombe, do you?" replied Dick.

"No; nor that you will marry his daughter," retorted the bookmaker.

"I don't know about that," replied Dick, doggedly, "I am not mistaken, Edith is really fond of me, and when that

is the case a girl don't throw you over just because her father says 'no.'"

"Ah! then you *do* think that probable?"

"Never had a doubt about it," rejoined Dick, sententiously; "when it came to the settlements it was hardly likely that any hanky-panky work you or I could manage would blind a man of business like Molecombe. No; I'll take your advice, and play the game out. I shall have to see Molecombe to-morrow, and no doubt get my dismissal when I disclaim all connection with John Madingley."

"Good," said Mr. Pick, sententiously; it comes exactly to what I reckoned it up at when you were out. Run away with the girl, if you can, and trust to the stony-hearted father repenting afterwards. I don't mean putting much money into the business, I tell you, but I'll stay with you a week, and find you enough to carry on for a month on the old terms; if it don't come off in that time, you had better give it up. And now my boy I am off to bed." And so saying, Mr. Pick lit his bedroom candle, and nodded good-night to his companion.

Dick Madingley sat lost in thought for some few minutes after the bookmaker's departure. He possessed considerable experience of how far an off-hand manner, unlimited assurance, and the possession of ready money, will impose upon society. He was utterly unprincipled, and had for some time come to the conclusion that his first stepping-stone to fortune was to carry money. He liked Edith Molecombe, but, nice-looking girl though she was, he, nevertheless, was no whit in love with her. The question was, whether the speculation was good enough. The banker must have money, and, storm and rave though he might at the outset, yet when the thing was irretrievable, he could not but forgive his only child. As for his father, Dick thought there would not be much trouble in burying that. It would be easy to ignore his present situation, and one or two of like character which he had previously held. Fool! as if the irrevocable past was not always dogging man's footsteps, and, obscure as his career may have been, rising up against him in the days of his splendour. It is no use; a man who knew you when you kept that grocery store in Islington confronts you sooner or later, when you soar to the glories of Mowwell Road.

However, this never crossed Dick's brain. He saw no further, and it was very possible to persuade Edith Molecombe to trust herself to him, and that, once married, her father's forgiveness would be a mere matter of time ; and, with a firm determination to pursue his love-suit to the bitter end, Mr. Madingley followed his friend's example.

The next morning Dick, strongly advised by Mr. Pick, determined to take the bull by the horns, and, to use that worthy's expression, "have it out with his gov'nor-in-law" at once.

"Now, you know what you've got to say," said Mr. Pick. "Say it, say it strong, and then come the indignant dodge. Kicked out you'll be ; that'll be the end of the first move. If the young woman means sticking to you, you'll know all about it before the week's out. Now then, off you go, and leave me to explore the beauties of Tunnleton."

Dick Madingley was blessed with plenty of nerve, and it was with the most unblushing effrontery that he knocked at the banker's door, and requested to see Mr. Molecombe.

He was informed that gentleman was out, upon which Dick expressed great annoyance, and, making his way to the drawing-room, told the servant to let Miss Molecombe know that he was waiting to see her. This request the man very naturally complied with, and, having shown Mr. Madingley into the empty drawing-room, went off at once in quest of his young mistress.

A very few minutes, and then the door opened and Edith Molecombe sprang forward to greet her lover.

"Oh, Dick," she exclaimed, "what a long time you have been away from me."

"Soothing to my vanity to think you have found it so," he replied, "but I could not get away before ; business arrangements consequent on our marriage detained me ; and you know, dearest, how slow lawyers are about these sort of things. But sit down, Edith ; I want to have a little serious talk with you."

"Yes," replied the girl, as she seated herself on the sofa. "You haven't bad news to tell me, have you, Dick ?"

"No, nothing very bad, though I must own I'm not a little annoyed, and, if you really care for me and will stick to me, I shan't so much mind."

"Why you know I will, Dick. Have not I promised?" she continued, almost in a whisper, "and do you think I'd go back from that promise?"

"No, I think I can trust you," he replied, "but during my absence a very awkward misunderstanding has arisen it seems. Mr. John Madingley—a well-known man up in Yorkshire—has taken up his abode in Tunnleton. Because his name happens to be the same as mine, and because I rather foolishly bragged of how good an uncle of mine was to me, and what great expectations I had from him, I find all the people here have jumped to the conclusion that this Mr. John Madingley is that uncle."

"We certainly all thought you had said so, and I think papa has called twice on him. It seems he is a great invalid and sees nobody, with the exception of General Shrewster and the Underbys."

Dick gave a slight start. "Odd!" he muttered. "Old Shrewster and that prig of a parson are the two people in Tunnleton I dislike most."

"Well, Edith," he continued aloud, "how the misunderstanding arose I don't know—I certainly never meant to say that Mr. John Madingley was my uncle. A very distant connection, no doubt he is, but the uncle whom I owe everything staying with me now, and rejoices in the more commonplace name of Dobson."

Edith Molecombe said nothing for two or three minutes. She felt quite certain that Dick had, upon more than one occasion, said positively that John Madingley of Bingwell, Yorkshire, was his uncle. She knew her lover was lying, but then she was her lover, so she deliberately shut her eyes to the truth, and determined to believe that she was mistaken.

"I don't see much to be disturbed about in all this. You will, of course, have to explain it to papa."

"Exactly what I had hoped to do this morning," he replied quickly. "I only heard of the rumour late last night, and came up this morning both to see you and to set your father right on this point."

"Papa may feel a little annoyed at having fallen into a mistake—most people are—but I don't know that it is one of very great consequence."

"Ah! Edith—Edith darling. Can't you see," exclaimed



Dick with well simulated passion, "that your father gave you to me under the misapprehension that I was heir to a nice estate in Yorkshire? When he finds that I only expect to inherit a more moderate income, and that my uncle, though as dear an old fellow as ever stepped, can lay claim to no particular family, I am afraid he will revoke his consent. Can I depend on you, Edith, not to give me up then, but to stand firm, and wait till time shall soften his disappointment?"

"Yes," she replied in clear resolute tones, "I promised myself to you because I loved you—of course we can't marry without something to live upon; but you won't find me grumble if we are not quite so rich as was expected."

"Thanks, my own brave girl," he replied, as he bent down and kissed her, "now I feel I can trust implicitly in you, I have no fears for the result, although I shall doubtless have to go through a stern probation as best I may. And now I am sure you will agree with me that the sooner I see your father and put a stop to this absurd rumour generally, the better."

"Yes," said Miss Molecombe, "it will be best so. I don't think you do papa quite justice. He may feel a little disappointed, just a first, but he is not the man to go back from his word on such slight grounds as those."

"You have taken quite a load off my breast; and now I must be off;" and, after again embracing his *fiancée*, Dick Madingley took his departure.

"Not a bad morning's work," he mused, as he strolled leisurely back to Tunnleton, for the banker's house, he remembered, stood a little way outside the town. "If Edith only sticks to me, and I think she will, old Molecombe will have to give in at last. It wouldn't do to talk to her about running away just yet, but when I am presented with 'the key of the street' I shall be able to harangue on domestic tyranny and point out that there is a period when parental oppression justifies daughters taking their lives into their own hands. It won't take very long to arrive at that stage, either."

Could Dick have been present at a little conversation in John Madingley's rooms, he would have realised that his next interview with Mr. Molecombe would probably be his last.

"I think," said General Shrewster, "it's time now, Madingley, for you to interfere. I hear this precious namesake



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"I'm not quite clear I'm called upon to interfere at all in the matter. Mr. Molecombe has thought proper to identify himself with the faction here that are apparently endeavouring to make Tunnleton impossible for Maurice and his wife to live in."

"I don't think that has anything to do with it," interrupted Maurice. "I can't altogether blame Mr. Molecombe because he has thought fit to credit malicious charges brought against me; but surely, sir, it is your duty to unmask this young scoundrel, and save Miss Molecombe from such a terrible fate as her marriage with him would be."

"You go a little too fast," replied John Madingley, quietly. "Just bear in mind, that whatever we may think, all we know positively is that he is no nephew of mine."

"Perfectly true," remarked Shrewster, "but I agree with Enderby, that it is only right you should let Molecombe know that fact at once."

Thus urged, John Madingley sat down and wrote a brief note to the banker, in which he said, "that it having come to my ears that a certain Mr. Richard Madingley, whom he understood was engaged to be married to Miss Molecombe, had stated that he was nephew and heir to him (John Madingley), I begged to inform Mr. Molecombe that the gentleman in question was no relation, and that he had never heard of his existence until he himself arrived in Tunnleton some three weeks ago."

"There," he said, "I think that meets the case; anyhow, it is all I virtually know of the matter, and Mr. Molecombe must do as he thinks best on that knowledge."

"Oh! that will be quite sufficient," cried Maurice. "No other could dream of giving his daughter to a man capable of uttering such a gross falsehood as that."

"I hope you're right, Mr. Enderby," said General Shrewster, "but mark my words, he is a precious cunning, plausible, young gentleman, and I should not be the least surprised if he carried off Miss Molecombe after all. If he is the arrant adventurer I suspect him to be, Edith Molecombe's money is a great attraction in his eyes. And the tenacity with which men of this class cling to a purpose of this sort is marvellous," and then the general took up his hat and departed.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## FAMILY JARS.

ALTHOUGH Dick Madingley had failed to see Mr. Molecombe he was not left long in ignorance of that gentleman's decision; indeed, in the course of the day he received two notes from the banker; the first merely requested him to call the next morning on a matter of considerable importance, the second informed him that there would be no necessity to do so: that he, Mr. Molecombe, had received a communication from the Reverend John Madingley not only entirely repudiating him as a nephew but disowning any relationship with him whatever. "As," continued the banker, "you have persistently and distinctly always referred me to your uncle, I need scarcely say that my whole belief in your account of yourself is shaken, and you cannot be surprised at my refusing to consent to any engagement between my daughter and a man about whose antecedents I know nothing, further than that he has represented himself to me as the acknowledged heir of a gentleman who had never even heard of him until about a fortnight ago. You will therefore understand that your engagement to my daughter is at an end, as also is our acquaintance," and then the banker wound up formally with, he had "the honour to be, etc."

But Dick Madingley was not going to take his dismissal quietly. He replied to Mr. Molecombe's letter, and repeated the same specious story of a misunderstanding that he had detailed to Edith, pointed out that the uncle from whom he really had expectations, and to whom he owed everything, was now staying with him, and that if Mr. Molecombe would only consent to be introduced to Mr. Dobson he would see how the mistake arose.

But the banker's reply was very short and uncompromising; he briefly pointed out that Richard Madingley had several times deliberately stated that John Madingley was his uncle, a fact which that gentleman emphatically denied. He could not refuse to believe the latter on this point, and therefore had no alternative but to regard Mr. Richard Madingley

having wilfully misrepresented his social position, and therefore begged to decline any further intercourse with him.

"Kicked out," said Dick meditatively, as he handed the letter to his mentor; "well, I expected that."

"Just so," replied Mr. Pick; "well, if old Molecombe won't let you in at the front door there's nothing for it but the young lady should steal out at the back. Yes, Master Dick, if you press the siege hard enough you ought to persuade her to make a bolt of it before a fortnight is out. However, I shan't be able to give you much more of my society; I have had my holiday and must be off to York races on Monday."

It was evident to the precious pair that Mr. Pick could be of no further assistance in the prosecution of this sordid love-suit; that was for Dick to pursue alone. As has been before said, he was of a bitter and vindictive nature, and he felt that it would afford him much satisfaction to laugh at the banker's head by carrying off his daughter in the face of the curt dismissal he had received, and the fates were fighting for him in a way which, though common-place, would not have happened in the case of a more judicious man than Mr. Molecombe. It was a sore blow to the banker's pride to think that all Tunnle would be talking of his daughter's engagement with one whom he felt little doubt now was a mere specious adventurer, and he was foolish enough to visit his annoyance upon Edith. He delighted in painting Dick Madingley's conduct in the blackest terms. His daughter stood up for her lover with much spirit. She had determined to believe Dick's own version of the story, and shut her eyes to what she knew to be a real state of the case. She was very much in love, and that girl under those circumstances would not stand up for her lover, let his wrong-doing be what it might?

There was much stormy converse with the twain upon this point, with the usual result, that Edith believed more strongly for her lover than ever.

To open a clandestine correspondence with Miss Molecombe was easy work for Dick, who was personally acquainted with the dependents of the establishment, and the female servant would not assist in the promotion of a love affair, more especially when liberally handselled, is rarely met with. Dick's passionate notes quickly found their way to their destination, and that they contained entreaties for a rendezvous need

scarcely be mentioned. There were plenty of secluded walks around Tunnleton, and in these long summer afternoons there was no one to know of Edith Molecombe's coming and going. The awkward disappointment gave her an excuse for rather holding aloof from Tunnleton society for the present, and so day after day she wandered through the field and woods with her scapegrace lover. The strong common sense that she naturally possessed would whisper to her now and then that Dick's love-tale was hardly veracious, but the glamour of her passion closed her eyes, and if she could not quite believe that it was all misunderstanding, and that he had never represented himself as the nephew of John Madingley, yet she deemed the falsehood had been perpetrated because of the great love Dick bore her.

"Even supposing," he would argue, "that I had said so, which I deny, when a fellow cares about a girl, and is just wild to call her his own, it's no great crime if he bounces a little about his position to her relations in order to carry his point. A man who is a man don't stick at trifles when he's over head and ears in love with a girl, and I don't think, Edith, I should stand at much to win you," and Miss Molecombe in her infatuation thought Richard Madingley one of the most chivalrous of men, and failed to discern the utter selfishness of his character. "Your father," continued Dick, "is behaving like a parent of the last century; he has no business to treat you in the way he is doing, it is shameful that he should play the tyrant in this by gone fashion; remember that you are of age, and no parent can dictate to you on a matter of this kind."

"Oh! Dick," she cried, "I am always standing up for you; I have told papa again and again that I will not sit by and hear you abused, and I intend to stand to my promise, and will marry nobody but you."

"You are a dear, good girl," he replied, "and if your father cannot be brought to listen to reason we shall have to take the law into our own hands. I want you for yourself, darling, and not merely because your father can make you a handsome allowance if he chooses."

"I don't quite understand you, Dick, but I couldn't marry you without papa's consent, I couldn't indeed! I will be true to you, but we must wait, he will come round in time."

"By all means," rejoined Dick, "give him time, though it is hardly fair to expect us to waste our lives because he happened to misunderstand what I said—but never mind, darling, I know you're as true as steel, and as long as that is the case I will bear this injustice as best I may."

It was ingeniously put; Dick Madingley was posing before his *financée* as the victim of cruel injustice. He drew her closer to him, and as they strolled leisurely down a briar-scented lane a more lover-like couple could scarcely have been seen; and this was precisely the view that a tall muscular young man, who had just reached a stile leading into the lane some thirty or forty yards behind them, took of affairs.

Maurice Enderby, for it was he, paused ere he mounted the stile. He recognized the couple before him at a glance, and had no wish to intrude upon them, but he felt sorely puzzled as to what he ought to do under the circumstances. He knew, as did all Tunnleton, by this time, that Mr. Molecombe had withdrawn his consent to Edith's marriage; he believed, as did many other people, that Richard Madingley was an impostor; still it was perfectly clear that Miss Molecombe had not given him up and did not share that opinion. Maurice Enderby sat for some time on that stile thinking what he should do. It did not require much knowledge of the world to know how clandestine meetings with an unprincipled scamp like Dick Madingley would terminate. He could not bear the idea of any girl becoming the prey of a reckless adventurer such as Dick. He could not stand still and see Edith Molecombe, in a moment of madness, consign herself to long-life misery. But how was he to interfere? It was a very delicate matter to touch upon. He might communicate his discovery to Mr. Molecombe, and throw that gentleman into a perfect tempest of indignation, but it struck Maurice that it would be more likely to precipitate an elopement than avert it. In vain did Maurice cudgel his brains; he could think of no other means of interfering except through the medium of Edith's father, and he felt instinctively that would produce more harm than good. In the meantime the lovers had got well out of sight, and he could now pursue his way home. Maurice felt that he should very much like to take counsel with somebody as to what he had best do—but with whom? Most decidedly he did not wish his discovery blazoned abroad. Should he confide the



matter to General Shrewster, and take his advice on the subject? He was a clear-headed man and not given to babble; however, he was not destined to require the general's services upon this occasion; for, to his great delight, on arriving at his own house, he found Bob Grafton chattering merrily over the teatable with Mrs. Enderby, and it flashed across him that a thorough man of the world like Grafton was just the very man to take into his confidence.

Grafton was in high spirits; news and gossip of every kind fell from his lips. He touched on pretty well every thing that was talked about—musically, politically, socially, and wound up by congratulating Mrs. Enderby with mock gravity upon her successful *début* as an owner of racehorses. Bessie's face became serious directly.

"Don't jest about that, please, Mr. Grafton. There is no denying we have been very fortunate, and that the money has been a great boon to us; but I can't help feeling that it is an ill-omened present, as we shall discover in the end."

"Nonsense, Mrs. Enderby! There can be no harm in what you do; indeed, as a matter of fact, you don't win it; you've the luck to possess a jolly old uncle who gives you half *his* winnings, which he can well afford to do. I only wish I had an uncle so charged with right feeling. And now I must say good-bye; it's a good stretch back to Bridge Court."

"I'll walk part of the way with you, Bob," said Maurice, as he took up his hat, and the pair descended the stairs together. "I want your advice on a rather ticklish point," he continued when they found themselves outside the door. And then Maurice told the whole story of Dick Madingley's arrival in Tunbridge, how he had proclaimed himself nephew and heir of John Madingley, had become engaged to a young lady of the place, and how that when John Madingley himself appeared on the scene he had utterly repudiated all knowledge of his namesake.

Grafton listened with great attention and no little amusement. "What a precious young scamp!" he exclaimed, as Maurice finished, "and by Jove! what a sell for him John Madingley turned up at the finish! However, of course that burst him up, and his matrimonial speculation is all over now."

"That is just what it isn't," rejoined Maurice. "Molecomb broke off his daughter's engagement, and turned this young gentleman out of the house with the utmost promptitude. But



the fellow still lingers in the place, as I happened to discover to-day, and is still making clandestine love to Miss Molecombe. Now this is what I want to consult you about. I don't wish to meddle, I don't desire to make a scandal. If I inform her father——"

"Oh, nonsense!" interrupted Bob, energetically; "from your description of him, he would lock her up, and then she would be off before twenty-four hours were over her head. No, there's only one way out of a thing like this. We must deal with Dick Madingley. We must either bounce him out of Tunnleton, or buy him, but I think we can manage to do the former. You must know that when I came down the beginning of the week my attention was attracted by one of my two fellow-travellers. The man's face haunted me. I knew I had seen it before, and under unpleasant circumstances. Rather to my surprise, they both got out at Tunnleton, and the porter told me that the younger man of the two was Mr. Richard Madingley. The name brought it all back to me. I recollected my man then. It was a Mr. Pick, a leg who was strongly suspected of being actively engaged in the laming of a horse of John Madingley's at Epsom. Like most of these cases, it couldn't be proved, but of one thing there was no doubt, that nobody benefited by that mare's accident so largely as Mr. Pick, and from the heavy amount he had betted against her it seemed as if he had foreseen the accident that befell her at the eleventh hour."

"Still, although that is very corroborative of the opinion I have formed of Dick Madingley, I don't see how that is going to help us."

"It's not all a bad card, my dear Maurice, in the game of chance that we are about to play; that this young gentleman could be entertaining such a known scoundrel as Pick speaks volumes against him; besides, didn't you tell me that he swagged a good deal about an uncle who is staying with him whom he asserted to be the uncle who owned the gold-mine, or whatever he choose to call it. Now I take it half Tunnleton could tell you who has been staying with Mr. Richard Madingley the week, and if it turns out, as I think it quite likely it may be that this thief Pick, the bookmaker, has been posing as that thief's relative, then my boy we've got the ace of trumps in our hand, and now good-bye. I'll be with you to lunch to-morrow, and we'll snuff our young friend out as soon as we have made the necessary inquiries."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## NOTICE TO QUIT.

THE morrow was rather an eventful day with Maurice Enderby. In the first place John Madingley took his departure ; he was extremely cordial in his farewell both to Bessie and her husband. "I'll give you what help I can, my lad," he said as he bade Maurice good-bye, "in whatever you turn your hand to ; but you're no more fit to be a parson than I was, though when they come to tot up my ledger they'll find I've been a good deal better clergyman than they give me credit for ; but remember, things were very different when I began, and what was thought no harm in a parson doing in my younger days is looked upon in quite another light now. You're in the wrong groove, my boy ; take an old man's advice, think very seriously before you are ordained priest, and remember if you want a little money to start in another line I dare say I can manage to find it for you." A warm kiss to Bessie, a hearty wrench of the hand to Maurice Enderby, and old John Madingley was speeding once more towards his northern home.

"I hope you've a decent lunch for Grafton," said Maurice to his wife, as they strolled home from the station.

"Don't throw doubts upon my housekeeping," replied Bessie, laughing, "the fatted calf has been killed for Mr. Grafton, and I don't think you'll have anything to complain of."

Bob Grafton turned up in due course, and did due justice to Mrs. Enderby's preparations ; but no sooner was their meal disposed of, and they were left by Bessie to their own devices, than he at once plunged into the midst of things.

"I've asked a question here and there about Tunnleton this morning, and gathered a fact or two that will be useful to us. Only one person has stayed with Richard Madingley since he established himself here ; that was his uncle, Mr. Dobson, who left again some two or three mornings ago. I've no earthly doubt that Mr. Pick and Mr. Dobson are identical, though what object Mr. Pick had in posing as this young man's uncle I don't

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know. I can imagine a score of good reasons for his changing his name. He may be veritably his uncle for all I know, but we've this fact to go upon: his relative is well known as a thoroughly unscrupulous bookmaker, and is masquerading down here under an assumed name. The conclusion is obvious; he is known to have given utterance to a most mendacious statement regarding his kinship to John Madingley. You have fair grounds, therefore, for supposing that he is also down here under false colours. And now comes the question of how are we to put the screw on. What I propose is this, that you and I walk down to see him, tell him briefly, but sternly, that we give him forty-eight hours to clear out of Tunnleton, and that if he has not disappeared in that time you will feel it your duty to lay the facts that have come to your knowledge before the committee of the club."

"And suppose," replied Maurice, "he simply laughs at us, and tells us to do our worst?"

"Then hold your tongue and let me talk to him. You see, if what we know really *was* put before a committee of the club, they would feel bound to make him substantiate his social position. What scoundrels he may choose to know is no business of theirs, but doubts having arisen they have a right to insist upon his vindicating himself, and show them that he is a gentleman and not a mere adventurer who has crept into their midst under false colours."

"And you think it possible, Bob, to keep Miss Molecombe's name out of the business altogether?"

"No, honestly, I don't; we will do our best; but an unprincipled blackguard like that is pretty certain to introduce it, even if he gives in and we carry our point; he is sure to spit all the venom he can; and look here, Maurice, you used to be able to hit terribly hard with the gloves when you were a freshman, and probably will be sorely tempted to knock Mr. Richard Madingley down before our interview is over. Mind, you must keep your temper. And now, the sooner we tackle this gentleman in his own den the better."

Mr. Richard Madingley, having made an excellent luncheon, was ruminating how things stood with him in Tunnleton. He was quite conscious that they were beginning to look askew at him at the club. They had no doubt there about his having represented himself to be John Madingley's nephew, and they were

equally aware from General Shrewster that John Madingley had most clearly denied all relationship during his brief visit to Tunnleton. People who had opened their houses freely to Dick Madingley began now to repent their precipitation. Some few crusty old members, who had not benefited by Dick's hospitality, were already whispering that "the fellow ought never to have been let in here, the committee are not half particular enough in their scrutiny." Let people once conceive a suspicion that you have deceived them, and that you are not what you represented yourself to be, and it is wonderful how willing they are to go into the other extreme, and believe any wild story to your detriment.

Dick felt that opinion was against him in Tunnleton. He could not but notice that many of his fair acquaintances, who had previously quite courted a bow from him, now seemed a little anxious to avoid meeting him, and when they did the old smiling salute degenerated into a frigid bend.

"Yes," he mused, "the game's about up here; well, it has served my turn very well, and I don't know that even the finish of it is not another trick in my favour! The question of settlements would have been a rock I must have split upon; my only chance would have been to run away with Edith, and old Molecombe's angry breaking-off of our engagement only makes it easier to win her consent to that step. A few days more, and I've no doubt I shall get her to agree to it." But here Dick Madingley's reflections were somewhat rudely interrupted by an intimation from Phillips that Mr. Enderby wished to see him.

"Mr. Enderby!" exclaimed Dick in great astonishment.

"Yes, sir," replied Phillips; "he and another gentleman I don't know his name, but he's often about Tunnleton, I believe; stops a good deal at Bridge Court, sir."

"Show them up to the drawing-room, Phillips, and say I'll be with them in two or three minutes. Enderby," he muttered, "now what can he want with me? I hate him and don't suppose he has much liking for me. What can he have got to say to me? As for the story about John Madingley, why all the town knows it by this time, he can't have come with that precious discovery to me. And I don't think," said Dick, meditatively, "he can possibly have found out anything else; however, here goes."

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When Dick entered the drawing-room, Maurice Enderby saluted him with a formal bow, introduced the stranger who accompanied him as his friend Mr. Grafton, and then, without further preface, he continued,

"I need scarcely say, Mr. Madingley, that nothing but a matter of urgent importance would have justified this intrusion, but if you will only listen to me patiently for a few minutes I will endeavour to be as brief as possible over a most unpleasant business," and then, in pithy logical sequence, Maurice stated the facts with which we are already acquainted, and concluded by saying that all these things threw such grave doubts on the minds of both himself and his friend that he had no alternative but to make them public.

"And do you suppose, Mr. Enderby, that I feel called upon to inform you of all the details of my family history, of where I usually live, who are my intimate acquaintances, etc?"

"No," replied Maurice, "that will be for the information of the club committee, and, as for family details, I can only trust that you will be rather more fortunate as regards uncles than you have been so far."

The shot told. A savage scowl passed across Dick Madingley's face, and he muttered something, of which "meddlesome parsons" was all that was audible. Bob Grafton, who had watched him keenly from the beginning of Maurice's statement, had noted, coolly though Dick took it, his slight start at the mention of Mr. Pick; he also noted the slightly nervous twitch with which he heard the threat of placing his case before the club committee. "That fellow will shut up when the pinch comes," thought Grafton.

"I have very little doubt, Mr. Enderby," rejoined Dick, with a sneer, "you are intimately acquainted with the members of the betting-ring. It is not often that any gentleman manifests your interest in turf matters who is not in the habit of doing business with that fraternity. I am not aware that you ever saw my uncle Dobson, but, even if you did, an accidental likeness to an unknown betting-man hardly warrants the assertion that he is a supposititious relation."

Maurice hesitated for a moment, but Grafton now cut into the conversation in quiet resolute fashion that somewhat awed Dick Madingley.

"Oh no!" he said, "we don't make mistakes of that kind.

I'm a racing-man myself, and have known Mr. Pick by sight ever since he nobbled Marietta for the Oaks seven years ago. I travelled down from London in the same carriage with you and him ten days ago, and know perfectly well he passed in Tunnleton as your Uncle Dobson. Never had anybody else staying with you, you know, since you've been in Tunnleton. Can't be any mistake about it, you see."

"And what the devil have you got to do with it, I should like to know?" demanded Dick fiercely. "By what right do you interfere?"

"Right!" exclaimed Grafton, with a short laugh. "By the right that men put welshers out of the inclosure of the racecourse, by the right that all men have to defend their brethren from fraud, by the acknowledged right and duty of every man to expose a swindler!"

"And you dare say this to me?" cried Dick, with a voice hoarse with passion.

"Yes," chimed in Maurice, "we not only say it, but, as Grafton says, it's our duty to say it. For the sake of some of those who have weakly trusted you, who have weakly welcomed you to their homes, and to whom this exposure must be a source of bitter shame, we are willing to hush it up as far as may be. Give us your word to leave Tunnleton within eight-and-forty hours, and we will stay our hands for that time; but after that remember everything we know is laid before the club committee, and your exposure is imminent."

"You may do as you like about that," rejoined Madingley, "I am quite willing to court investigation, and shall bring an action for libel against the pair of you to boot."

"No you won't," chimed in Grafton, "we are not going to be frightened by brag, and you don't mean fighting. You'll be out of Tunnleton in forty-eight hours."

"Do you know, sir," rejoined Dick, with inimitable assurance, "that I am engaged to be married to Miss Molecombe, and that——"

"Her father kicked you out of the house a few days ago. Yes, we know all about that, and it is to avoid such annoyances as this that we suggest that you should leave Tunnleton quietly and at once—but leave Tunnleton you will, or find yourself cut by the whole community."

For a few minutes Dick reflected in dogged silence, then he said—

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"Remember, I in no wise acknowledge that the allegations you make against me are true, although perhaps there is just that suspicion of truth in them that makes them difficult to disprove; but, gentlemen, my feelings are deeply involved as regards Miss Molecombe, and I utterly decline to leave Tun-  
nleton for another week."

"Ha! in order that you may continue your clandestine meetings with that foolish girl," interposed Maurice, hotly. "No, Mr. Madingley; forty-eight hours is the outside we give you, and I honestly believe that is twenty-four too long."

Dick looked at him for a moment.

"I suppose," he said, with an evil sneer, "that in the interests of mortality you consider it necessary to keep strict espionage over your flock. I have heard of such shepherds, but never saw one of the dirty creatures before. You have been doing me the honour, I presume, of dogging my footsteps lately."

For an instant Maurice's fist clenched, his eyes flashed, the veins in his forehead stood out, and it was the veriest toss-up whether Dick Madingley measured his length on the carpet or not; but a "steady, old man," from Grafton turned the scale, and with a mighty effort Maurice mastered his temper.

"I happened to see you walking with Miss Molecombe yesterday, and knowing, as indeed all Tun-  
nleton knows, that her father had forbidden all intercourse between you, I don't scruple to say that such conduct on your part will make gossip all too busy with her name."

"Never mind going into all that," broke in Grafton, "it is quite beside the point. Mr. Madingley thoroughly understands us—we give him forty-eight hours to leave the place quietly. After that, we do our best to unmask an adventurer. No; you needn't talk about libel—we'll chance that. Come along, Maurice; I don't think we need detain Mr. Madingley any longer; he quite understands us."

"I shall take my own course," blustered Dick.

"Just so," rejoined Grafton; "which will be a ticket to London by an early train to-morrow. Good morning."

Dick Madingley vouchsafed not the slightest notice of their salutation, and, when the pair were outside the house, Maurice exclaimed—

"Thank Heaven we are through with that. I never was so

sore tempted to inflict personal chastisement as I was a few minutes ago."

"No, I know, old man; but it would have weakened our game terribly, and a summons for assault is always an awkward thing for one of your profession. He's going right enough, never fear; but you were right in one thing: we ought not to have given him more than twenty-four hours; he's a vindictive, mischievous cur, that, and, mark me, Maurice, if by any fluke he ever has a chance of squaring accounts with you he will do it; but he's a plausible beggar, and there's no saying what he mayn't persuade Miss Molecombe to do in the time we've given him; however, we may console ourselves with one thing: if a young woman in these days is bent upon marrying the wrong man she will do it sooner or later in spite of everybody. I turn off here, so must say good-bye. I leave Bridge Court in two or three days now, and if you happen to want me *in re* Madingley you know my London address."

Maurice Enderby walked home musing over his interview with Dick Madingley. He had done the best he could think of to prevent Edith Molecombe falling into the hands of the audacious adventurer who had ensnared her affections; but he was forced to admit that Grafton was right, and that, let the girl's father and friends do what they would, it must depend very much upon whether Edith could be brought to see the utter worthlessness of her lover. On one point of the interview Maurice looked back regretfully, and a faint smile played round his mouth as he muttered,

"No; I don't think I am suited to the profession. Ah, if I hadn't been a parson how I would have knocked that fellow down!"

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## HER HEART FAILED HER.

DICK MADINGLEY paced the drawing-room for a good half-hour after his visitors left him. He had decided before their coming that it behoved him to quit Tunnleton very shortly, and, except for Edith Molecombe, it would suit him just as well to leave the day after to-morrow as a week or two later; he would not see Edith this afternoon, as he was well aware that she had an engagement that would prevent her meeting him; and further, she had told him that she must inevitably be discovered if their meetings were too frequent. She was to see him to-morrow, and the question was, should he be able to persuade her to elope with him on the following day? Dick had a pretty genius for intrigue; no, he would not go by the morning train, for that was the train which Tunnleton chiefly affected, for the obvious reason that it gave them a long day in town; no, he would go by the mid-day train, and, if he could persuade Edith to come with him, well, he would take her; they must not go together, and he thought if Edith travelled up second-class and closely veiled she would run little risk of recognition; he would get her ticket for her and contrive to slip it into her hand as she passed into the station; once there she must stick closely to the ladies' room till the train came in, and then, if she slipped quickly into her carriage, he thought in the confusion she would escape all observation. Would he be able to persuade her to this step so abruptly? Dick Madingley had great confidence in his power over the girl; if that confounded parson had only given him another week or ten days he would have had no fears as to the result, but most girls are startled at the idea when such a step is first proposed to them. Dick knew this, and, though by no means troubled with diffidence, felt that he might not succeed.

Grafton read him truly; he might bluster about what he was going to do, but Dick Madingley knew a good deal better than

to risk an inquiry into his social status by any of the Tunnleton people. No, he would settle the few bills he owed in the town that afternoon, for Dick was not an adventurer of the petty sort that swindles the tradespeople of the place in which they conduct their campaign; he flew at higher game than that, and, but for the inopportune appearance of John Madingley on the scene, would probably have won the prize for which he strove. This aim, just now, was a wealthy marriage, and in Edith Molecombe he imagined he had found a young lady who must eventually come into a good bit of money, and whose father, if he liked, could behave very handsomely to her at present. He might have had to run away with her in any case, but he would have figured in a very different light before Tunnleton had his imposition regarding John Madingley not been discovered. Yes, if ever a man of his temperament had a debt to settle with another he had with Maurice Enderby, and he vowed that, should the chance ever come, Mr. Enderby should be paid in full. Curiously enough his animosity was but slightly roused as regarded Grafton, but his antipathy to Maurice was of long standing and had increased in intensity day by day: this was the culmination of it, and Dick Madingley was not likely to be very scrupulous should he ever see his way to revenge.

Dick Madingley had been sitting on the stile leading into Kilroe Wood a good half-hour, and was beginning to wonder whether Edith would keep her appointment, when a light step behind him caught his ear, and, in another moment, Miss Molecombe was by his side.

"I am very sorry I am late, Dick, but I had a good deal of difficulty to get here at all. I can't help thinking they suspect something; papa said last night that he could not think what you were still hanging about Tunnleton for, a place in which, he said, you were utterly discredited; and further added that if he for one moment thought it were on my account he would pack me off to my aunt in Wales, and then, as usual, we came to high words, which ended in my flouncing out of the room and having a good cry up stairs."

"It is as I thought, darling," replied Mr. Madingley; "your father is commencing to play the domestic tyrant. As long as you stand to me you will be continually talked at. It is too much to ask of any girl to bear that. Better tell your father

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at once, dear, that you give me up, and then they would let you alone."

"You don't mean it, Dick, you can't; you know I wouldn't give you up."

"I think perhaps it would be best for you, dearest. I must leave this to-morrow, and though, as long as there is a hope of winning your hand I shall be true, yet it is trying you too hard to hold you to your engagement. Tell your father it is broken."

"Dick! Dick, don't you think so meanly of me; do you think I cannot wait and suffer patiently for your sake?" and Edith thought how unselfish and chivalrous her lover was in endeavouring to make their parting as easy as possible for her.

"Yes, it must be so," replied Madingley. "It will be sad and dreary work for me, but there is no alternative, unless ——" and here he paused abruptly, with apparent confusion.

"Unless what?" she exclaimed anxiously.

"Nothing, nothing. Don't ask me: I never ought to have said what I did; forget those last two or three words."

"No; I claim to hear what you were about to suggest," replied Edith; "if there is any other course open to us, I've a right to decide whether I will take it."

At first Dick Madingley positively refused to explain himself, but gradually the specious impostor allowed Edith to draw from him that she might be freed from all annoyances and their mutual happiness secured if she could make up her mind to run away with him the next morning.

At first Edith was frightened out of her life at the bare suggestion, but gradually as Dick unfolded his scheme, and pointed out to her the extreme simplicity of it, she began to listen to him, and before they parted she had pledged herself to meet him at the Tunnleton Station, and elope with him by the mid-day train, and then Miss Molecombe scampered home with a heightened pulse and a heart beating with unnatural rapidity.

If Edith wanted any strengthening in her resolution it was administered to her that night. Business at the bank had gone a little awry; it was not that anything serious had occurred, but an unpleasant mistake had been made with regard to one of their best customer's accounts, and the customer in question,

who was a wealthy and irascible man, had gone the length of blowing up Mr. Molecombe in his own bank-parlour about the carelessness of his subordinates. That Mr. Molecombe had passed that on, and made things pretty lively all round for the subordinates in question, it is almost needless to add, but unluckily he had not wholly worked off his irritation at his place of business, and poured forth the remnant of his wrath on his own family. Having pronounced the cook utterly incompetent, and marvelled why Mrs. Molecombe continued to keep a woman so incapable of cooking a mutton chop, having informed his butler that he was an idiot, who, after many years' experience, seemed to know less about what should be the proper temperature of the wine than a charity schoolboy, he, when the servants withdrew, commenced to talk at his daughter, perhaps the most exasperating form of attack: he said nothing to Edith, and poured forth a flood of ridicule and abuse to his wife on the subject of Dick Madingley. At last Edith, springing to her feet, exclaimed, with flashing and tear-stained eyes, that she would bear it no longer, that she believed none of these lies that were circulated about Mr. Madingley, and that even if they were true he might recollect that with his own consent Dick Madingley had been affianced to her for weeks. That she had given him her love, and, come what might, she would not sit still and here him thrown stones at. "I can bear these taunts no longer, and sooner than continue to endure them I shall seek a home elsewhere."

"You had better seek your pillow at once, miss," replied Mr. Molecombe, furiously, "and as for the home, if this is not good enough for you, I'll make arrangements for you to reside with your aunt in Wales. The scenery is magnificent, and as for society I believe there are the goats," concluded Mr. Molecombe with irony.

"Good-night, mamma," said Edith in a low tone, and without even glancing at her father she quickly left the room.

Mrs. Molecombe, was a rather weak woman and stood in no little awe of her domineering husband, but she loved her daughter dearly, and no sooner had the door closed than she took up the cudgels on her behalf.

"You are too hard upon her, Alick, you are indeed," she exclaimed; "the girl has met with a bitter disappointment and is naturally very sore at heart. Why cannot you give the

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wound time to heal? Why will you not suffer her to do her best to forget him? You don't know the suffering you inflict. You don't know that when a girl has given her heart away what a desert life seems to her when she is told that her lover is worthless and that she must give him up."

"Confound it, woman," rejoined Mr. Molecombe, in milder tones and with no little contrition for his past ill-temper, "you don't mean to say that it was my fault we did not discover this Madingley was a liar and a scoundrel sooner."

"No, Aleck; but cannot you understand that alluding to her lover's iniquities is dropping nitric acid into Edith's wounds. Pray, pray, leave the subject alone before her. Don't let the name of Richard Madingley ever pass your lips."

"Well, well, perhaps I'm wrong, but the whole thing, you know, has been so duce'd disagreeable. I am quite the laughing-stock of the town, and then Edith makes me mad by standing up for the young villain; but I'll do my best, I'll try not to say anything about him before Edith, and if, as I hope, he clears out of Tuunleton before many days are over, that will make it all the easier."

The banker lingered over his breakfast next morning in the hope of making friends with his daughter, but Edith's maid reported that her mistress was suffering from a bad headache, and wanted nothing but a cup of tea in her own room. Mr. Molecombe of course went up to see her, but Edith declared she was suffering chiefly from the effects of a bad night and only wanted quiet and to be let alone. She had made up her mind that this would be her best chance of escaping all observation; it was easy enough to get out of the house and make her way to the station, but the difficulty was to carry a hand-bag with her; more baggage she dared not attempt, but even that little would attract attention, should any of the servants catch sight of her departure. Once clear of the house, and the getting to the station by roads by which she was not likely to meet acquaintances was easy. In due course she rang for her maid and dressed, then ordered a cup of beef-tea and desired not to be disturbed till luncheon-time. A quarter of an hour afterwards, and, closely veiled, hot though the weather was, with her dressing-bag in her hand, she stole down the back stairs into the garden; a light shawl thrown carelessly over her arm veiled the dressing-bag. One piece of lawn dan-

gerously open to observation was safely crossed, and then Edith plunged into the shrubberies and felt safe. No chance of meeting any one now, unless it was some under-gardener. No. She felt the perils of her enterprise were over until she arrived in the purlieus of Tunnleton Station.

Edith passed into the booking-office unnoticed, and then stood irresolute, not knowing how to act. She glanced at the clock, and saw there was a quarter of an hour yet before the train was due. Had she better take her ticket while the office was as yet uncrowded, or leave the obtaining of it to Dick.

While she still hesitated a voice whispered in her ear—

“Go into the waiting-room at once ; don’t come out till the bell rings, and then jump as quickly as possible into the nearest carriage.” while at the same time she felt her ticket slipped into her hand.

Without turning her head she made her way into the waiting room as directed, and there, in a state of some trepidation, awaited the signal of the coming train. A few minutes and the bell rang out its warning for passengers to take their seats. Grasping her dressing-bag, Edith made her way swiftly to the platform ; but as she crossed the threshold stopped paralysed, for there, not half a score paces from her, stood her father in animated conversation with some gentleman, whom he was apparently seeing off to London. To reach her part of the train she must pass close to him, and she could hardly hope that he would not instantly recognise her. Her heart failed her, she shrank back again into the waiting-room, intent only on escaping her father’s recognition.

Dick Madingley had been also terribly discomposed by the appearance of the banker. He judged it wisest to attract as little attention to himself as possible, and, therefore, instead of lingering, as he had intended, to see Edith emerge from the waiting-room, he got into his carriage and took a seat on the far side from the window. Another two or three minutes and they were off, and Madingley was left to wonder the whole way up whether his *fiancée* had effected her escape.

“It could hardly have been a mere chance,” he muttered ; “this is some of Enderby’s work, I’ll be bound. I’ve no doubt he or his creatures have dogged my every footstep ; he doubtless bribed some one of my servants to know by what train I was going to town, and put old Molecombe up to seeing me off.

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His taking his stand where he did was probably accident, but there he was like a terrier at a rabbit-hole. I don't suppose that Edith is on the train ; she is a clever and a plucky girl if she managed to get past him."

On his arrival in London, Mr. Madingley speedily convinced himself that his surmise was correct, and, with a furious malediction on Maurice Enderby, he drove off to the scene of his usual avocations.

In supposing that the banker's appearance at the station was due to Maurice Enderby, Dick Madingley was mistaken. It was the result of pure accident. The irascible customer of the day before had called in to have a little more talk with Mr. Molecombe of a less fiery description, and, not having been able to quite finish his say and being at the same time anxious to catch the London train, the banker had walked down to the station with him in order to finish their discussion.

His client off, Mr. Molecombe at once turned his back upon the railway and retraced his steps to the bank. But Edith had no more idea of this than her lover. Conscience-stricken, she thought her premeditated elopement had been discovered, and sat trembling in the most retired corner of the waiting-room, expecting every instant to see her father enter in search of her. When a quarter-of-an-hour had elapsed, and she saw no sign of any one in quest of her, she ventured to peep once more cautiously out of the door. The platform was nearly deserted ; except for a boy cutting papers at the bookstall, and a grimy gentleman assiduously engaged in cleaning lamps, there was no one visible. The very porters were all over on the other side of the line awaiting the down train.

Edith began to recover her courage. Whatever caused her father's presence there, it was possible, could she only regain her home unnoticed, that her escapade of this morning might be kept a secret. Fortune favoured her, and she regained her own room unnoticed, some quarter-of-an-hour before luncheon, without any one suspecting that she had been beyond the shrubberies.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## "THE SPOTTED DOG."

TUNNLETON was quite in a ferment during the next day or two. The Torkeslys, the Prauns, and the Maddoxes, were much excited about the sudden departure of Richard Madingley.

"Given up his house, by Jove!" said General Maddox in his usual deliberate tones; "paid off all his servants, and has cleared off without beat of drum; hasn't left a P.P.C. card anywhere that I can hear. Looks queer, sir. Gad, I don't believe that fellow is quite right after all!"

"Right, Maddox!" replied the irascible Praun, who was always in extremes, and who flew from the view to a diametrically opposite one, quickly as the wind flies round the compass; "I have no doubt he was the most confounded impostor that ever put foot in the place. Took us all in, damn his impudence!"

"Very disgraceful, Praun," replied General Maddox, shaking his head; "though to do him justice, he did give good dinners."

"Yes," replied the other; "and, scoundrel though he was," a remark, by the way, for which General Praun had very scant justification, "I should like to know, before he is hung, where he got his after-dinner sherry; but I don't know what's coming to us: the place is getting turned topsy-turvy; what do you think I passed on my way here? Mrs. Enderby, if you please, driving a carriage and a pair of ponies. Now I hate gossip; I don't want to meddle in my neighbour's affairs, but when you see a phenomenon, such as a curate setting up his carriage and pair, one can't help asking how he does it."

"Livery stable probably," rejoined General Maddox; "trap for the day, you know; two ponies, though? Quite beyond his means," concluded the general, with a shake of his head.

"Means!" cried Praun; "nothing is beyond the means of a gambler while he is in luck. How Jarrow can reconcile it

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to his conscience, how Tunnelton can submit to a parson within its midst, who, instead of attending to his duties, is devoted to speculating on the turf, passes my comprehension!" and in good truth for the next few days the backslidings of Richard Madingley and Maurice Enderby divided the attention of the town.

But for all that we are not wanting in any community worshippers of the rising sun. To these worldly people that Mrs. Enderby should have turned out a veritable niece of John Madingley and have set up her pony-carriage were signs indicative of coming prosperity that they deemed unwise to neglect. They reminded each other that the Enderbys, although they had said nothing, had always held strictly aloof from Richard Madingley's entertainments: in fact, a slight reaction was already setting in in Maurice's favour, although the two generals had by no means abandoned their hostile attitude.

But now that fatal wedding-gift once more began to haunt Maurice, once more to send the blood dancing through his veins, once more aroused visions of a broad green-ribboned turf, white rails, silken jackets, and half a score of horses tearing up "the straight" at full speed. Doncaster meeting commenced in a few days; the sporting papers were, so far, nearly unanimous in predicting that "the Wandering Nun" would win the Campagne Stakes; and, strive to banish it from his mind though he might, it was all no use, and Maurice Enderby was once more feverishly anxious about the result of the race. He had not dared to ask Grafton to telegraph to him again, although he knew that gentleman would be at Doncaster. The *employés* at the telegraph office are not altogether reticent about the messages that pass through their hands, and it was pretty well known through Tunnelton that Mr. Enderby had been the first man in the town to know of "the Wandering Nun's" victory at Goodwood.

Generals Maddox and Praun could hardly be blamed for holding that Maurice speculated on the turf, for it would be very difficult to have persuaded the Tunnelton people generally of that and while the respectable part of the community regarded a betting clergyman as an anomaly that could not be suffered in these days, there was a minor and godless section who had much admiration for Mr. Enderby's astuteness. It is hard to

stem the tide of calamity, more especially when such calamity is based on such apparent grounds as there were in Maurice's case. His own acts too combined strongly to strengthen the prevalent belief—the interest he had manifested in racing, the telegram, his sudden command of money, and, last not least, what his enemies in Tunnleton termed his arrogance and effrontery in sitting up a carriage and pair of ponies.

Most of us have some few sworn friends who will stand by us unflinchingly should disaster overtake us, who, if unable to assist us in our trouble, we know will always meet us with sincere sympathy and a hearty hand-grip; there are others who, though loyal enough in the first instance, begins to waver as the tide runs high, who begin to calculate and doubt whether they are prudent in championing what looks like a lost case. Politic and rather timid people some of these, willing to take our part in the first instance, but afraid that it may be to their own detriment to continue their partizanship when they find the clouds of popular opinion are gathering thickly around us. Now this was rather Mr. Jarrow's case, he had stood staunchly by Maurice in the first instance, but even that had not been friendship, but his natural obstinacy, combined with much indignation that men like Generals Maddox and Praun should venture to interfere in affairs of his. But he was beginning now to waver in his belief in his curate; evidence continued apparently to accumulate against Mr. Enderby, and that Tunnleton gave credence to such evidence was unmistakable. Maurice too declined any explanation, and, except to the rector, had hardly condescended to deny the accusation brought against him. Mr. Jarrow began to think that it behoved Maurice at least to refute the charge to the utmost extent of his power. He, the rector, in his interview with Generals Maddox and Praun, had actually blustered about bringing an action for libel, and yet Maurice sat down supinely under the scandal, and made no effort to remove the taint from his name. The rector was of a pugnacious disposition, and never happy unless engaged in a wordy war with somebody, and it was wormwood to him that Maurice, by the attitude he had taken, precluded all continuance of his quarrel with the two generals.

In good truth, ever since Grafton had put the idea into his head, which John Madingley had considerably strengthened,



Maurice had been weighing in his mind the propriety of his giving up the Church. He had tried it, and, though he consciously performed his duties, still he felt he was in no wise fitted for the profession. He had taken to it as a means of living, but before seeking ordination as priest he felt that a man should have some higher feeling regarding it than that, and now he was once more bitten by the turf fever, and, do what he would, could not keep the "Champagnes" out of his head. The success of "the Wandering Nun" was not the great object which it had been to him when she secured her first victory; he was no longer pressed for money, but nobody exists in such affluent circumstances as not to be very well pleased at the idea of having a little more of that useful commodity. Still it was not so much that as was the interest he took in the career of the flying filly; and if it had not made a penny difference to him he would have been still as deeply interested in the issue of her forth-coming essay at Doncaster.

The next two or three days slipped by, and at last came the opening day of the great Yorkshire meeting, and Maurice knew that at three o'clock this race, the winner of which so often made his mark in turf history, was to be decided. As the afternoon wore on he could no longer control his restlessness. They must know it in the town now, the telegram must have arrived at the club, but he did not wish to make any further scandal. He supposed he must wait till he got his paper the next morning, but he was resolute not to look in at the club for fear of what might be said as to his reason for coming there.

He wandered aimlessly about the town till in an evil moment his vagrant footsteps brought him outside a second-class hotel called "The Spotted Dog." He knew this house by repute, he knew it bore the reputation of being a sporting-house, and he had heard some of the young men at the club declare that they knew what had won a big race at "The Spotted Dog" always a quarter of an hour sooner than anywhere else in Tunnleton. In an evil moment he resolved just to step in and ask the question. He cast a hurried glance up and down the street, but there were not many people moving about, and nobody he knew was in sight. He ran up the three or four steps and glanced rapidly round for some one of

whom to make enquires. A small knot of rather ruffish looking young men were gathered in front of the bar, and one of these saved him all further trouble.

"There you are, sir," he said, pointing to the tissue fastened up in the bar window, "won in a canter; that 'Wandering Nun' is about the best bit of stuff Mr. Brooks ever owned."

Maurice bent his head in acknowledgment of the speaker's civility, and retreated rapidly into the street, which he gained just in time to receive a frigid bow from Miss Torkesly, just issuing from a shop on the other side of the road. Maurice knew all was over as he raised his hat. He felt that Tunnleton would never tolerate this fresh iniquity, that he would be cast out from among them. That question of resigning the Church was being much simplified, as he could not but think, looking back upon his imprudence. There was much likelihood of the Church resigning him. It was well that it was a nice day for walking, for Miss Torkesly had seldom enjoyed a busier time than was her lot that afternoon. To whisper into the ears of all her friends and acquaintances that she had seen Mr. Enderby coming out of "The Spotted Dog" was Miss Torkesly's clear and bounden duty before she slept.

"So dreadful, my dear. Of course, we all knew that the poor infatuated man gambled, but I'm afraid he drinks as well."

"It is terrible, but I believe they usually both go together. Fancy, to be seen coming out of 'The Spotted Dog' in broad daylight! I didn't know what to do, and I am afraid I bowed, my dear. Just fancy! bowing to a man who came out of 'The Spotted Dog.' I was too confused and horrified to see, but I darsay he was even walking unsteadily."

Yes, before twenty-four hours were over, the greater part of Tunnleton was aware of Maurice's delinquency. About how the unfortunate man left "The Spotted Dog" accounts varied according to the imagination of the narrator. He was variously described as being the worse of liquor, having reeled down the street, or carried home insensible to his wife. Such a schedule of wrong-doing as was now filed against Maurice Enderby was more than a man could hope utterly to refute.

It was not likely that Mr. Jarrow would be long left in ignorance of his curate's questionable proceedings. Mrs. Praun picked up the news in the course of her afternoon

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rambles. The general quite bubbled with excitement upon hearing of it. "Ah," he said. "we will see what Jarrow has to say to this. He took a precious high hand with me, and threatened me—me! General Praun, with an action for libel, told me that he had Mr. Enderby's own word for it that he never bet upon horses, and, when I pointed out his sudden plentiful supply of money, he informed me that he had nothing to do with that. Mr. Enderby had probably relations who assisted him from time to time. Ah!" continued the general, with a triumphant snort, "I suppose he was looking for one of those relatives at 'The Spotted Dog,' and we shall hear next that his duties necessitate his attendance at a public billiard-room; but I'll have it out with Jarrow to-morrow morning."

General Praun was as good as his word. Habitually an early man, he was at the rector's house almost as soon as he had finished his breakfast, and desired to see him. Shown into Mr. Jarrow's study, he plunged at once into his subject, and dilated upon it with such volubility that his astounded host was unable to get a word in.

"I told you so, Jarrow, I have told you all along, that this paragon of a curate of your's was a dissolute young man quite unfitted for his position. There is nothing remarkable in it; you are not the first rector by many who has been similarly deceived; but you are so obstinate; you shut your ears to what your parishioners tell you."

"Obstinate? me?" suddenly interposed the Rev. Jacob. "If there was ever a man open to conviction—if there was ever a man prepared to listen to facts or contravention of his own opinions—I flatter myself I am that man."

"Very good, then," said General Praun. "You have been told that Enderby gambles. You now hear upon unimpeachable testimony that he frequents what, though he may call it a second-class hotel, I should denominate a sporting public. If you think that befitting one of your cloth well and good, but you won't find Tunnleton agree with you."

"I need scarcely say," rejoined Mr. Jarrow, who had by this time somewhat recovered himself, "that I heard nothing of this before; that I should make inquiry into such a rumour is matter of course."

"It is no matter of rumour, I tell you," snapped Praun, irritably.

"Then, sir," rejoined Mr. Jarrow, in his pompous manner, "it will so much the easier to investigate. Rumours are difficult to grapple with; facts demand explanation. I shall withhold my opinion till I have spoken to Mr. Enderby on the subject."

And the rather stately bow with which Mr. Jarrow intimated that their interview was at an end, made the hot-tempered Praun's very pulses tingle.

"They take too much upon themselves, these parsons. By Jove! Jarrow dismissed me as I used to dismiss a subaltern in the old days. Bowed me out as if I had been a mere nobody instead of a general officer." And with these thoughts Praun fumed along on his way to study the daily papers at the Tunnleton Club.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

"BETTER I SHOULD RETIRE NOW."

MAURICE told his wife that evening what had happened; and Bessie at first my no means realized the consequence of his imprudence. She did not even know, as was very natural, the name of this second-class hostelry. She did not see that because on one occasion her husband once entered an hotel it should be looked upon as any great crime on his part. A score of reasons might have taken him there—reasons which might be proclaimed from the housetops. And it was not until Maurice explained to her that "The Spotted Dog" had the reputation of being a sporting-house, pointed out to her that Doncaster races were going on, and reminded her that he had been charged with betting on horseracing, and that, though it was not true, his denial thereof had never been half believed in Tunnleton,—that she grasped what would probably be the outcome of this last imprudence.

"Ah, Maurice," she said, "Uncle John meant well, and from a money point of view his gift has proved princely, but I am afraid it will turn out a fatal wedding-present in the end,"

"You are always saying that," he rejoined, testily: "but I think this last escapade is very likely to terminate my engagement at Tunnleton. Jarrow stood by me in the first instance like a thorough gentleman. He took my word that the charge was false, and refused to listen further to what my traducers said, but, looking back, I think that was due in part to the natural combativeness of his nature; moreover, he will very likely tire of perpetually fighting my battles. Do you know, Bessie, I am thinking seriously of giving up the Church."

Now, much as he had thought over this himself, Maurice had never said a word to his wife on the subject, and her first feeling was that of repugnance at the idea. "Oh, Maurice," she said, "you would surely never do that!"

"Why not?" he said; "it is surely better that I should retire now than become positively enrolled in a profession for which I feel I am unfitted. I shall never make a good clergyman, but I think I have stuff in me, and could do good work in some other calling."

Still, Bessie was not to be reconciled to the idea; she urged him to consider well what he was about, pointing out that, though he might have been imprudent, he had really done nothing wrong, and that there were other places besides Tunnleton in which he could obtain a curacy.

"Oh, it's a thing that there will be plenty of time to think about. Jarrow is not likely to wish me to leave until he has found some one to supply my place. However, we shall doubtless have some conversation on the subject to-morrow, as a conflagration in a high wind spreadeth not so quick as scandal in the mouth of the Torkeslys."

Maurice had not long to wait. General Praun had left the house not ten minutes when a servant was on his way to Mr. Enderby's with a note, intimating that the rector wanted to see him as soon as possible. Maurice was quite as anxious for the interview as Mr. Jarrow, and accordingly lost no time in making the best of his way to the rectory. He was admitted at once to the Reverend Jacob's sanctum, and there found that gentleman in a most unmistakable state of fume and fidget.—It was matter of deep annoyance to Mr. Jarrow when any *protégé* of his—and he was much given to taking people up—was found wanting; he prided himself especially upon insight into character, and that his swans should occasionally turn out



geese was always sore vexation to him. He snatched greedily at all pretty pieces of patronage which fell at all within his reach ; from the nomination of a pewopener to recommending a man as a fit candidate for the town constabulary, Mr. Jarrow always endeavoured to have a finger in the pie ; and any curate of his should be deemed unfit for his position was casting much discredit on his sagacity.

"Sit down, Mr. Enderby," he remarked, their first greetings over. "I have sent for you upon a very unpleasant business ; but the fact has been pointedly brought to my notice, and it is incumbent upon me to ask you for an explanation."

"I will save you all further preamble Mr. Jarrow," replied Maurice. "You have been told that I was seen coming out of 'The Spotted Dog' yesterday. Perfectly true, I was.—Why did I go in there ? To learn the result of a race in which my wife's uncle, John Madingley, had got a horse running. Had I any bets on it ? Most certainly not. I never have bet upon horse racing, except in a very trifling way before I married, and most assuredly I have never wagered a sixpence since on that or anything else."

Mr. Jarrow paused for some minutes before he replied. He thoroughly believed Maurice, but then he felt at the same time that nineteen people out of twenty in Tunnleton would not.

Mr. Enderby," he said at length, "although I am quite willing to accept your explanation, you must be aware that the public will not. As some eminent man, whose name just now I forget, has said, mistakes are worse than crimes. You must forgive my saying that since you have been among us your life seems to have been a succession of blunders. You have, by your own imprudence, put yourself so completely in the wrong light, that I am afraid it will be impossible to convince the public that you don't gamble, and from what I heard this morning, they are likely to add drink to your transgressions. I have stood by you as long as I could, but you must excuse my saying," and few would have given the pompous rector credit for the kindness with which the words fell from his lips, "that under the circumstances, you can exercise no influence for good in the parish."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Jarrow," replied Maurice, quickly, "and as you were doubtless about to say, it is better under those circumstances we should part, we will look upon



that as clearly understood between us, and I shall remain only so long as suits your convenience."

"Well, Mr. Enderby, you have taken the words out of my mouth, but I do think that will be the best arrangement we can arrive at. Shall we say, sir, about two months from this date? That will give you time to look around as well as me."

"I have to thank you, Mr. Jarrow," said Maurice, rising, "for much kindness since I have been here, and shall be very glad to time my departure with regard to your convenience. As for myself, let me tell you in strict confidence that I have quite made up my mind to resign the profession. And now, for the present, I will say good-morning."

Mr. Jarrow remained for some time after Maurice's departure in a brown study. He shook his head two or three times, like a man who has come across a phenomenon beyond his comprehension. He had had curates resign before now, but this was his first experience of a young man resigning the profession as well as the curacy.

It soon became evident to Maurice that Tunnleton society was unfeignedly shocked at the last scandal in connection with his name. That he should dabble in horse racing had been deplorable, shocking in the eyes of most people, but a clergyman who "frequented public-houses" (that he had only been seen entering one once was a fact quite lost sight of) had put himself quite without the pale. When Tunnleton heard that he was going away, it shook its head, and opined that Mr. Jarrow could do no less. It was a sad pity that a young man should be so depraved, but of course he was useless in his present position, and Tunnleton feared would do no good anywhere. And now curiously enough a reaction set in in favour of Mrs. Enderby.—How it began one hardly knew, but Bessie had made some few friends in the place, and it probably owed its origin to them. It suddenly became the fashion to express great commiseration for "poor Mrs. Enderby," and society delighted to paint imaginary pictures of Bessie vainly attempting to keep her husband in the straight path. It was difficult to say which suffered most from the new order of things—Maurice or his wife. He on his part was subject to the most freezing returns to his salutations, but I doubt if that was so hard to bear as the ostentatious pity to which his wife was subjected. Nothing

was ever said to her, but the ladies of Tunnleton had determined that she was to be pitied and condoled with, and their faces could not have expressed more mournful sympathy had she been lamenting the actual loss of her husband. They both agreed that Tunnleton was unendurable, and Maurice speedily asked Mr. Jarrow to release him as soon as possible.

Two people there were who Maurice determined to take into his confidence. One of these was Frank Ohylton, to whom he had already told the story of his singular wedding-gift. He now thought it only right to explain to him the itching curiosity that had led him to commit the imprudence of entering "The Spotted Dog." The other was General Shrewster. The latter had heard the whole story of the wedding-present from John Madingley, and the comic side of the business had tickled him immensely.

"I can understand his reticence," he said, "but I am afraid it is destined to do him a good deal of harm here. You see this is an eminently respectable place, extremely orthodox and all that sort of thing, and when the people are that, they are always not only willing but greedy to believe the very worst of their neighbours."

But when Maurice told him of this second imprudence the general simply roared with laughter.

"My dear Enderby," he said, "how could you do it? You know you were, so to speak, under the ban of Tunnleton, now you'll be positively outlawed; what are you going to do?—You will never make head against it."

"I am not going to try," replied Maurice quietly; "I have resigned my curacy and am only waiting now as a convenience to Mr. Jarrow. Further, general, I consider myself unsuited to the profession, and am going to adopt some other calling."

"There I think you are right; it's a pity that you've thrown away a whole year, but anything is better than a life-long mistake. I can only say I shall be very glad to help you should it at all lie in my power. As far as ways and means go, your uncle promised to assist you to a start; still, I should be afraid his interest would lie chiefly in the profession you are about to abandon. For myself, I have none except in my old trade."

"Thank you very much, general," replied Maurice; "I will ask for your good word without fail should I want it,

but at present I have not made up my mind as to what I shall do."

"Will you let me give you one piece of advice, the warning of a man who has been through the furnace: keep clear of the racecourse whatever you do. I was a rich man once, and should be so now had I not been bitten by the turf tarantula. I took the fever very badly, and, unless I very much mistake, you are a man likely to contract it in its most virulent form. I makes your pulses tingle even now, and you will probably be quite carried away if you find yourself in the thick of the fray. There, I am going to say no more," said the general, laughing; "a word is more likely to be remembered than a sermon in these cases. Of course my mouth is closed about what you have told me, but I think the sooner you allow Chylton and myself to make the whole story public the better."

"I don't want it published until I am gone," replied Maurice; "I am too angry to care to right myself in the eyes of the people here; and now I will say good-bye for the present."

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### A LITTLE DINNER.

NEXT week brought two things to Maurice Enderby: first, a jubilant letter from old John Madingley, enclosing a very handsome cheque on account of the "Champagnes"; "and though," he added, "I was not there to see, and indeed have never seen 'the Wandering Nun' run except that time at Goodwood, yet I am convinced she is the best I ever owned; let her only keep well and the Oaks is a moral certainty for her next spring." The other letter was from Bob Grafton, and ran as follows:—

"DEAR MAURICE,

"I am afraid you are about the most hopelessly ruined man of my acquaintance. A man who has only to sit still and see hundred-pound notes dropping into his lap is certain to dete-

riorate; he is bound to get out of the idea of ever earning his living in future. The filly is a clipper, and made a perfect show of her field on Tuesday. By the way, I met young Balders at Doncaster, and he tells me that you are about to leave Tunnleton. What does that mean? Are you tired of it or has the petulant little place tired of you? When we cast out from its bosom your most virulent foe—Richard Madingley—if that really is his name—I thought that Tunnleton would be bound to acknowledge its obligation to you. Do you know I saw that precious young scoundrel in the outer ring on the Leger day; he was in close conference with Pick and one or two more of the same kidney; you may depend upon it he is a regular hanger-on of the turf: I don't mean of the jackal species, but he has no more right to the social status he assumed in Tunnleton than he probably has to the name of Richard Madingley. I shall be glad to hear about why you are leaving Tunnleton, also what are your intended movements. I presume you are in search of a fresh curacy, or can it be possible that you have made up your mind to resign the profession? Kindest regards to Mrs. Enderby, and tell her her pretty turn-out requires no outriders, though I admit 'the Wandering Nun' is enough to tempt her fortunate owners into the most profuse expenditure.

"Ever yours,

"ROBERT GRAFTON."

As he finished the letter Maurice could not help thinking that perhaps the one good thing he had done at Tunnleton was compelling Richard Madingley to leave the place, and so saving Edith Molecombe from rushing on her fate. He little dreamt of how, if chance had not intervened, his efforts would have been unavailing, and that, but for a valued client of her father's having proved rather long-winded, Edith would have been the partner of Dick Madingley's compulsory retreat. The person who not a little astonished Maurice at the juncture was Mr. Molecombe; the banker had called upon the Enderbys at the instigation of his partner, Frank Chylton, when they first made their appearance in Tunnleton, and when the rumours to Maurice's discredit arose there could be no doubt that he rather dropped them. He did not take a rabid view of Maurice's conduct like General Praun, and

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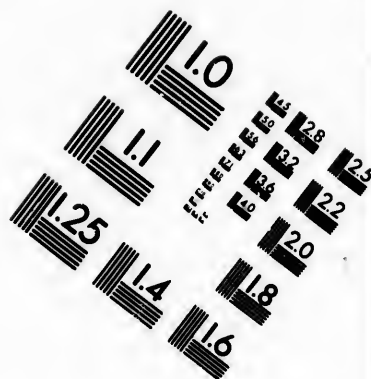
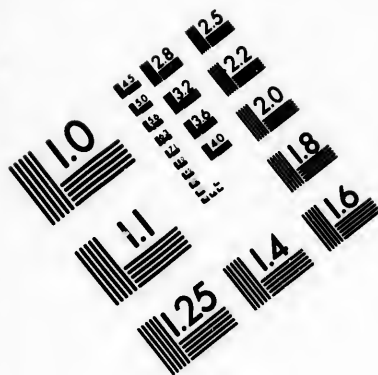
thought, probably, that report considerably exaggerated his misdoings, but he did think that Mr. Enderby was not exactly an acquaintance to cultivate. He was cautious and civil enough when they met, but he no longer asked the Enderbys to his house. Now a reaction had arisen in his mind; he knew that Maurice was *bona fide* John Madingley's nephew by marriage, just as he knew that Dick was an impostor. Very sore about the somewhat ridiculous position he had been placed in, he had a sort of hazy idea that he owed reparation to the right man; he felt that he had been swayed very much in his judgment by Richard Madingley, and, being a tolerably clear-sighted man, thought that Maurice had perhaps had hard justice dealt out to him. Mr. Jarrold, for instance, would hardly have taken his curate's part without being satisfied that the allegations against him were untrue; as for this last scandal, he had taken the trouble to make a few inquiries concerning it, and easily ascertained that "frequenting" meant that he had been once seen coming out of "The Spotted Dog." As Mr. Molecombe remarked to himself, "A gentleman don't live close upon a twelvemonth in a place like Tunnleton without the fact of his frequenting public-houses being known."

Maurice, unable to think of any other reason for the banker's increased cordiality, at last attributed it to the satisfactory balance standing to his account; still, he was rather taken aback at Bessie's getting a note from Mrs. Molecombe asking them to waive ceremony and come and dine in a friendly way.

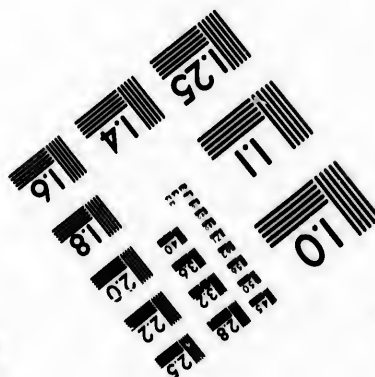
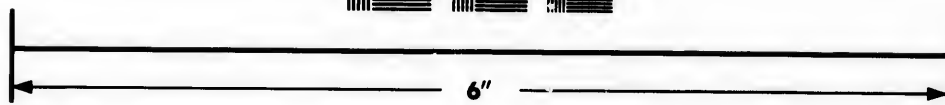
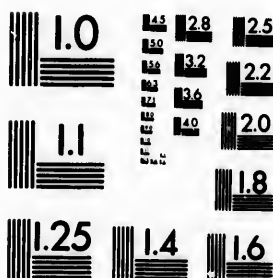
There are wheels within wheels even in an invitation to dinner; and the conceit would be taken out of a good many of us could we know the real reason why we are bidden to the feast. We should be astonished to find how rarely it is for our own sakes. It was quite true that Mr. Molecombe was disposed to be much more cordial to the Enderbys than he had been, but for this invitation they were indebted in a great measure to his daughter. Edith Molecombe was much depressed about the tangle of her love affair. That she was very earnest in her love for Dick Madingley was evinced by her consenting to elope with him. She had heard nothing of him since that brief peremptory whisper in Tunnleton Station when he had slipped her ticket into her hand. She had heard — it is difficult to say exactly how, but young ladies in Edith's







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situation do contrive to get news of their truant lovers in marvellous fashion—that Mr. Enderby and a strange gentleman had called upon Richard Madingley only a day or two before his departure. Now Edith Molecombe knew very well that Maurice was no friend of Dick Madingley; she knew, on the contrary, that the Enderbys had been rather pointedly excluded from the two or three garden-parties Dick had given. It was therefore, decidedly, not as a friend that Maurice would call there. She fretted dreadfully over this mysterious silence on the part of her lover; he must have seen her father at the station, and have understood why she had to abandon their scheme. She was unable to write to him, as she did not know his address; but he, if he chose, could have no difficulty in letting her hear from him. Whatever Mr. Enderby's business might have been, it was possible that it might throw some light upon her lover's silence. In the course of the evening, she thought, she should have no difficulty in questioning Maurice on this point.

The Enderbys, at Maurice's instigation, accepted the invitation. He was quite as curious to have some conversation with Edith Molecombe as she was with him. He knew her but slightly, and had taken no particular interest in her till the events of the last few days had brought her so prominently to his notice.

The only people asked to meet them were the Chyltons. These acted as a sort of connecting link between the Enderbys and their host, and, as the banker kept an undeniable cook, the little dinner passed off gaily. A regret was expressed at the coming departure of Maurice and his wife, but the subject was not unduly dwelt upon. Richard Madingley and his misdemeanours were naturally not alluded to; and, in short, when the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room, everything had gone off most sociably and pleasantly. Mr. Molecombe was no niggard, he thoroughly enjoyed entertaining, and, though he would have been puzzled to explain what had induced him to give this little banquet, yet he had got on very well with Maurice, and had come to the conclusion that gentleman was a very good fellow. Taking up his favourite position on the hearthrug, Mr. Molecombe rather confused Mrs. Chylton and Mrs. Enderby by favouring them with his views on the political state of the country, while Edith carried

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Maurice off to a distant table to look over photographs. She was a young lady of considerable determination, and lost no time in broaching the subject that was nearest her heart.

"Mr. Enderby," she said in a low voice, "I have one question to ask you. Will you answer it?"

"If it really is only one question," replied Maurice, smiling, "I think I might say yes; but one question is very apt to lead to a string."

"Why did you call upon Mr. Madingley last week? He was no friend of yours, surely?"

"Certainly not," said Maurice, "I called to see him on business."

"That is no answer," replied the girl quickly; "what business?"

"That is another question, and I must think a moment before I answer it."

There was a pause of several seconds, and then Maurice continued—

"I am not sure that it would be fair to tell you that. Like everybody else in Tunnelton, I am of course aware of the relation in which you lately stood to him. I should be exceedingly sorry to say anything that would hurt your feelings, therefore, if you please, we will leave the subject where it is."

"No, no," she said quickly, "tell me all; whether for good or evil I have a right to know what men say concerning him."

Again Maurice hesitated for some little time. At last he answered slowly, "Perhaps you are right, you ought to know. If I give you pain forgive me. At any rate I will be brief. I saw Richard Madingley, in company with a friend of mine, to inform him that he was down here under false colours, and that it was my duty to unmask him before all Tunnelton, unless he thought proper to avoid such scandal by leaving the place in forty-eight hours."

"And what induced you to tell such a lie as that?" said Edith, with quivering lips.

"I had tolerable proof of what I asserted, and that Mr. Madingley thought there was some truth in it was proved by his accepting my terms and leaving Tunnelton within the time specified. We will drop the subject now, if you please, Miss Molecombe, but you may rest assured of one thing, that Mr. Richard Madingley is not at all what he passed for in Tun-

nleton, and that it is extremely doubtful whether that is even his name." And with that Maurice rose from his chair with a hint that perhaps they had better join the circle.

"You don't quite like the idea, Bessie, of my giving up the Church," said Maurice as he drove his wife home; "but do you know the three friends I have mentioned it to have not uttered a syllable of remonstrance. General Shrewster and Grafton, on the contrary, clearly think I am right in doing so; while as for dear old Frank Chylton, he has clearly regarded me as a square peg in a round hole ever since I have been here."

"You know best, Maurice; still I confess to a feeling that it is too late for you to turn back now."

"You forget that I am only in the novitiate, and not as yet, actually elected to the ministry."

Bessie said no more, but she still had her doubts as to whether her husband would be right in doing this thing.

Edith Molecombe retired to her room as soon as the visitors had left; but it was very late that night before she sought her pillow. She had had her interview with Maurice Enderby, and for the first time unbelief in her lover sprang up in her mind. She had been very much impressed by Maurice's manner; unlike her father he had hesitated at speaking at all about Richard Madingley; when he did speak it was in the quiet, resolute tones of a man confident of his assertions and of his power to prove them. He had passed over her insult, and Edith's face blushed even now as she thought how very rude she had been to him in her own home. Careless of that, he had been only anxious to warn her that her lover was not what he represented himself to be, and cautioned her against trusting to his word. That said he had evidently no wish to touch further on the subject. Could it be so? Was it the old story? Had she also set up for herself a false idol and fallen down and worshipped? She had refused to believe her father, she had refused to believe all stories to Dick Madingley's detriment that reached her ears; but Maurice Enderby had cast doubts into her mind, and for the first time she felt that it was well her future was yet in her own hands.

Generals Maddox and Praun were much exercised in their minds when they met upon the Promenade the morning after the banker's little dinner. To have given a stranger a seat in

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shop in Tunnleton unknown to the community would have been difficult. Mr. Molecombe's entertainment, it need scarcely be said, was already talked about.

"I really am surprised at Molecombe," said General Maddox. "Think of a respectable man like him entertaining a dissolute young man like Enderby, a perfect scandal to his cloth. Upon my honour, I don't know what society is coming to."

"Shameful! disgraceful! I call it," replied General Praun, angrily. "That is where it is, sir; the plutocracy is playing the very devil with the country. Molecombe is a man of business; Molecombe is a mammon worshipper. What does Molecombe care about a man's private character as long as he keeps a good swinging balance at his bank? What does he care, sir? answer me that;" and General Praun inflicted sundry severe punches on the flags at his feet, as if exhorting the very stones to rise and bear testimony on his behalf. "I tell you what, Maddox," he continued, lowering his tone, "if Beelzebub's account stood at over four figures, it's my impression Molecombe would ask him to dinner!"

General Maddox shook his head solemnly, and said gently, "Too true, I am afraid; but Molecombe will live to discover that a gambler's account is liable to considerable fluctuations;" and with this exchange of amiable sentiments the two veterans separated.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### RIPE FOR TEMPTATION.

AUTUMN, with all the glories of its dying tints has departed, a few last lingering leaves have fluttered lifeless to the ground; hedge and tree stand stark and bare, grimly defying the chill embrace of winter which now threatens them. The markets are glutted with pheasants; the Christmas turkey and the Christmas holly are already shadowed on the horizon, and the Christmas bills, more surely to be depended upon than either turkey or sausages, loom imminent in the near futurity.



The Enderbys have paid their farewell calls, have wished their friends good-bye, have shaken the dust of Tunnleton from their feet, and left their characters behind them. Much debate about these latter still raging in Tunnleton, for General Shrewster and Frank Chylton have both now spoken out and narrated the singular story of John Madingleys wedding-present. It is known now how the Enderbys suddenly became possessed of such command of money; it is known now what induced Maurice's strange interest in the turf; it is known now what was the cause of that visit to "The Spotted Dog," which had scandalized Tunnleton; and all but the most bigoted and obstinate of its inhabitants are fain to admit that under similar circumstances they would have acted much as Maurice did. A strong reaction has set in in favour of the Enderbys, while Mr. Richard Madingley's reputation is drowning in the backwater of public opinion. Mr. Molecombe especially is full of regret that he did not sooner recognize the curate's good qualities. The rector makes himself peculiarly offensive to Maurice's opponents, by alluding to him as "that excellent and talented young man, who an obstinate faction literally hounded out of Tunnleton." General Shrewster cuttingly remarks that those who had condemned Maurice Enderby and believed Richard Madingley had shown they did not know a gentleman when they saw him, and had exhibited much want of tolerance in their judgment.

General Maddox, finding the storm run high, and that he had been somewhat mistaken in his estimate of Maurice's iniquities, thought it expedient to leave Tunnleton for a temporary change of air, but the irascible Praun stood manfully to his guns, and declared that, if Enderby had not yet been guilty of the charges brought against him, he inevitably would be before he had done; that the thirst for gambling was implanted in his veins; that they might tell this tale of a wedding-present to the marines; that if Mr. Enderby had not bet as yet, which he didn't believe, they would very soon hear of his transacting business in that respect, that is if they ever did hear of him again; that Mrs. Enderby had exhibited her fiendish temper when spoken to in her own interest by two of her best friends; that those who lived would see. And then the general faded out of the club billiard-room with a rumbling chorus of expletives suggestive of service seen with that famous

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army of Flanders. On the subject of Dick Madingley, the general prudently refrained from expressing any opinion. He had his own misgivings concerning that gentleman, and remembered regretfully that he had constituted himself one of his principal supporters in Tunnleton.

The Enderbys had meanwhile established themselves in comfortable lodgings in the Hyde Park district, and Maurice was turning over in his mind what calling he had better embrace. Thanks to the successes of "the Wandering Nun" he had a very comfortable balance at his banker's, and this would give him time to look around. For some time the Bar commended itself to his attention, but the beginning of that profession was cast among rather stony places, and at the best some time must elapse before he could expect to make even a slender income at it. Many young barristers at the outset of their career supplimented their business with their pens. This Maurice had commenced trying to do at Tunnleton, and still continued in London ; but, though it had been attended latterly with some little success, it certainly did not at present promise to swell to a regular income. And yet for the life of him beyond the Church and the Bar he could see no other profession open to him ; medicine required special training, and for the army and navy he was too old for admission. It must not be thought that Maurice was lounging about town in a happy Micawber state of mind waiting for something to turn up ; he was strenuously seeking for the "something" himself ; but it is not quite so easy at six-and-twenty to find an opening. However, after some weeks' reflection, he attained the first great step. He made up his mind what it was he wanted, and there is much in that. It was true this choice fell on what he believed to be utterly out of his reach ; but the apparently unattainable is sometimes achieved by dogged perseverance. He would be a soldier if he could ; and he decided that he could do no better than write to consult General Shrewster on that point.

General Shrewster's answer speedily arrived ; he would do his best, and was willing to seize every opportunity, but he pointed out that Maurice's age precluded his getting into the army by any of the regular channels. "Your only chance, my dear Enderby, of joining the profession is by a by-path ; they don't stand much of it in these days ; still, a commission is got

now and again in that way. You must wait for a war of some kind, and with our magnificent and extensive empire the luxury of a small war is a thing we are rarely without for many months together. You must then go to the authorities, and volunteer to go out in any capacity. You will be handsomely snubbed no doubt ; never mind that. Your case becomes my business then, and I shall hope that I may have influence sufficient to induce some one employed to take you on his staff, in of course an unacknowledged capacity ; then we must trust to the chapter of accidents. If you get a chance of distinguishing yourself, or do good service in the field, your chief may recommend you for a commission, and we must endeavour all we know then to get you appointed to a regiment. You will be beginning late, but if luck favours you with plenty of fighting you may easily make up for a bad start. An old friend of mine was six years an ensign in an infantry regiment, but nevertheless was a Colonel of Dragoons at the end of eleven years.—May fortune be as favourable to you when we get you started.

"With kindest regards to Mrs. Enderby,

"Believe me,

"Ever yours,

"JAMES SHREWSTER."

This letter gave much encouragement to Maurice. From that out he began to take much interest in the proceedings of our missionaries, who are the cause perhaps of more of our petty wars than anybody else. That matter of religion has been productive of bitter feeling since the world began, and the desire of the one man to arbitrarily substitute his own creed for that of his neighbours the cause of much heartburning exasperation. Strengthened by Shrewster's counsels, Maurice gave up the thought of seeking other employment. He read the papers carefully, more especially the Indian news, but the winter glided away, and England seemed as far from an imbroglio as ever. It was unfortunate, but an unnatural tranquillity seemed suddenly to have settled over the restless area of the British Empire. Of the numberless races which acknowledge the sway of England, not one at present showed signs of irritability. Maurice even wrote a letter to General Shrewster, complaining of the stagnation in the trade of wholesale murder. The veteran could not help smiling upon receiving his *protégé's* letter.

"such a rapid conversion," he murmured, "was never seen. Most decidedly he was not in his right vocation here." But he wrote a few lines to Maurice and told him not to trouble himself, for that England was very seldom long without a small war on her hands; that in the meantime he was in the right place both for obtaining the earliest information and for making the earliest application for employment; and further promising to come himself to town directly he saw a chance of forwarding his (Maurice's) interests.

But as winter merged into early spring in his search through the papers Maurice found himself constantly confronted with the betting on the Spring handicaps, and as the weeks slipped by the betting on the Two Thousand and Derby became added to the prize-list. The old infatuation once more took possession of him, although "the Wandering Nun" was engaged in none of these races, but in watching the return of last year's sport Maurice had acquired a general knowledge of the running of most of the more prominent horses on the turf, and had noted the vicissitudes of their various careers with the keenest interest. Once more he began speculating in his own mind on their chances, and picking out what he conceived ought to be winners of these races, not that he had the slightest intention of backing them, but simply with a view of seeing whether his judgment would prove to be correct. Once or twice that solemn warning which Shrewster had given him crossed his mind, but there was little cause to feel afraid of trouble accruing to him in that wise at present. It was true, racing had begun again, and besides the Lincolnshire handicap many another big stake had been fought out in the Midlands; but he never went near these battlefields, and contented himself with reading what had happened in the daily papers.

But when a man is ripe for temptation it is odds that his bad angel speedily offers him the opportunity to indulge his weakness. As Maurice was strolling down Oxford Street one morning he ran across his friend Bob Grafton.

"I didn't know that you were back in town," said Maurice as they shook hands.

"Well, yes," replied Grafton; "it was getting high time to get back to the dear old wilderness of bricks and mortar. The hunting is about played out, at all events my own two or three screws are, and all the country is no good for the next five

months. I'll tell you what we'll do—there can't be any harm in it now, you know—we'll go down next week and see the City and Suburban run. You cannot help taking some interest in racing as half-proprietor of the crack three-year old of the season, and the Epsom handicap is a pretty race to see."

Now Maurice had vowed to himself that he would not do this thing; that though he could not help watching racing he would not go near it; but then that was while General Shrewster's word of warning still rang in his ears. That was some time ago now; it was all nonsense; he could look on and enjoy the sport without betting, and, after a moment's hesitation, he yielded to Grafton's persuasions and agreed to accompany him to Epsom on the following Wednesday, and, this settled, the two friends separated for the present.

Maurice had, of course, seen big races run before, but for a young man with a strong taste for horses and hunting racing had, so far, interested him singularly little; it was easily explained: he had, till the last year, never made any study of it, he barely knew the names of even the prominent equine celebrities, he had no knowledge of the colours of the owners; consequently a race to him so far had been like the flashing of a kaleidoscope, and even when the numbers were hoisted the names of the placed horses interested him but little. Now it was different; while at Tunbridge he had surreptitiously studied the calendar attentively and learnt the colours of prominent owners by heart, and was looking forward with considerable excitement to visiting a racecourse under different auspices and accompanied by such a capable mentor as Grafton.

Bob was true to his tryst at Victoria Station.

"Glorious day," he said, as they stepped into a railway carriage; "bright, clear, and no chance of rain; but your top coat is hardly thick enough, it will be nipping on the Downs, you may depend upon it," and Bob glanced down with much satisfaction at the bulky ulster in which he was himself encased. "I'll tell you what, too," he continued; "I've got a rare hint about the City and Suburban, and we'll see what we can do with it when we get to the course."

Two or three strangers now got into the carriage, and Grafton at once dropped the subject and never opened his lips



about it again till they found themselves on the lawn at Epsom, just outside the gate leading into Tattersall's ring.

"Now you wait outside for me while I go in and see what's doing," and then Bob slipped through the jealously-guarded portals of that inner enclosure.

Maurice lingered where he had been left, and, though it was some little time before Grafton returned, yet he found himself thoroughly amused; he fell across three or four old college friends and chatted pleasantly with them, and each of them at parting gave him a different tip for the big race. Maurice's own predilections ran in favour of a three-year-old called Wolfgang, a prominent favourite with the public, and he was wondering whether Grafton would coincide with him in that opinion, and getting slightly tired of the monotonous question, "Do you want to do anything, sir?" or the slightly varied formula of "Want to back one, sir?" when Grafton touched him lightly on the shoulder.

"It's all right, old man, I've got a rare good price. Twenty to one to a pony is rather a nice bet if it comes off. I met Jack Danby at dinner last night, and he told me that all their stable are going for old Drumhead. The public don't fancy him a bit; they think he's got too much weight, but he says the old horse is wonderfully well just now, has won a rare good trial, and is sure to be there or thereabouts at the finish. Now, Maurice, you shall be in a fiver with me. You must have a bet, you know; you can't come down and see the City and Suburban without having a trifle on it, and, win or lose, I'm sure old Drumhead will give you a good show for your money. And now let's come up to our stalls and see the race."



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## EPSOM DOWNS.

THEY reached their seats in very good time, and Maurice mentioned to his friend his own partiality for Wolfgang, who, as he pointed out, was very well in the handicap.

"That's just what it is," replied Grafton, "he is rather too well in. He's rather a headstrong horse, and wants a man to ride him. A big colt of that kind, to my thinking, always runs better when not so lightly weighted, for the simple reason the boys can't hold him. However, we shall soon see all about it now; here they come."

And in threes and fours the competitors paced slowly past the stand.

"It is a large field," remarked Grafton, "and a horse wants to be lucky as well as good to win to-day; the starter will very likely have a job to get them off. Twenty-nine of them altogether. There goes Drumhead, Maurice, with the black jacket and crimson sleeves," and Grafton pointed to a big brown horse that was pacing soberly up the course on the far side. Another few minutes and the cavalcade came striding back once more past the stand in their preliminary canter.

"Here comes Wolfgang," cried Grafton, "the blue and white chevron in the centre. Now do you see what I mean? He's a splendid mover, but look how he is tearing at his bit, it's as much as the boy can do to hold him now, and it's a chance whether he won't lose control over him in the actual race."

"Yes," laughed Maurice, "in a hunting-field I should say it was odds that a beggar like that spread-eagled the pack. But hear comes Drumhead, a very sober, business-like gentleman that."

"Yes," said Grafton, drily, "he is a veteran of five seasons, and knows better than to go using up himself and his jockey in that fashion. But isn't he a rare goer? Look at his long easy stride, and then he has such power. A few pounds more

don't make much difference to him. Ah! Hampton, how are you?" continued Grafton, as he nodded to a wiry red-haired man, who, in an ulster and a pot-hat, had just entered an adjoining stall. "What are they doing below?"

"Golden Dream is strong ar brandy. His party are very confident, more confident than they have a right to be in such a big field. Five to one is hard to get against him now; but there's lot of 'em backed."

"What do you fancy yourself?" inquired Bob.

"Well, you see, Mr. Grafton," replied the bookmaker, "it's not quite my business to have fancies, but I think old Drumhead will run well, and I've kept Flycatcher to run for the book. His people think he'll give a good account of himself."

"It must be a good betting race."

"Very fair, sir," replied Hampton, "very fair. It won't hurt any of us much. But I always like to go for the gloves when I have a chance, and keep one."

"They are down at the post now," said Maurice, "and some of them appear very fractious."

Grafton looked stealthily through his glass at the cluster of silken jackets grouped in the starter's charge. "Yes," he said, "there are three or four of them giving trouble. They're off!" he cried, and the shout was re-echoed from many a throat, only to be followed by a cry of "No, no! false start!" while some half-dozen horses were seen streaming to the top of the hill.

"That's bad for Wolfgang," continued Grafton. "it is as I thought, he's got away with the boy, like two or three more."

Wolfgang, indeed, proved more insubordinate than his companions, and reached the top of the hill before his jockey succeeded in pulling him up. It would be tedious to dwell upon the numerous false starts that took place—as is not uncommonly the case when there is a large number of competitors, and the field comprises three or four fractious youngsters. The bad manners of these sinners are infectious and make even elderly and well-disposed horses forget themselves. Suffice it to say that the backers of Wolfgang and Golden Dream passed a very bad three-quarters-of-an-hour. False start succeeded false start, and upon pretty nearly every occasion Wolfgang and Golden Dream were nearly at the top of the hill before they could be

stopped. Latterly Flycatcher, who had been very well behaved during the first part of the proceedings, began to exhibit signs of temper, and even Drumhead and his experienced pilot began to manifest anxiety to be off. At last the welcome roar of "They're off!" was followed by no counter-cry of "False start!" and, with a sense of relief, the crowd saw the cluster of silken jackets stream up the hill and come sweeping through the furzes. If the backers of the two principal offenders had looked askance at the erratic proceedings of their favourites during the last forty minutes the supporters of Golden Dream had good right to be disgusted with that animal now. After being pretty well first away in every one of the previous "no goes" he had distinguished himself by getting off very badly when the flag fell in earnest. Wolfgang, on the contrary, proved eager to begin till the last, and, coming through the furzes, assumed the command; he must have been a good colt, in rare condition, for, notwithstanding all his breaks away, and that he had as good as taken a race out of himself before starting, he led his field a cracker till half-way down the hill, leading to Tattenham Corner, when Flycatcher ran up to him, and, getting the inside berth round the famous turn, deprived him of the lead. By this time the scattering of the field was amazing; such tailing had rarely been witnessed, and, out of the twenty-nine who left the starter's hands not two minutes before, there were certainly little more than half-a-dozen left in the race.

At the road Flycatcher was still leading, with Wolfgang lying second. Then came three or four all in a cluster, and barely a couple of lengths behind; while stealing up on the rails, inch by inch, was old Drumhead, whose jockey, watching the leaders keenly as a hawk, already felt victory within his grasp. At the distance Wolfgang was done with, and Flycatcher came on with a lead of two lengths. Half-way up, there were only three left, and a cry of "Come on, Flycatcher," burst from the excited throats of his immediate partisans. At the "Bell," one of the three competitors compounded, while Drumhead rapidly closed with his opponent. Flycatcher's jockey cast an anxious look right and left, and became aware that on his near side the most dangerous horseman that ever steered thoroughbred over Epsom Downs was at his quarters. He had ridden steadily and with judgment

up to this, now he lost his nerve, and, anxious to get home, sat down opposite the Stand and commenced riding his horse in earnest. His grim opponent smiled as he found, despite his jockey's efforts, Flycatcher could not improve the half-length he held. Then he too began, and driving the old horse all he knew, landed him a clever winner by a good neck.

"A fine shave, Hampton, either way," cried Grafton; "and from here I can't be very sure, but I fancy Drumhead got up in time."

"Not a doubt about it, sir," replied the bookmaker; "if I wasn't sure myself the silence down below would tell me. Flycatcher would have been a clean haul for most of them, but few, I fancy, missed laying Drumhead any more than I did."

"Now, Maurice, we can go down and look after some lunch comfortably. I've collared four and you are one hundred in, old boy."

Maurice said nothing, but he could not help reflecting that his determination not to bet had been promptly dissipated. It would be absurd to suppose that he felt penitent or uncomfortable about it, for winning a hundred pounds on a breezy April afternoon never oppressed anybody within my recollection. He had not meant to do it, and, great as his excitement had been over the race, he had honestly never thought of the bet he had upon it. His interest had been absorbed, first in the bold front shown by his own selection, Wolfgang, for so great a part of the distance, then in the sudden advent of Flycatcher, the bookmaker's tip, and lastly, in the triumph of his friend Bob Grafton's favourite, Drumhead. It was some time before they could make their way downstairs, for the crowd were, like themselves, hunger-stricken, and the staircases of the Grand Stand are by no means broad and stately. Mr. Hampton was jammed up with them on the way down, and, slightly to Maurice's surprise, Grafton insisted on his coming to luncheon with them. The beauty of the hunting-field, quoth Mr. Punch, is that it enables all classes to mix, but for purposes of amalgamation the hunting-field in that matter cannot be compared with the racecourse. At length they made their way into the chief refreshment saloon, where Grafton at once ordered everything, including a couple of bottles of champagne. Everything, as he explained, simply meant such

food as the hurried waiters could lay their hands upon ; while, as for the liquor, " we can only hope it may be drinkable."

Mr. Hampton ate with all the equanimity and rapidity characteristic of his class. They are perfectly used to the losing and winning of money, and as convinced as the proprietors of Monte Carlo that they must win in the long-run, but of time for revelry they are aware they have little during business hours. Mr. Hampton was not long finishing his lunch and tumbler of champagne, and then announced that he must be once more " up and doing." Grafton and Maurice lingered some little time longer.

" I don't care much about the minor races, here," said Bod. " We've seen the big event, and, after we've had a stroll through the paddock, I'm good to get back to town again as soon as you like. Sure to see a lot of fellows there, you know, who can tell us all about the race, and sure too to encounter several others who always said old Drumhead would win, but who for varied reasons never backed him."

Maurice returned to town in excellent spirits, and, having thoroughly enjoyed his day, I'm afraid felt but small compunctions concerning that profitable wager that he had allowed himself to be led into. He had no intention of taking to betting, but this was just an odd instance that wouldn't occur again, and as for enjoying a day's racing occasionally it was quite possible to do that without gambling ; and, now he had determined to lay aside his sacred calling, there would be no shocking of people's prejudices on that account. From this out he paid as much attention to turf news as if he had been a declared votary of the sport ; and as the Epsom carnival drew near Maurice got deeply interested in the probable results. He had not been on a racecourse since the triumph of Drumhead, but had made up his mind to see the Derby, and more especially the Oaks, run for. " The Wandering Nun " had made a successful *début* at Newmarket, and carried off the Thousand Guineas in a canter, and racing-men were pretty nearly unanimously of opinion that the ladies' race at Epsom was at her mercy provided she kept well.

The last week in May saw Maurice accompanied by his friend Grafton once again on the Epsom lawn. He had been down on the Derby day and had been persuaded by Bob to have ten pounds on the winner of that race. Between that

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and his half of the stakes for the Thousand Guineas his balance at his banker's waxed fat, and Maurice, ever sanguine, looked upon the success of "the Wandering Nun" this afternoon as a foregone conclusion. Grafton had left him to see what was doing in the inner ring, which Maurice, not being a member of Tattersall's, was, of course, unable to enter. Suddenly his attention was arrested by a voice he thought he recognised vociferating "'The Wandering Nun' I'll lay against, here's four to one 'the Wandering Nun.'" Looking in the direction from which the voice proceeded he at once recognised Hampton just the other side of the railings which divided the Tattersall enclosure from the Lawn. It flashed through Maurice's mind that this was a chance. The last quotation he had heard against the favourite for the Oaks had been five to two. Leaning over the rails he touched the bookmaker with his umbrella and said, "I'll take fours, Mr. Hampton."

"Very well, sir. What shall it be in? Will you have it in ponies?"

"No," exclaimed Maurice, "I want four hundred to a hundred; will you lay it?"

"Certainly," replied the bookmaker. "Let's see—Mr. Enby, isn't it?"

"No, that's not quite right," replied Maurice—"Enderby. You met me with Mr. Grafton at the Spring Meeting. You may remember."

"Certainly," replied the bookmaker, who, like most of his class, had a good memory for faces, and then, having made a rapid note of the transaction, he turned round and once more vociferated his war-cry.

Some little time after Grafton rejoined him, and Maurice at once informed him of what he had done.

"Backed it for a hundred?" said Grafton. "The deuce you have. Surely, your share of the stakes should be good enough for you, and I'll tell you what: I'm very much afraid it isn't coming off this time. I've not been able to catch anybody who can tell me anything about it, but there's a screw loose about 'the Wandering Nun.' Those fellows in there lay as if they knew something, and I saw one or two good judges very busy covering their money. It's not a very healthy sign when the odds against a favourite expand just before the race."



As they made their way to the coign of vantage, from which they meant to view the race, two men who were ascending the stairs just before them enlightened their minds on the subject. "No, 'the Wandering Nun' won't win; she is not even first favourite just now. All the better for us. With her out of the way Belladonna ought to be about good enough."

"Have you heard what's the matter with the 'Nun'?"

"Gone slightly amiss at the eleventh hour, I fancy, as these fillies will sometimes out of sheer perversity. Some of them seem to have got a hint of it in the enclosure, for Hamptom, Weston, and two or three more of the most deadly pencillers out, have never ceased betting against her all the morning."

"Pleasant news," said Maurice, with a smile; "however, I can afford to forgive her if anyone can."

The race for the Oaks was devoid of all interest as far as Maurice's champion was concerned; from the fall of the flag "the Wandering Nun" either could not or would not go near her horses. She never looked dangerous from the first to last, and finished an indifferent sixth in a field of ten runners. Belladonna and Tamarinde fought out a rattling race, which terminated in favour of the latter by half a length.

"She is not herself, and showed temper to boot, but that running is too bad to be true, and 'the Wandering Nun' will win you a hat-full of money yet, old fellow, before she has done," remarked Grafton.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### EDITH GETS OVER IT.

ALL great gatherings of the people are remarkable for one thing, to wit, those whom you wish to see you never meet, whilst those whom you would rather did not see you there, do. Your puritanical uncle, from whom you had expectations, who regards racing as the acme of iniquity, is sure to hear that you graced the Derby with your presence. Your spinster aunt, who has strong and intolerant feelings about

the scarlet lady of Babylon, is certain to be informed of your attendance at any High Church temple of worship. You cannot as a rule join in any celebration which your dear relatives consider unfitting without its speedily coming to their ears. Our sins have a greater tendency to make themselves heard of than our good deeds. Maurice was most assuredly not thinking of Tunnleton during the Epsom week, but there were Tunnleton men there who saw him, and a large section of Tunnleton is even now bewailing his backslidings and misfortunes.

It is very well, said Tunnleton, for General Shrewster and one or two more to express their belief in Mr. Enderby's innocence of the accusations laid against him, but "what was he doing at Epsom? Answer me that," demanded General Praun, fiercely; "I am told too that he has lost a very large sum of money."

As Maurice was now currently known to be the nephew of the owner of "the Wandering Nun," the defeat of that animal would naturally give rise to some such rumour in the little town, and it was upon that report that the latter part of General Praun's statement was founded. As for Maurice he troubled himself little about Tunnleton's opinion. He had received his first rebuff on a racecourse. He had made so sure of "the Wandering Nun's" victory that he felt very much as if he had lost a large sum of money; but General Shrewster had gauged him pretty accurately—he was just the man of which bold and daring bettors are made. He was not in the least depressed at his defeat, but simply keen and sanguine to recover his losses. His successes had been so unbroken, for every victory of Uncle John's flying filly had been practically a success for him, that he must have been a very craven to have been cast down by the first reverse. This was a quiet week, but next came Ascot, and there Maurice had made up his mind to plunge into the thick of the fray. Even Bessie, though very far from intending it, confirmed him in his resolution. He had mentioned neither his little bet on the Spring Handicap nor his big one on the Oaks, but, like himself, in spite of all her prudent resolutions, she had gradually come to look on Uncle John's racing successes as a welcome contribution to their income, and this last would have been such a grand prize. Such a sum as two thousand pounds odd, which

she had come to regard as sure to fall into their hands, was bitter disappointment to be bereft of, and she more than once laughingly expressed such disappointment to her husband.

"Never mind," he rejoined, "our good fairy has one or two engagements at Ascot, and we must hope that next week will find her restored to health. The sporting papers all say it was merely a temporary ailment."

"You won't go down, Maurice, will you?" she inquired, a little anxiously.

"Oh, yes, I shall," he replied. "It's no distance, and I thoroughly enjoy the sport."

"I am afraid Tunnleton will be more convinced than ever that you bet, if they hear of you at all these racecourses," said Bessie, with a smile.

"And with some justice at last," thought Maurice. Nonsense!" he said. What's Tunnleton to me or me to Tunnleton? Bar the Chyltons and Shrewsters, I think we have left no friends behind us there."

"Well, I must say I liked the Molecombes, they were very civil to us at the last, and very anxious to make amends for having lent too credulous an ear to that precious impostor Richard Madingley. By the way I had a letter from Edith this morning, and, what is more, it contains a mysterious message to you. She desires her kindest regards, hopes you will forgive her being so rude to you, and bids me say that she bears what you told her constantly in mind; and now, Maurice," cried Bessie quickly, "what did you tell her?"

"A mere nothing; only gave her my opinion regarding Richard Madingley, which she naturally refused to believe true. I am very glad to see that she at all events thinks that I may be right after all."

"She talks of coming up to town in the course of next week, when she hopes to see us."

There was one person who shook his head, though not so noisily as General Praun, yet much more seriously, over Maurice's proceedings. It so happened that General Shrewster had heard of Maurice's presence at the Spring Meeting, and he feared that his prediction was about to be realized.

"It will be the ruin of him, that life in London," he muttered, "with any amount of racing going on all round him. He will begin attending all these meetings, and as for a man of

his temperament not betting it is preposterous to think of. Ah! if there was only a chance of getting him into the service in some way. To pack him off to India, or rattle him out on service, would be the making of him just now, but I am afraid at his age there is no opening at present; odd, too, that we are not in a petty quarrel with somebody."

However, for a wonder, the country was not engaged in protecting its frontiers, punishing its feudatories, or annexing its neighbours, and soldiers had nothing for it but to regret the stagnation of their trade.

Mrs. Enderby was very pleased in the course of the week at receiving a visit from Edith Molecombe. That young lady was unfeignedly glad to find her hostess at home, and seemed still more pleased at discovering that Maurice was likely to be in later in the afternoon. She wanted very much to make friends with Mr. Enderby, who, she had taken it into her head, had a shrewd suspicion of her contemplated elopement, though she hardly anticipated the chance of saying much to him. As it turned out, when he did make his appearance, he was accompanied by his friend Mr. Grafton, and the conversation became, of course, general.

Grafton had never as yet set eyes upon Edith Molecombe, and, knowing her his ory as he did, looked upon her with no little curiosity. She was looking her best; the worry of her disappointment had imparted a refinement to her features which they had hitherto lacked. She was a nice-looking girl, of medium height, and with a neat figure, which showed off her dainty muslin draperies to the utmost advantage; and, in spite of Miss Torkesly's remark that it was high time she got married, although past her majority, she was still a long way off being an irreclaimable spinster.

"Well worth interfering about," thought Grafton; "it would have been a sin that a nice ladylike girl like that should have fallen into the hands of an unscrupulous blackleg."

In spite of his passion for sport of all description, Grafton was a man fond of ladies' society. He could drop all the shibboleth of the racecourse in their presence, and, rarer faculty still, could refrain from chanting his prowess amid the turnips or in the hunting-field to their weary ears. He chatted away to his hostess and Edith Molecombe about all the gossip of the day, and what was doing in town, in the liveliest

fashion. Fancy-fairs, exhibitions, royal patronages, Bob Grafton had attended them all and had a piquant anecdote to tell about many of them. He was a popular man, and sure of being heartily received at many a London teatable could he only be entrapped thither. It was not till the last moment that Grafton alluded to the forthcoming Ascot, and then it was briefly to arrange with Maurice where they should meet, but that allusion produced results which Bob never dreamed of.

"How I should like to see Ascot!" exclaimed Miss Molecombe; "but the Millisons, with whom I am staying, say they cannot find any one to go halves in a box, and Mr. Millison declares that he cannot afford to take a whole one."

"And I have never seen Ascot," cried Bessie, "and really," she continued, with a slight toss of her head, "as I am never likely to be part proprietor of another racehorse, I ought to be allowed to see 'the Wandering Nun' for once. Can't you manage it, Maurice?"

"Of course he can, and must," replied Grafton; "the idea of a lady who owns the best three-year-old of the year not going down to see her mare run! How can you expect her to win, Mrs. Enderby, if you don't personally smile on her exertions?"

Maurice was rather in a dilemma; he did not want to take his wife down to Ascot, but, considering that all the money which had come to them by means of "the Wandering Nun" was virtually hers, it did seem rather ungracious to refuse her request, so after some little hesitation he yielded, and said that if a box could be procured so late in the day he should be very glad to share one with Mr. Millison.

"Hold him to that, Mrs. Enderby, and never fear but what I'll find the box. It's of course a little late in the day, but there are always a few come in at the last moment belonging for the most part to regular tenants whom something suddenly prevents from attending," and with this Mr. Grafton made his adieux and departed.

"Do you think we shall get the box?" exclaimed Miss Molecombe, with eyes sparkling at the prospect of witnessing the, as yet, unknown glories of Ascot.

"I can only say the affair could not be in better hands.—Grafton knows all sorts of people, and if the thing is to be managed he is the man to do it."



"Yes, Edith," said Mrs. Enderby, who believed immensely in her husband's friend; "I don't think we shall be disappointed, so you may look out your best frocks."

"It will be delightful. I must run home now and tell Mr. Millison the good news: and Mr. Enderby," she continued in a low voice, "I want to apologise for being so rude to you that night; from several things I have learnt lately I am afraid you have told me the truth. I don't want to say anything more on the subject, but you may be sure I shall not forget your warning. Good-bye."

"I think she has pretty well got over it," said Maurice when he had returned from seeing his visitor out.

"Yes; there is one thing that, once convinced of it, would help a proud girl like Edith Molecombe much in getting over a disappointment; her pride would be so wounded at the thought of there being good reason to doubt her lover being a gentleman."

"Ah!" said Maurice, "I believe distraction is always recommended for these cases,"—he was still feeling a little annoyed at the idea of being saddled with ladies at Ascot—"I suppose Edith is just in the state described in the old song:

'From place to place they hurry me to banish my regret,  
And when they win a smile from me they fancy I forget:'

and, as far as my experience goes, they are pretty well justified in doing so. I don't suppose, if it is a fine day and her dress fits, that we shall be wrong in supposing that Edith has forgotten.

"You needn't sneer in that way, Maurice; it would be rather odd if she hadn't. Don't you know that from the day Richard Madingley left Tunnleton she has never heard of him? That is about three-quarters of a year ago; I think most girls would have ceased to think about such a lover as hers was in that time."

"It would be very curious if it should be so, but do you know, Bessie, it's just possible that Edith might see her old lover at Ascot. I have never seen him myself during my few days' racing experience, but Grafton tells me that he has caught sight of him once or twice, and that whatever he might have been when he was at Tunnleton he has little doubt now that he is enrolled in the ranks of the ring."



"We will hope she won't," replied Bessie ; "surely we shall not be mixed up with those sort of people ?"

"No, but I saw at Epsom that some of the smaller book-makers roamed about in pursuit of their calling in front of the Stand, and I daresay they will be the same at Ascot ; however, it is not very likely to happen, and, let Grafton only get us the box, no doubt we shall have a good time."

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A BLACK ASCOT.

NEVER was there greater promise of Queen's weather than the Ascot week held out for the royal meeting. No party on the Waterloo platform was in higher spirits than the Millisons and Enderbys. Old Millison was the head of a well-established broker's house on the Stock Exchange, and dearly loved a bit of racing now and then. A judicious *douceur* to the guard enabled them to obtain a compartment to themselves and, furnished with racecards, the whole party were speedily engaged in speculation as to what would win the Queen's Vase. Even the ladies caught the enthusiasm, desired to be instructed, and expressed their intention of having a bet upon the race. And Grafton soon found himself invested with the office of the ladies' commissioner, while they themselves plunged into an animated discussion as to what extent their investments were to be carried. Miss Molecombe solemnly handed a five-pound note over to Grafton, which he was adjoured to lay out to the best advantage. Mr. Millison deposited a similar stake on behalf of his wife, and then Maurice handed over a like sum on the part of Bessie. Mrs. Enderby was in a state of great excitement as to whether "the Wandering Nun" would run or not for the Queen's Vase. The mare was reported amongst the arrivals at Ascot, and was also coloured on the card. But Grafton rather inclined to the belief that she would not start for that race.

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three valuable engagements this week, and as she wasn't quite herself ten days ago it is probable they will keep her for something that is run over a less severe course than the Queen's Vase."

Now it had been arranged that the ladies should run down for the first day of the meeting and the Cup day. And now arose another problem for Grafton to solve. Mrs. Enderby was naturally excessively anxious to see this famous mare, of which she was half owner, run. Miss Molecombe was equally decided that above all things any race in which "the Wandering Nun" figured must be witnessed. But here came a little divergence in view; whereas Bessie and Mrs. Millison had only suggested a change of day if necessary, Edith thought that they had better adhere to their original arrangement, and come down an extra day if circumstances required it. Racing might amuse Miss Molecombe, or it might not, but she had at all events made up her mind to thoroughly satisfy herself on this point.

At last Ascot station is reached, and, descending from their carriage, the party followed the throng, making their way up the narrow lane leading to the back of the Stand. No sooner are the ladies comfortably installed in their box than Maurice and Grafton sally forth across the lawn towards the betting-ring to ascertain what is doing, leaving Mr. Millison to do *cicerone* and point out the humours of the course to the two neophytes. Their box was on the second tier, and looking down upon the crowd that thronged the lawn and racecourse afforded ample amusement to Mrs. Enderby and Edith. With their glasses they could see clearly the motley crowd on the far side, drags covered with men whose appearance unmistakably stamped them as wont to mingle in the clubs of St. James' and the drawing-rooms of Belgravia. Other drags there were in which the ladies looked quite as smartly dressed, but exhibited much want of that repose of manner which characterized their neighbours. The men too in these latter were remarkable for a brilliancy of attire, which, if not quite to be picked to pieces, gave a vague idea of not being exactly correct as a whole. There were the sable sons of minstrelsy, the tumblers, the gipsies, girls with the last musichall songs, strong men, freeaters, cardsellers, and all the miscellaneous crowd that mingle in the throng of a big race-meeting. Although watching them from

afar, Edith through her glasses could see quite well enough to be amused at the motley gathering. At length a line of police marched steadily down the centre of the course, other mounted policemen accompanying them, and in an incredibly short space of time the broad green ribbon is cleared of the loungers, who but a few minutes since had crowded it. Another minute, and a ringing cheer some distance down the course announces that the royal *cortège* is close at hand, and immediately afterwards some half-dozen open carriages, with the Prince and Princess of Wales in the leading one, passed leisurely up the centre of the course, and deposited their contents at the door of the Royal Stand.

The sharp note of the saddling-bell is now heard, and a minute or two later the numbers go up for the Trial Stakes.—There are five runners, and, as is usually the case in this race, one of them is at once made a pretty hot favourite.

Grafton and Maurice hurry in at the last moment, and Bob informs the ladies that he has taken two to one against Marmaduke, for what he calls the Ladies' Betting Association, limited. That he has backed it himself, and fancies it should win. But the Trial Stakes, which inaugurates the meeting, is generally an uncertain race and wont to result in discomfiture to the backers to start with. It follows its charter this afternoon, and our party see their horse beaten in a canter by a little-fancied outsider, about whom very long odds had been offered a few moments before ; however, nobody reeks much of the first reverse of a big meeting ; there is plenty of time for us to recover from such petty disaster ; and Grafton, as he laughed gaily and said "Better luck next time," little dreamed of the scale upon which Maurice had commenced operations. Enderby had made up his mind to bet in earnest for once, and had unluckily conceived a hazy notion of a system about backing horses. He did not know it, but the idea was as old as the hills, and had brought many a gallant backer to grief in his day. It was simply increasing your stakes after every rebuff, on the principle that your turn must come, and that when it does you will have recovered all your losses and a good deal besides. Maurice had lost fifty pounds upon this race, and had already determined to have a hundred on the next.

"Is my horse going to start, Mr. Grafton?" exclaimed Mrs. Enderby. "What have you heard about her in the ring?"

"No, you won't see her to-day," she is not to go for the Vase, but I hear she is to run on Thursday for the rich St. James's Palace Stakes. Not quite perhaps all the honour and glory of winning the Vase, but a much richer prize, and if 'the Wandering Nun' is at all herself she should win without difficulty."

The Gold Vase which immediately succeeded, terminated, as the prelude to luncheon always ought to, in the triumph of the favourite, and a monetary success to the little party all round, and they adjourned to their cold lamb, lobster salad, and champagne, which Millison's servants had laid daintily out on the lawn at the back of the stand, in the highest of spirits. The stock-broker was a lover of the flesh-pots, and had a capital notion of doing things properly, and two bulky hampers in charge of his butler and footman had accompanied them from town. Maurice, in particular, was in high feather; he had put a hundred on the winner and was consequently more enamoured of his theory than ever. They were very merry over the lunch, and, when they trooped back to the box to once more enjoy the sport, Miss Molecombe vowed that racing was the most exciting amusement in which she had ever embarked, and that a proprietress of racehorses like Mrs. Enderby was a woman wonderfully favoured of fortune.

"You will have to lay out some of your winnings," exclaimed Edith, "in purchasing two or three more racers. It must be so nice to have a few of one's own."

"No, no, Mrs. Enderby," laughed Grafton, "we must make a good deal more money than we've done so far before we start our stud. You are to appoint me your master of the horse, remember, and I can't authorize our beginning as yet."

It would be tedious to follow our friends through all the vicissitudes of fortune. Interesting as the fierce battle between backer and bookmaker is to those engaged, it is somewhat wearisome to read about. Suffice it to say, that wagering under the sage advice of Bob Grafton, when after the last race but one they made their way back to the train, they were all winners with one exception. Flushed with success, Maurice had trusted to his own judgment instead of relying upon his mentor, and unfortunately had done so for a considerable sum. He alone had lost money on the day; the others, although far from requiring sacks to carry home their winnings,

were still victors in the afternoon ; and Edith Molecombe, at all events, was convinced that racing was the sport for kings. as, indeed, it may well be termed so far as English monarchs are concerned.

Many a black Ascot has opened as seductively as this one, and looked like a very garden of Bendemeer to the fashionable London throng, who have already found their resources severely taxed to keep pace with the constantly recurring exigencies of the season. The veterans put but little faith in these gay openings, and the fielders blench not a whit because the first day goes against them. The former have seen the storm-clouds gather heavily round the Royal Hunt Cup—that prettiest of gambling races—and the decision of the Workings cause Ascot to close, metaphorically speaking, in a gloom dark as Erebus. It had been settled that the ladies were not to go down on the off-day, but the men all met again at Waterloo, Maurice keener than ever for the fray, and with a firm conviction, shared indeed by the other two, that it was a card easy to pick winners from. But disaster came with the opening race, when the favourite, upon whom two, and in some instances even three, to one were laid was most ignominiously beaten. The second race was attended with a similar result, and then came the pause which usually proceeds the Royal Hunt Cup. The competitors were numerous, and the betting remarkably heavy ; but the powerful stable that owned Duke Humphrey were apparently not to be stayed by any efforts of the bookmakers, and continued to back their horse. Two of the patricians connected with that stable were as shrewd judges and as bold speculators as any men on the turf, and sheer weight of metal kept their horse at the head of the poll, although many of the others were also backed heavily. Acting under the advice of Grafton, Maurice had thrown in his lot with Duke Humphrey.

He was standing against the rails of the lawn, scanning the competitors as they cantered past, when a voice he thought he knew struck upon his ear.

"Do as you like," said the speaker, "but I tell you it is so. I know all that ; I've heard it all before. Lord Lynton and Sir Ralph don't throw their money away, I grant you. They make mistakes at times, and they're making one here. There's a tout I employ on those Downs, and he's about the best of his

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calling in England. They've tried Duke Humphrey all right enough, but their training ground is not the new mile at Ascot, and they have not yet quite opened their eyes to the fact that their horse is a rogue."

Maurice had recognised the speaker by this, and looked round to make sure that he was right in his conjecture. Richard Madingley was turned slightly away from him, but the satchel hung from his shoulder left no doubt about the part he played on a racecourse.

"And you think, then," said Dick's companion, a somewhat over-dressed young man, "that Jerry can beat the Duke?"

"No, not if the Duke would try; but he won't like the hill, and he won't like the struggle; and so I recommend you, if you want to get out of your scrape, to back Jerry this time. You can get a good price, at least you could just now. I've made my book for him, and backed him besides."

Maurice wondered if there could be anything in what Madingley said; he had looked with rather contempt upon that gentleman's judgment at Tunnleton, and considered that he himself was a far better judge, which, had he analysed it, was simply based upon the fact that he happened to know more about "the Wandering Nun" than Madingley. No, he decided if he was to let his own opinion be swayed by every idle rumour he heard, he might back half the horses in the race. "Jerry," he muttered, contemptuously, and here he turned round and asked one of the outside bookmakers what that horse's price was.

"I've done on the race, sir," replied the man civilly, "but I laid one hundred to six about that one."

Maurice walked quietly back to his box to see the race, where he found his two friends duly installed, and with their glasses in their hands. There was the usual slight delay at the post, and then the bell announced that the field for the Hunt Cup was away.

"We can't see 'em till they top the hill," cried Grafton. "Keep your glasses on its crest, Maurice. All right so far," he exclaimed, as the charging squadron, glittering like a tulip-bed in the summer sun, flashed in sight, "Duke Humphrey is lying fourth."

And now the squandering began. A little more and there were only six in it, opposite the Stand there were but three.



Duke Humphrey was leading, but sticking to his quarters like a bur on either hand were a pair of antagonists who promised to give trouble. Another stride or two and the one on the near side has shot his bolt, and gives way beaten, but the one on the off closes with him inch by inch, and no sooner does the Duke find this doughty opponent at his girths than he lays back his ears, and swerving across the course enables Jerry to win by a good half-length. From the box they cannot be sure of the result, but when the numbers go up Maurice sees that Dick Madingley has been at all events right this time. The ill-luck of the backers continues through the afternoon, favourite after favourite goes down, and on the homeward journey Maurice feels a little serious when he reflects upon his losses.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE ST. JAMES'S PALACE STAKES.

MAURICE had begun the week with a very handsome balance at his banker's, derived entirely from the victories of Uncle John's flying filly, but he might well look serious when he thought of the inroads he had made upon that balance during the last two days. The latent demon of gambling had been aroused in him, and he had already discovered that it requires a man of iron will to follow a system on the turf, and a little more knowledge of that amusement will show him that a system is infallible on a racecourse as it is at the gaming-table. It is certainly harder to carry out, for in the latter case you will be allowed to pursue your theory untroubled by advice, whilst in the former you are generally advised of nearly as many winners as there are runners in the stake about to be contended for. Neither his wife nor Grafton had the slightest idea of the magnitude of his speculations.

Mr. Hampton the bookmaker was a prominent member of Tallesrsall's, and at Ascot had a particular coign of vantage, which custom seemed to have made his own. At the corner

of the inner ring, adjacent to the Grand Stand, and just beneath the lower gallery of the Iron stand, was a square pillar about five feet high; from the top of this Mr. Hampton was wont to offer to give or to take the odds to all comers. It was an excellent position for his purpose; everybody could find him, and he was both within reach of those in Tattersall's enclosure and also of those without the pale. His secretary stood, book in hand, at the foot of the pillar, taking note of his transactions as quickly as they were made, and such was the swarm of customers at the foot of the pillar, that it was all the secretary could do to write down his employer's wagers. Long habit had made the pair thoroughly expert at their business, and it was rarely that Hampton's memory faltered as to what sum he had laid against any particular horse. It was with this man that Maurice had carried on his speculations. He could not go into the inner ring, and in the outer lawn had not the knowledge which would enable him to distinguish good men and true from the pirates who mingled with them.

Hampton knew Mr. Enderby to be a friend of Grafton, and that had been introduction enough for him; besides, he had given the bookmaker a hundred-pound note through the medium of Grafton when "the Wandering Nun" was beaten for the Oaks, and therefore Hampton had been only too glad to welcome him as a new client.

There had never been such a glorious Ascot week known, said the pleasure-loving dames and demoiselles who, robed in their freshest and prettiest, thronged the Waterloo platform on the day of the Gold Cup.

"There had never been such a deuce of a time seen," said their male belongings, who had passed the last eight-and-forty hours in weary battle with the bookmakers. Men studied the card gravely, and pronounced it promising.

"A winning card, Mrs. Enderby," said Grafton gaily, "better than the first day's even, and we did pretty well then."

"And it need to be," replied old Millison, "for if they don't have a change for the better the gentleman will be all clean broke."

"We are going to see your colours out to-day, Mrs. Enderby, and I think we must all have a plunge on 'the Wandering Nun.' She ought to win the St. James's Palace Stakes, if

well, and they would hardly have sent her to Ascot unless she was supposed to have a race in her."

"Yes, Mrs. Enderby," exclaimed Edith, "when we see your pretty blue and white sleeves go by victorious our throats must make the welkin ring. Isn't that the proper way to put it, Mr. Grafton?—and oh! by the way, what *is* the welkin?"

"That's known only to the poets," replied Grafton, "and the craft keep that mystery safely to themselves."

They arrived at Ascot in time to see the royal *cortège* sweep up the course in state; the Master of the Buckhounds, attended by his huntsman and whips, riding at the head of the procession. There was much cheering from all parts of the course, and much waving of pocket-handkerchiefs from the Grand Stand, as the prince and princess bowed their acknowledgments. Royalty safely disposed of, racing people settled down to the regular business of the day.

It would have been well for Maurice Enderby if he could have overheard a conversation which took place on the corner of the lawn next the racecourse about this very time. Mr. Pick and Richard Madingley had been holding grave conference over the afternoon programme, at the conclusion of which Mr. Pick remarked—

"We had a rare innings yesterday. I tell you what, Dick, the swells looked blue enough over it, but I've a strong idea that indigo will be nothing to 'em by the time the card's finished to-day. This 'Wandering Nun' will be facer the first, there'll be heavy plunging on her, and I've got a hint from a man I can depend on that she is not quite up to concert-pitch."

"There is one thing more; you remember that young parson who spoilt my game at Tunnleton. I always stuck to it he was a betting-man, and he is here, and what is more he is backing 'em and no mistake. I was just putting a young friend of mine on Jerry for the Hunt Cup yesterday, when I twigg'd him with his ears back listening to all I was saying. Well, after that I stalked my gentleman and found him interviewing Hampton before every race. Now I owe that fellow a pretty heavy score, and I should like to settle a bit of it at this meeting. If you give me a lift I think we can induce him to back a loser or two pretty heavily."

"Well," rejoined Mr. Pick, "from all you've told me I

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shouldn't think you would be the man to whom he would come for advice, but if you can speak to him put him on 'the Wandering Nun' to begin with."

"I can't speak to him for one thing," rejoined the other, "and he'll back that one safe enough without ever a hint from me; he's always been mad about her; no, from my being right about Jerry he's pretty sure to pay attention to what I say; I want him to overhear a little talk between you and me before the Gold Cup; you understand?"

Mr. Pick grinned in reply,

"Yes," he said, "that also promises to be a queer race, but we'll put the parson on the winner, no fear—rather!" and, with an ominous wink Mr. Pick disappeared through the wicket of the inner ring.

One or two minor races were disposed of to start with, resulting in no material difference between backers and fielders, and then the numbers were hoisted for the St. James's Palace Stakes. "The Wandering Nun" was the cynosure of all eyes in the pack; she was pronounced a grand mare, and many of her admirers marvelled not a little how she had lost the Oaks; her coat shone like satin, and the crowd generally announced her in splendid condition. One or two old hands, and more especially those who knew the mare best, shook their heads and muttered "She would be the better for another gallop or two," but these cavillers were deemed hypercritical, and the crowd, full of enthusiasm for John Madingley's filly, rushed back to the ring prepared to stake their money freely on what many of them declared was the "best thing of the meeting." The fielders were apparently of the same way of thinking, and declined, in the first instance, to do business under three to one "on," and some of the irrepressible, who are always anxious to be early in the market, laid those odds on "the Wandering Nun." The bookmakers took a point shorter later on, but excitable Maurice, one can easily imagine, had not waited for that but promptly laid Hampton six hundred pounds to two hundred on the mare as soon as the betting opened.

That there was great excitement in Mrs. Enderby's box it is needless to say. The ladies had not only invested one of those subscribed fivers but all such winnings as still remained to them from the Tuesday, and their glasses were rivetted on

"the Wandering Nun" the minute she made her appearance. A slashing, dark chestnut mare, with not a speck of white about her save the blaze on her face, and looking really fit to run for her life, except to a thoroughly trained eye, owned by a man also well acquainted with the mare. The ladies were enthusiastic, and even Grafton, accustomed as he was to the vicissitudes of the racecourse and carefully as he had scanned "the Wandering Nun" in the paddock, told Mrs. Enderby that he thought she was sure to see her favourite win to-day.

The race may be told in a few words; "The Wandering Nun" apparently held her opponents safe until she reached the distance, then it was seen that she was palpably in difficulties, and, though she struggled gamely till her jockey ceased riding, she only finished a bad third to two animals of infinitely inferior class to herself. The want of condition up the punishing Ascot mile had beaten her.

A fierce shout of exultation with which the ring welcomed the downfall of the favourite was succeeded by an ominous silence. Everybody connected with racing knew that one of the heaviest beating meetings seen of late was going all one way, and that the week was likely to end in wide-spread disaster and leave many a gap in the fashionable world; even the ring looked somewhat askance at its good fortune, and a hard-headed northern member of the fraternity was heard to say to one of his exultant brethren,

"Noa, noa, laad, it's too good; if the swells don't have a turn or two before we finish there will be no saatlins worth speaking of."

In Mrs. Enderby's box there was much lamentation; not only had they lost their money, and women never like that, but they were all much mortified at seeing the famous mare, with which they had proudly identified themselves, beaten, and it was with a sense of relief that Bessie and Edith Molecombe welcomed Grafton's proposal that they should take a turn on the lawn and then walk up the course, have a look into the Royal inclosure, and see the horses parade for the Gold Cup. Maurice had disappeared the moment the race was decided, and Mrs. Millison, a portly lady not much given to exertion, declined to leave her chair even to feast her eyes on the millinery triumphs displayed in front of the Royal Stand; however, she made no objection to being left alone, and so,

under the charge of Mr. Millison and Grafton, the other sallied forth.

Like many another plunger of that memorable Ascot, Maurice glanced moodily at his betting-book and wondered whether he could afford to go on; he knew very well that he had no more right to continue than he ever had to have begun, but still, thanks to the thousand guineas, he had not yet got to the end of his balance at his banker's. It was impossible that things could go on like this; it would never do to give up now, luck must turn. He sauntered idly towards the entrance of the inner ring.

The next race, which was a small one, had virtually resolved itself into a match; it looked pretty well a certainty for one, and, flushed with success, the ring were liberal enough to take short odds about the result. Once more did Maurice boldly reply to Hampton's challenge, and this time his venture was crowned with success. He had the satisfaction that he had reduced his losses to some small extent. He had not been up to the box to see this race but had viewed it from the rails, and, as he turned away, he found himself face to face with Dick Madingley.

"How do you do, Mr. Enderby?" said Dick; "you were pretty severe upon me because the people of Tunnleton took an idea into their heads and declared that I was a liar and impostor; do you think there is much to choose between us now?"

"You'll be good enough not to address yourself to me in future," rejoined Maurice, haughtily.

"Now don't go on in that way, Mr. Enderby. I'll own I couldn't stand you at Tunnleton because I looked upon you as an arrant hypocrite; you declared you never bet on races."

"Nor did I," rejoined Maurice quickly.

"No matter; I suppose you hardly pretend you don't now, and I like you all the better for it. I'd do you a good turn if you would let me."

"I want neither your advice nor your conversation," replied Maurice coldly.

"Go your own way then," replied Dick; "you must have had a pretty bad time, like the rest of them, and the upset of 'The Wandering Nun' would not improve things for you; she was a favourite of yours from the first. Oh, you needn't be



"afraid," continued Dick, as Maurice made a gesture of impatience, "after the Gold Cup is over perhaps you'll wish you had listened to what I had got to say," and, turning sharply on his heel, Madingley disappeared amongst the throng.

Maurice could hardly suppose that Dick would do him a good turn. He must have been singularly blind if he had failed to see the rage and malice concentrated in Madingley's face at their last interview. He had not been the cause of his exposure in Tunnleton, but it was he who had baffled his projects by threatening to divulge the further information he had acquired concerning him. No living thing likes being hunted except perhaps foxes, and man is wont to treasure up fierce resentment against his social pursuer. No, whatever his motive might be, it would be absurd to suppose that he could feel any desire to be of use to him, Maurice Enderby. And yet Maurice could not divest himself of the idea that Dick was really in possession of mysterious information about the big race now so soon to be run.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE GOLD CUP.

MRS. ENDERBY and Edith most thoroughly enjoyed their stroll through the lawn. Under Grafton's guidance they passed through the wicket, and proceeded up the course till they were opposite the Royal inclosure, where they fastened their eyes on the very last efforts of the crack London *modistes*. It is a wondrous show, that lawn on a fine Cup day, when fashion's fairest daughters ruffle it in all their bravery. It was their first experience of Ascot, remember. The two country girls were delighted with everything they saw. Grafton, it need scarcely be said, knew by sight everyone who was anyone in the London world, and pointed out many celebrities to his charges. "And now," he said, as the roar of the betting-ring broke once more upon the ear, "it is getting time we went back. The numbers are up, and we shall have the horses out directly."

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As they re-entered the wicket, Grafton and his companion had fallen a little behind Bessie and Mr. Millison. Suddenly Bob felt a strange flutter on the little hand within his arm. He turned quickly to see what was the matter. Miss Molecombe's face was very pale, and her eyes were looking into infinite space with that far-away look which we all assume when determined not to see anyone.

Just in front of them stood Mr. Richard Madingley, busily vociferating,

"The Gold Cup I'll take odds upon."

He was well dressed enough, but there could be no mistaking what his vocation was even by one so little versed in race-courses as Edith Molecombe. He was busy taking money, and giving in exchange tickets which he took from the bag slung across his shoulder. Grafton would have led his charge away, but ere he could do so Madingley had caught sight of them, and, though Edith was most certainly not looking at him, the unabashed scamp, with a smile, deliberately raised his hat to her. As Grafton told Maurice afterwards, he never felt more inclined to try his hand at physical force; but, although aware that this man's salutation was a positive insult to Miss Molecombe, there was of course nothing to be done; to have resented it would have only made a scandal, in which Edith's name would have been bandied about.

Grafton, having seen Miss Molecombe safe to the box, at once disappeared to see what was doing in the betting-ring. On his way thither he ran across Maurice, who eagerly asked him what he thought of the Cup.

"Well, I don't know much what to think of it. How are they betting?"

"There are only two backed in earnest. They take even money about the Vicking, and there's a large party who are backing old Bellona."

"Ah! I can quite understand that," observed Grafton. "They know the old mare can go the course, and it's yet to be seen whether the young one can stay." And with that Grafton disappeared into the inner inclosure. Almost immediately afterwards Maurice's attention was arrested by the voice of Dick Madingley. He was talking to one or two of his brethren, and apparently perfectly unaware that Maurice was in his vicinity.

"No, don't tell me," he was exclaiming in much the same arrogant way he had been wont to assert his opinion at the Tunnleton Club, "this Vicking won't win. Old Bellona will gallop him to a standstill. The swells will get another spill, you see if they don't. I have it pretty straight from the stable. They very much doubt whether their horse can stay, but they hope it will be a slow run race, and then they know that they can cut the old mare down for speed. But the Bellona people are quite as wideawake as their neighbours, and they mean the race to be run right through."

The little group seemed much impressed with Mr. Madingley's views, and they all agreed that to take three to one about Bellona under the circumstances on this information was about as good a chance of making money as often fell to men, and then apparently separated to take advantage of it.

Maurice was strangely impressed with this conversation. It coincided in some measure with Grafton's idea of the race, and moreover it offered the great chance to recoup himself for which he so anxiously looked. His mind was made up quickly; he would wait no longer, but take Hampton's fifteen hundred to five hundred if he could get it.

Verily, General Shrewster was right. The gambler's instinct was strong within Maurice.

Hampton hesitated for a moment, and then replied, "All right, Mr. Enderby, three monkeys to one, Bellona;" and, that little bit of business satisfactorily concluded, Maurice thought he would go back to the box and see the race. There he was not a little surprised to find that Grafton had changed his opinion and backed the favourite, both for himself and his fair clients.

"You told me you fancied the mare for the race," said Maurice.

"So I did," replied Grafton; "but when I got inside there I found all the best judges were going for the Vicking, and they assured me there wasn't the slightest doubt about his staying."

"Well these are the sort of rumours that backers of horses are usually destined to hear till the race is run. Up to the very last moment there is always somebody to presage disaster to the steed that carries your investment. Some *gobe-mouche* invariably encounters you with tales detrimental to that luckless horse's welfare. He may be right, he may be wrong, but

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his actual knowledge is certainly no more than that of the policeman who keeps the wicket ; and I once saw that official gravely consulted on the subject of the Gold Cup by an unmistakable West-end cockney.

There was no delay at the starting-post on this occasion. The half dozen runners were dispatched almost immediately, and the race itself was as tame a struggle for the Cup as ever was seen, and may be told in two lines. Bellona made running till they were in the Swinley Bottom, when Vicking took up the running and galloped home an easy winner by twenty lengths, to the great delight of Mrs. Enderby and Edith. The irony of fate is common enough on our leading racecourses. Wives and daughters rejoice over the gloves and bon-bons they have won, knowing little what the triumph has cost their husbands and brothers. The fickle goddess is capricious, and is wont to deal better with our feminine belongings than she does with ourselves.

Maurice laughed gaily as he congratulated his wife and the rest on their success, and in answer to Grafton's inquiries as to what he had won himself, replied, "I was not so lucky as you all seem to have been ; my investment, sad to say, was on Bellona," and then Maurice abruptly left the box.

This last defeat was a crushing blow. He knew now that he was getting near the end of his resources, and felt that he had hardly capital enough remaining with which to take advantage of a turn in the tide, even if it should come. It had not occurred to him that the conversation he had overheard had been got up expressly for his benefit ; and, only that Madingley, afraid of risking this chance of wreaking his vengeance, sternly discountenanced it, one of his companions upon that occasion would have endeavoured to lay Maurice the odds against Bellona, which mare the confederates believed really to have no sort of chance with the favourite.

But Dick Madingley's malice would have hardly been gratified without his making Maurice aware that he had been the victim of a little conspiracy. One of his associates had dogged Enderby until he had heard him make that bet with Hampton in accordance with the false information he had been allowed to overhear. The confederate quickly reported the fact to his principal, and it was with much chuckling Madingley and his companions saw the race terminate just as they had anticipated.

"Come along," said Dick in such jubilant tones as a man may use who has won his money and worsted his enemy ; for although Dick had fielded in the first instance, he had turned round and backed the favourite to finish with. "Come along," he said, "I want to give the parson another chance ; he benefited so much by listening to gentlemen's private conversation last time that he is safe to be keen to be in our little secrets again," and Mr. Madingley favoured his friends with a wink and grimace.

"Yes," rejoined Mr. Pick, "it was a very neat little plant, but it is a thousand pities we couldn't have collared that five hundred instead of Hampton, it would have been so much more finished like."

The confederates had not to go far before they saw Maurice, smoking a meditative cigar and thinking over what he had best do next. With another wink at his companions Dick took up his position within earshot of, but with his back towards, Maurice. They clustered round him like bonnets round a cardsharper, and then Mr. Madingley commenced his narration.

"I'll just tell you how it was, you never saw such a game. There's a fellow here whom I've vowed to pay out for an ugly trick he served me in the country not long since. He's as innocent as a baby when he gets on a racecourse, and I saw him going about with his ears cocked listening here and listening there, and seeing what he could make of it all. When he had put it altogether I knew that he looked upon it that I was a tidy judge of racing, and it suddenly occurred to me to put him on a 'wrong 'un' for the Cup. I let him hear a valuable piece of information, and am blessed if the sagacious cuss didn't trot off and back it for a monkey."

An ostentatiously loud guffaw followed the conclusion of Dick's narrative. It was not that his listeners were really amused, it was more like the conspirators' chorus in "Madame Angot," a necessary *fanfaronade* for the proper rendering of the plot. Maurice had heard every word, and knew that he was intended to hear it, and could have grovelled on the lawn at his own foolishness. Was it likely that any information ostentatiously dropped by such men as Dick Madingley could have any other object than to delude the bystanders? Was it likely that Madingley would drop a hint for his benefit? Of

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course not ; but that he would gladly be the cause of his losing a lot of money was easy of comprehension. He had thirsted himself to strike Dick to the ground at Tunnleton, and was it to be supposed that Dick's feelings towards him had not been of similar nature ? He had read of the salting of gold and diamond mines, and saw now, idiot that he was, how possible it was to salt gold mines on the turf. If there was one man at Ascot whose ill will he had good cause to dread it was Richard Madingley, and he had been insane enough to follow his advice on a big race.

"Fool ! fool ! thrice sodden fool !" he muttered. "The veriest child would have mistrusted one who had always been his avowed enemy, and I must actually put faith in him. I start on a system and neglect to follow it. I put my own judgment of racing against Grafton's, who has been following it the last ten years. No wonder I have come to grief. To finish with," he continued grimly, "I happen to have thrown in for the worst meeting backers have had this year. Well, I've gone too far to give in now. It may as well be a little worse as left where it is. Luck must change, one cannot always go on backing losers."

It is to be hoped not, still the sad fact remains that one may do so for a very considerable time. There is nothing in this life in which luck does not form an ingredient.

Bob Grafton, lounging through the lawn where he smoked his after-luncheon cigar suddenly ran across Mr. Hampton. "Well, we got the best of you that last time, but you and your brethren are having a rare meeting."

"Well, yes, Mr. Grafton, we are ; as poor Ned Caley used to say, I am almost tired of winning money. I beg pardon, Mr. Grafton, there's a gentleman you introduced me to, who I think you should give a hint to. Mr. Enderby is having an awful time."

"But he's not betting high, surely ?" exclaimed Grafton.

"Well, sir," replied Hampton, "of course I don't know anything about his income or resources, nor do I know what other bets he may be making, but he must be getting on towards a couple of thousand to the bad in my ledger."

"I had no idea he was betting like that," replied Grafton quietly. "He don't usually speculate so heavily, but he's good enough, if that's what you mean."



"No, Mr. Grafton, I didn't quite mean that. I only mean that he's backing his bad luck right out. I've seen a meeting or two like this before, and I can only say if I was a backer I should turn it up and go back to London."

As Grafton walked away he reflected rather seriously over what the bookmaker had told him; he had no doubt that Hampton's story was correct, and that Maurice, carried away by the excitement of what he called his first race-meeting, had staked heavy sums again and again. He knew perfectly well what this was to the Enderbys. It meant sweeping away all those winnings of "the Wandering Nun" even if they sufficed to pay Maurice's liabilities. He thought rather ruefully that it was he who had been at the bottom of this Ascot excursion. However, there was no more to be said, but it made Grafton somewhat grave for the remainder of the afternoon.

They were a somewhat sombre carriage full on their way back to town. First and foremost they were all tired, and in the crowd of the Cup day had a considerable difficulty in getting away from Ascot station—two trains leaving before they succeeded in obtaining the accommodation they required; and those who have experienced that wait at the station after a fatiguing and unsuccessful day will quite understand that there was not much life or conversation in the party on the way home—in short, most of them, I think, slept more or less, and if Maurice did not he was at all events chewing the bitter cud of his own thoughts.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE NEWS OF ISANDHLWANA.

ASCOT is over; there is nothing left but to pay the bill, and Maurice sits gloomily this Saturday morning, pondering over the pages of his betting-book. It is no use hoping for a mistake in the figures, he has gone over it at least a dozen times, trying to cheat himself with the idea that he has added it up wrongly; but no, the figures are inexorable, his losses are larger than he had fancied them. Even if he drains his bank-

ing account to the last shilling it will not suffice to discharge his Ascot liabilities. He does not quite know what to do; he must go and consult Grafton about it; indeed, he would have to do that in any case, as it was through him that he usually settled with Hampton. He did not quite relish the confession he had got to make to his friend. It is difficult to mask ill-tidings from those who love us and are accustomed to note every change of our face—and, to add to his perplexities, Bessie saw something had gone wrong with him, and, though she was very far from guessing the whole truth, it did not require much penetration on her part to suspect he had lost more money during the week than was justifiable.

However, having calmed her apprehensions as well as he could, he started forth for Grafton's chambers in Half Moon Street, and found that gentleman at breakfast, although it was past noon.

"Come in," he said, "and sit down; I always take it out after a hard week's racing, especially when it has been such a week of disaster as this has. I've a philosopher among my acquaintance who always takes to his bed when he is hard hit; as he says, it is the most economical thing you can do. You don't spend money, and are edging any amount of sleep for livelier times."

All the time Bob rattled on he was watching his companion's face keenly—as he rightly guessed, he was about to listen to a discussion of ways and means. He had listened to so many from all sorts of people that he was quick at reading the signs of the storm-beaten. Indeed, he enjoyed quite a reputation in this way. Clear headed and fertile in resource, it was quite a common saying amongst his own set, "Go to Bob Grafton, he'll pull you through if anybody can."

"I want to consult you, Bob," said Maurice, as he took a chair.

"I know," interrupted Grafton; "you got hit deuced hard at Ascot. I'd no idea you were betting heavily, or else I should have told you not to be such a fool as to do it. However, it's no use talking about that now; the question is, what does the scrape come to?"

"Twenty-four eighty," replied Maurice as he handed his memorandum book to his host.

"Well, you've joined the plunging school with a vengeance,"

rejoined Grafton. "I heard something of this accidentally at Ascot. The names of the heavy losers generally ooze out in the ring, and I suppose you attracted attention as a new hand. But I'd no idea it was so bad as this. Well, it's no use going over it all, you've no doubt totted it up correctly. *How* it was lost is of no consequence—that it has got to be paid at once—is. What are the assets?"

"About five hundred short of that amount if I draw out my last shilling."

"Well, you can't quite do that, you must have some ready money to carry on with. Hampton, I see, is your main creditor. You must let me have as much as you can spare on Monday morning. I'll pay off the few minor creditors, I will give Hampton all there is left on account, and ask him to give you time for the remainder."

"Yes," said Maurice, gloomily, "I know all that can be done, but the worst of it is, I don't see what time is to do for me."

"I do," rejoined Grafton; "and, if you'll promise me solemnly not to go plunging any more, I can give you a gleam of comfort in that direction. Remember, 'the Wandering Nun' was all amiss at Epsom, and she hadn't got over it at Ascot, but I can tell you what I saw there—some of the cleverest men on the turf were backing her quite quietly for the Leger. Now, you stand to win quite enough upon her without backing her. Half the Leger stakes will satisfy Hampton and put your banking account in a very satisfactory position—should it happen to come off."

"Let me only get out of the trouble that way, and I will give my word never to go racing again. I can't trust myself, Bob; it's intoxication, infatuation, what you will; but I couldn't look on at it without betting."

"No, I understand you now," replied Grafton, "and deeply regret I ever persuaded you to accompany me to a racecourse. I've met your sort before, nothing but total abstinence is of any use to you; and I tell you what, old man, the sooner you get some thing to do—to work your superfluous steam off at, the better. You're certain to come to grief if you stop idling about town."

Talk about marking out our own career—how very little we often have to say to it. Men who have started for the

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bar have become eminent dramatists ; men who have started for the navy have become famous judges ; while warriors like Cromwell and Clive were not bred to arms. Had it not been for Uncle John's wedding-present, Maurice Enderby might have blossomed into a respectable clergyman ; as it is, wherever his future may lie, he will never obtain celebrity in this wise. Yet Maurice's pen was getting recognized amongst the guild of literature as that of a bright, lively writer, with considerable power of satire, one who handled the topics of the day in light, masterly, and, above all, readable fashion. It might not be very lucrative employment as yet, but he had at all events established a market for his wares.

Now another person whose character had been somewhat altered by Ascot was Miss Molecombe. She had been, previous to her affair with Dick Madingley, a quiet, conventional young lady ; but these latter events had imparted a certain amount of dash and possession to her manner which it had not possessed before. She had been pretty well cured of her passion for Dick Madingley before going to stay with the Millisons. No girl who had dared so much for a lover could have stood the cool, premeditated neglect that followed the *fiasco* of her attempted elopement. She had stood up for him for some time, but her womanly pride had been cut to the quick, and it must have been indeed a very clear explanation which would restore him to her good graces. At Ascot she saw him in his true colours, and the very salt was sown over her dead love with a vengeance ; but strange to say she returned to Tunneleton with a great admiration for Maurice Enderby. He had been so loyal and true to her, and above all the very iniquities now charged against him rather glorified him in her eyes. That Mr. Enderby had withdrawn from the Church, and had lost a very large sum of money at Ascot, was no secret whatever in Tunneleton. The latter Dick Madingley had taken care should reach that town, where he hoped it might do Maurice considerable harm. He was not aware that Enderby had severed all connection with it, but the blackening of Maurice's character was a thing to which he was ready to devote himself ungrudgingly. But Miss Molecombe looked back upon Maurice's misdeeds, when they came to her knowledge, with a species of reverence. We all understand it. The petty sinners regard the great ones with a quiet awe. And the mild gamblers

of the racecourse revere the magnates of the turf, whose chief celebrity lies in the fact that they bet in thousands, instead of wagering the more modest stakes of their fellows. Even mere boys who have lost some thousands in anticipation of their patrimony are looked at with morbid interest, and yet if there is one thing within every one's accomplishment it is the losing of money.

When General Shrewster heard the Ascot story he wrote a few sensible lines to Maurice, in which, while regretting that his warning had been so quickly found too prophetic, he repeated Bob Grafton's advice of "total abstinence," and further added, "There is trouble arising in South Africa, and you should hold yourself in readiness to take advantage of the earliest opportunity of volunteering that may arise. Count upon me to back you in this. Now, to help yourself. I have heard that you wield a smartish pen of your own. Can't you get an appointment from one of the daily papers should these rumours turn out true? It would be no detriment to you as an extra aid, remember, to be in possession of the ear of a prominent daily. Take my advice, and look after the second string at once, and, if you can't speak whatever the lingo of those parts may be, well, pretend you can."

Maurice was thunderstruck as he finished this letter. Mr. Greville, in his Memoirs, recalls how Epsom and Newmarket utterly absorb a man, and Maurice had forgotten for some days to take note of anything in the papers that did not bear upon the pursuit uppermost in his thoughts, but though he heeded them not, and the Government also troubled their heads but little about it, there were signs of stormy times on the Cape frontier. We were acting with our usual contempt for our neighbours, arrogantly sending a corporal's guard to put down a simmering insurrection which required a division to intimidate it.

It is our way, I suppose. We are so impressed with the manner in which a handful of policemen cow a London mob, that we believe a like handful of soldiers will suffice to strike terror into the hearts of our savage neighbours. We are astonished to find that, much as well-trained soldiers can effect by science and superior weapons, yet when the foe, exulting in his numbers, has, reckless of loss, fought his way in to a hand-to-hand struggle, the barbarian's sinews are tougher

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than those of our own men. Overweening confidence and insufficient numbers have been the cause of more than one disaster to our arms, and first successes give courage to the enemy.

Here and there an old military man, who knew the country, shook his head, and prophesied that if Government did not stamp this little agitation out promptly they would find themselves involved in an awkward war before many weeks were over.

The croakers were right—these prophets of ill omen are at times—and, when the cable flashed the news that a British regiment had been annihilated, the nation was one in demanding that the Zulu king should be at once brought to his knees. A mere question of time and troops, no doubt, but meanwhile those with a stomach for fighting were like to get their fill of it.

The story of the all but annihilation of the Twenty-fourth, and heroic defence of Rorke's Drift had not yet reached England, when General Shrewster wrote, but it followed pretty quickly on the heels of his letter, and Maurice saw now that the chance had come to him. As General Shrewster had foreseen, brigadiers, staff-officers, and newspaper correspondents, were all on the wing, and tumbling over each other in their anxiety to procure employment of some sort beyond the Tugela.

*Note.*—There is some little discrepancy in the time of the disaster of Isandhlwana, and history has had to bend here to the exigencies of fiction. I can only

"Fairly acknowledge I  
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ever was very precise in chronology."



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## THE LEAGUER.

IF England had been startled and Europe amazed at the terrible intelligence that the cable had flashed from South Africa, it was nothing to the dismay that spread through the country itself. In Natal the news of the disaster produced a positive panic. It was rumoured that the Zulu army, flushed with victory, had crossed the Tugela and were in a fair way to overrun the province. Paris and Berlin, as well as London, were aghast at the catastrophe. Even in civilised warfare it is rare to hear of the annihilation of a regiment, and, singular to relate, it was the same regiment that some thirty odd years before had died grimly fighting almost to a man, in India, on the fatal field of Chillianwallah. That the scare should be pretty general through the provinces bordering on Zululand was excusable, considering that even the military leaders took a most gloomy view of the situation, and at once abandoned the initiative for the defensive.

Had the Zulus of that time been led by one of those wild military enthusiasts who seem born to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm, they would have swept like a torrent across the Tugela, annihilating convoy after convoy, in their triumphant march, but, according to the manner of barbarians, their first impulse, after striking a great blow, was to return home in triumph with their plunder. Our own Highlanders in the last century had a good deal of this feeling, and, though easy to gather for one supreme effort, were difficult to hold together for a continuous campaign.

Colonel Pearson, advancing into Zululand at the head of a long straggling convoy, had arrived as far as Etshowe, when he received news of the catastrophe of Isandhlwana, with orders to entrench himself where he was, and be prepared to bear the attack of the whole Zulu army. This the column did without the loss of time, and for about a month was known to the outer world no more.

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The first streaks of dawn were just visible in the heavens; the advance sentries drop slowly in and report that all is quiet as far as they can ascertain, but every one knows that Etshowe is surrounded by a numerous and subtle foe; they have had too many proofs of late both of the numbers and cunning of their enemies not to be strictly on the alert; creeping up noiselessly through the night again and again, the Zulus had become only visible at the last moment, when, with a savage yell, they made a determined attempt to rush the entrenchments, but so far they had been invariably repulsed with heavy loss. As the sun tops the horizon and lights up the big rolling prairie, clothed for the most part in long grass, dotted here and there with mealie fields, one recognizes how easy it is for the savage foe to conceal his numbers, and, in the hours of darkness, steals up to the attack; but there are keen eyes and stout hearts behind those breastworks, and, as long as the cartridges and food hold out, there is little fear of the Zulus ever getting inside.

A tall, bearded man, clad in semi-military costume, stands resting his elbows on the parapet and eagerly scans the country through a field-glass, but apparently without discovering anything worthy of his attention. As he puts down his glass a quiet voice by his side observes,

"Another night of tranquillity, Mr. Enderby?"

"Yes, sir," replies Maurice, as he turned and touched his cap to the veteran chief who stood beside him; "you don't suppose they will raise the siege, do you?"

"Not a bit of it," replied the colonel; "I've had much experience on the frontiers, and the Zulus, like all barbarians, are full of tricks and stratagems. They are only trying to lull us into fancied security. I wish we could hear something from the outside; we know less of what is going on than they do in London."

"And know, I should think sir," replied Maurice, laughing, "more about the Zulu army than most people."

"Ah," replied the chief, "we can't tell how much of that army we have got around us; except in small bodies we never catch much sight of them by day, and in the night attacks it is difficult to judge of their numbers. By the way, Shrewster, in his letter to me, told me your object in volunteering, and I've seen quite enough of you here to know that you have the

makings of a good soldier. Now I can't say for certain, but the probability is in two or three days I shall want a volunteer on a very delicate mission; I don't disguise from you it's a risky one, but if you pull through all right it will count as a special bit of service, and strengthen your claim considerably for a commission."

"It's only too kind of you to give me the chance," replied Maurice; "I can only promise when the time comes to do my level best."

"That'll do," said the chief; "only don't forget a cool head is the first essential in difficulties," and, with a slight nod, he walked away into the interior of the fort, leaving Maurice to wonder what his special mission might prove.

It was rather a grim consultation at which the chief had next to preside. He had to point out to his second and third in command that their stock of provisions was getting low, and that, though he had no doubt he could hold Etshowe for months had they food, yet their ability to do so was now simply dependent on that fact.

"I don't like to do it, but I am afraid I shall be compelled to put the force upon half-rations. It is a sad necessity, for the men are hard-worked; you can't expect to get that out of either man or horse unless they are well fed."

"No," replied the other officers, "moreover there is a good deal of sickness amongst both officers and men. They don't give in, but stick to their work pluckily enough, still they are not likely to improve upon half-rations."

"No," replied the chief, "but there is no sign of any relief for us as yet, and we do know that four weeks at the present issue of food will bring us about the end of our stock."

"That's true," replied the other, "and even when we get an intimation that succour is on its way to us, it may be still some time before it arrives."

"Quite so," said the chief; "and as it is clearly our business to hold out till the last I shall put the garrison on half-rations from to-morrow. It looks as if the massacre of Isandhlwana had been by no means the measure of our disasters. The commander-in-chief would have surely contrived to communicate with us before this if there had not been further trouble."

Maurice's first experience of active service had been by no

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means cheering. The march up to Etshowe had been all very well; riding through a strange country in which they might hourly expect to be attacked had a wild excitement about it which sent the blood coursing through the veins and made the pulses tingle, but this being cooped up, like a rat in a corner, the dull and depressing routine of siege life, is about the hardest trial a soldier has to endure, followed as it usually is by all the privations of insufficient food, et cetera. As for fighting, the Zulus, to do them justice, took care they should have plenty of that. Maurice, like all his comrades, knew that they were fighting for their very lives. Their fierce foes had already shown them how they construed "washing their spears," and every one in Etshowe knew that if the place was taken the Zulus would spare no one within its ramparts. Men die hard when fighting for their lives, and so far the Zulus had found Etshowe a stubborn nut to crack. But they knew as well as its beleaguered defenders that there was a limit to their provisions, and waited patiently till the time should come when the garrison would have to choose between surrender or that last expedient of the desperate—an attempt to cut their way through.

About two days after the order for half-rations had been given out some of the soldiers were suddenly struck with some singular flashes that illuminated the sky in the direction of the lower Tugela, and no sooner was this fact communicated to their officers than the entire garrison crowded out to see what could be made of it. The officers welcomed it with a great sense of relief. It was apparent to them that their own people were striving to communicate with them by means of the heliograph. It is true that so far they were unable to interpret the signals, but one thing was clear, assistance was approaching, and that one fact did more to raise the spirits of the gallant little band than even luxury in the shape of rations could have done. There is something terribly depressing in utter isolation to most of us, but nothing perhaps tries the soldier more heavily when besieged than complete ignorance of what his friends on the outside may be doing on his behalf. The leaguered force at once attempted to reply in similar fashion, but the afternoon wore away without their being able to interpret the signals. This, however, was clear: that friends was signalling to them, and evidently recognized

their flashes in response. Whether they were understood any better than they understood the heilographs of the relieving column they were of course unable to judge, but that assistance was close at hand was beyond all doubt. The next day was a repetition of the abortive signalling, and still, much to his disgust, the commandant found himself in ignorance of what the advancing column was trying to say to him. As far as they could judge, by the flashes, the signallers were stationary, and had not moved since yesterday; they were some twenty miles off, apparently, but that was rather a matter of guesswork. The commandant was much exercised in his mind on this point. Was the revealing force held in check by the Zulus, and were they inviting him to co-operate in a grand attack? Was this the meaning of the quiet of the last two or three days—had the Zulus withdrawn from around Etshowe with a view of giving battle to the relieving force? If so they were probably lying more or less masked on the road leading to the fort. It was, he thought, imperative that he should communicate with the leader of the advancing column. He must send a messenger—a dangerous errand, no doubt, still a resolute, well-mounted man might get through, carrying with him such explanations as would make all signalling easy for the future, and who would also be able to speak as to the exact state of things in Etshowe. He had been prepared to do this before when without the knowledge that assistance was so near at hand, and it seemed to him still more necessary to send that messenger now. His mind was soon made up, and then he sent for Maurice.

Briefly he explained what he wanted.

"It's not a nice ride for you, Enderby, and you'll want both sabre and revolver to your hand, but I think if you keep your head cool you'll pull through. A good deal depends upon your horse, and you've my authority to take your choice of any one in the fort."

"Thank you, sir, but I think my own horse looks as well as any of them; he's got a bit of blood about him that'll serve me well if it comes to the pinch. I had plenty of opportunities of trying him on the way up, and know he'll do his best in case of need."

"Good! you'd better start just before daybreak. I will have the road patrolled so as to ensure you a clear start. My

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impression is that you will see no Zulus till you get some miles from here."

"You don't think they have withdrawn from around Etshowe?" inquired Maurice.

"In the main, yes. They've left part of their army here to watch us, but the bulk of it is withdrawn to give battle to the force coming up to relieve us, and it is as you near that you run the greatest danger. You had better spend the afternoon concerting a simple code of flashing with Chamberlain; he seems to understand the heliograph better than any one else, and to thoroughly establish communication is, of course, the chief object."

And with a quiet nod the commandant dismissed Enderby for the present.

As for Maurice, he left the room in search of Chamberlain as gay as a lark. A somewhat hazardous piece of service it might be, but it may be doubted whether there was an officer in the garrison who would not have been delighted to change places with him. In war men are called upon to risk their lives day by day, to die with their face to the foe, with the brief epitaph that they have done their duty, or if fortunate enough to escape shot and steel to be rewarded with the homely but pithy observation "that it was all in the day's work;" but here was a chance. The man who carried out this mission successfully would be sure of praise, and had a fair promise of being mentioned in the despatches. Maurice knew well that in most callings the man who can carry a still tongue is wont to be most trusted by his superiors. To no one of his comrades did he confide his forthcoming departure save Chamberlain. That officer it was necessary to acquaint with the orders he had received, to explain the urgent need of his being instructed in heliography to the extent that time would allow; and before sundown he had mastered sufficient of the science of flashes to feel certain that to the extent of a simple code communication would be established between Etshowe and the relieving force, should he only succeed in reaching it. That done, he jealously superintended the doing up of his horse, and then, having finished his own supper, threw himself on his pallet to snatch a few hours' rest before starting on his perilous ride.



## CHAPTER XL.

## A PERILOUS RIDE.

It wanted considerably over an hour to daybreak when Maurice was aroused from his slumbers and told that the chief was awaiting him. A toilet is a brief and hasty ceremony at such times, and a very few minutes elapsed before he followed the orderly across the open space of that wing of the mission-house which served as the commandant's quarters.

"I have nothing much more to say to you," said the veteran, as he acknowledged Maurice's salute, "than to wish you God-speed, and shake hands. You will tell how it is with us here to whoever commands the relieving column. Say we can last on the half-ration for three weeks yet, and that they will never turn us out of the fort except by starvation. Take an old hand's advice—spare your horse on the early part of your road so as to keep all the powder you can in him for the time when you will have to trust to his heels. Let the first flash you can send us announce your own safety. The picket report that they can get no touch of the enemy as far as they have been along the road; and now God bless you and send you safe through: the sooner you are in the saddle the better," and as he concluded the veteran extended his hand and exchanged a hearty hand-grip with Maurice.

Enderby's final preparations were soon concluded. Some two or three hours would either bring him to his destination or see him in the hands of the Zulus if alive. There was no necessity, therefore, for carrying food with him, and it was best to travel as light as possible. He confided a letter to Chamberlain to be forwarded to his wife in the event of the worst happening to him, and then, having looked carefully to girth and bridle, swung himself into the saddle, and made his way quietly to the gate. A quiet "good luck" from the officer commanding there, and then Maurice found himself without the entrenchments, and fairly started on his errand. He jogged gently along at starting, peering into the darkness on every

side, for it was now that blackest hour of the night which heralds the dawn, which from late experience he knew was a favourite time with the Zulus for commencing their attack. He would have been troubled to have increased his speed much at present, for it was just as much as he could do to make out the track, which even in broad daylight was by no means very well defined. More than once he turned in his saddle and checked his horse, while he looked back to see if there was any stir at Etshowe, but no,—all was still. He had been travelling now as far as he could guess for about an hour, and, although the fort was long lost to sight, yet his ear must have caught the sharp rattle of musketry and the fierce yells of the foe had there been any attack upon it.

He hailed the first streaks of dawn with no little satisfaction. If the Zulus were more likely to catch sight of him by daylight, he, on the other hand, was more likely to blunder into their midst in the darkness. Then, again, with light it would be possible to travel considerably faster. As far as he could guess he was now some four miles from the fort, and he hoped had traversed a fourth or so of his journey. And now the sun peeps above the horizon; the stars have faded away; a few minutes more and another day has begun. Maurice pulls up his horse, and gazing around takes stock of the situation. He can see Etshowe behind him, and in the clear morning air can almost make out the sentries on its ramparts; but with that exception there is not a sign of a human being. He can see the track plainly enough now, and just at present it seems to be pretty fair going. Putting his horse into a hand-canter, he rides gaily forward, and is half inclined to already deem the dangers of his expedition overrated. Still, he had seen too much of the cunning of the Zulus to relax his vigilance, and knows that as yet he has not come to where, in the opinion of his chief, he might expect to be waylaid by the enemy. He has got over another three miles in easy fashion, and is approaching a place where the road bends considerably to the right. Round that bend he thinks it quite possible he may catch sight of the distant laager of the relieving column. Suddenly he fancies he sees a black head appear for a second above the crop in the mealie-field to the right. It disappears almost instantaneously, but another minute convinces him he was not mistaken, as in half-a-dozen places the dark heads appear for

an instant above the crest of the corn, and then as suddenly vanish. Yes, he has come upon the enemy now, and then it flashes across him what is happening. The Zulus have caught sight of him, and are hurrying under cover of the mealies to intercept him just beyond the bend. He knows now that the crisis has arrived, and that Bay Robin will be called upon to gallop in real earnest.

He shakes up his horse ; and, as Bay Robin settles down to his stride, Maurice thanks Heaven that he has a stretch of fair galloping ground in front of him. A yell bursts from the throats of the Zulus as Maurice's quickened pace tells them they are discovered. Throwing off all further attempt at concealment, they come trooping in irregular order through the mealies as fast as they can. But if the corn had afforded them cover in the first instance, and so nearly compassed Maurice's destruction, it stood to him now. It hindered his foes from progressing as fast as they otherwise would ; the fleet-footed Zulus could not utilize their speed as they might have done in the open ground, and Maurice saw, with a gleam of exultation, that, with the exception of some half-dozen of the foremost, he should easily out-strip the remainder. These were straining every nerve to intercept him just below the bend. Should they fail to arrest him there, Bay Robin would speedily bear him beyond their reach.

"There'll be a tussle for it, my horse, muttered Maurice, as he bent forward in the saddle and patted the animal's neck ; "we're tailing them off nicely, but they haven't near so far to go as we have, and those leading fellows will be in time to throw their assegais at us. We must chance it, and take very good care that, if their assegais don't hit us the first time, they have no chance to throw a second."

It turned out even better than Maurice had anticipated. He is round the bend, and then it becomes evident that he will have to deal with no more than three of his enemies. Two of them emerged from the mealie-field and gained the edge of the track just as Enderby comes well round the bend. They are still some fifty yards from him, while the third man is not as yet emerged from the corn. Drawing his sabre, and setting spurs to his horse, with a wild cheer Maurice dashes straight at them. Breathless with their long run, the two Zulus are not as accurate as usual in their aim. A couple of assegais whizz harm-

lessly past the horseman. One of the two, a big powerful fellow, makes a desperate snatch at Bay Robin's bridle, only to go down before a swashing sabre-cut that lays his right cheek open grizzly fashion.

"But sabres shall swing.  
And head-pieces ring.  
When the gallants of England,  
Are up for their King."

muttered Maurice with a grin laugh in all the intoxication of battle, as he and Bay Robin speed merrily onwards. Forward—away—onward, onward, the best part of a mile is past before Maurice drew the bridle, then the broken ground dictated a slaking of speed. Sheathing his sabre he looked back and saw the Zulus were gathered round the fallen man, still brandishing their spears at him, but they had evidently abandoned all idea of pursuit. Once more he laughed in his beard, but still pricked on as quickly as he could conveniently go over the uneven track. Once more he comes to a stretch of smoother ground, and again presses his horse to a hand-gallop. Bay Robin is barely in his stride when he swerves across the track so suddenly that a less practised horseman than Maurice would very likely have been unseated. It was well the gallant brute had done so, for half-a-dozen assegais whizzed past his rider that would in all probability have taken effect had it not been for Bay Robin's being startled by the gleam of the spears in the long grass to the right. As it is, from some cause or other, the horse nearly blunders on his knees, and half-a-dozen Zulus rush forward to seize their victim. Quick as thought Maurice draws his revolver from the holster. Crack! crack! and the two nearest bite the dust. Bay Robin recovers himself by a supreme effort, and gallops on with unabated vigour, but it is not for long. Another half-mile and his rider feels the gallant horse faltering in his stride. He turns an anxious glance back, but his foes, singularly enough, have already vanished. He pulls Bay Robin together, but feels that he is dying away under his hand. What has come to him? He lurches in his gallop, and as Maurice pulls him up is beginning to sprawl after the fashion of a drunken man. His rider has barely time to jump from his back ere the honest brute pitches heavily forward, and then rolls over on his side. It is clear enough

now, the cruel assegai is quivering in his flank, and Maurice knows that his charger's last course is run.

He looks round. Small chance of his escape now he thinks. His foes can be but a few hundred yards behind him, and as soon as they see he is dismounted, there is little likelihood but what they will start in hot pursuit; although he can see nothing of them he has small doubt but that they are watching his movements. Singular, he thinks, that a fierce yell of triumph did not burst from their throats as they witnessed the fall of his horse. He drew the revolver from his holster, loosened his sabre in its sheath, and made up his mind to sell his life dearly. That they would be on him before many minutes he looked upon as certain; and then he cast a despairing look along the track in front of him. Ah! could it be possible? Yes, he felt sure of it—a long way off yet, but there was a laager straight ahead. Could he gain it? and Maurice strode madfully forward.

Every moment he expected to hear the whizz of an assegai; but no; he trudged along a good mile and still his foes made no sign. Again and again he looked back but could see nothing of them, and at last the truth dawned upon him: the Zulus were ambushed with a view to attaching the relieving column as soon as it was once more on its march; they were afraid to follow him further for fear of discovering themselves. Maurice's spirits arose; let him gain the laager and the information he brought with him was of the highest value, not only to those whom he had left but to those he would join.

He had not trudged far before he espied a small party of horsemen riding leisurely towards him; it was evident, moreover, that they had already caught sight of him; although some distance off he felt pretty sure that these were friends. Another minute and two of them, detaching themselves from the group, came galloping towards him. The foremost was an officer, and, as he reined up his horse close to Maurice, he exclaimed,

"Who are you and where do you come from?"

"I am a messenger from Etshowe," replied Maurice, "and the bearer of important news for your general."

"When did you leave the fort?"

"A little before daybreak."

"They were all right then?" asked the officer eagerly.

"Yes ; and quite able to hold out for some time yet."

"Ah, we've been trying to communicate with you for the last two or three days, but our people can't understand your flashes. You haven't come on your feet surely?"

"No ; I left a good horse on the road about three miles back. It was a squeak and I had to ride for it. I pulled through, but they killed my horse, and a right good one he was, too."

"Ah, you came through the Zulus?" said the dragoon ; "I suppose they lie pretty thick between us and the fort?"

"Yes," laughed Maurice, as he tramped onwards by the side of his companion's horse, "you will find them thick as thieves some few miles ahead."

"Well," replied the other, "the general will be glad to see you ; he is very anxious, I know, to get news from Etshowe. It was a great relieve to us all to get those answering flashes on the heliograph ; we couldn't make out what you said but they showed you were all right, and we're within a long day's march of the fort now. We are advancing rather slowly because we expect to come in contact with the enemy every hour. Now if you will follow with my orderly I'll gallop back to camp and report that you are on your way to the general. You've a good three miles before you yet, but I'll send out a horse to meet you, which will save you a bit," and, so saying, the dragoon set spurs to his horse and galloped off with his news.

And now, as Maurice neared the laager, it was evident that all the preparations for the march had been suddenly suspended. His former acquaintance met him with a led horse.

"Jump on," he cried ; "the general wants to see you immediately. You are upsetting all the programme," he continued, laughing ; "the orders are for the camp to stand fast while the rocket-troop and horse artillery go forward and search all this long grass right and left of us."

Thus adjured Maurice swung himself into the saddle, and, guided by his new friend, found himself in less than a quarter-of-an-hour at the laager.



## CHAPTER XLI.

## A NIGHT ATTACK.

EXCITEMENT at Etshowe ran high that morning. It was pretty well known, two hours after daybreak, by the garrison that Maurice Enderby had been despatched to carry a message to the relieving column. Would he get through? was the question at that moment in all men's mouths. They would soon know now. Had not Captain Chamberlain said that if Mr. Enderby won his way through safely the heliograph of their friends would be easy to understand. At length the well known flashes were once more discerned, and from those entrusted with the signalling suddenly came forth a ringing cheer. Even the veteran commandant's stern features relaxed as he said, "Read it out to them, Chamberlain, read it out."

"Shall be with you to-morrow. Enderby safe!" and then the cheer of that small party on the ramparts in charge of the signalling was re-echoed by the throats of the whole garrison, who knew now that their wearied leaguer was over, and that they henceforth meet the foe in the open. Full rations were served out immediately, and the whole garrison perked up and discussed jauntily the likelihood of their commencing the offensive and making a sharp sortie to assist their deliverers.

Maurice meanwhile had made his report to the general commanding, who had quickly decided what to do. Finding there was no immediate necessity for reaching Etshowe that night, he determined to advance leisurely, searching the ground on his front and on his flanks rigorously as he proceeded. He felt very little doubt that he should have to fight the Zulu army before he reached the fort; it should be to-day if they chose, but if not he intended to join hands with the Etshowe garrison on the morrow, though all Zululand stood in his path.

"You have done your mission very well, Mr. Enderby," he said, as Maurice finished his narrative; "and now after your riding for your life to get out of the place you will have to take a turn with us and fight your way in again. You say you saw no large bodies of the enemy?"

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"Mere pickets, sir, about thirty in the first instance and not more than six or eight in the second, but we had little doubt at Etshowe that the besieging force had been withdrawn to meet you, and from what I saw I should say you would come across them some five or six miles from here;" and then Maurice was dismissed in charge of an aide-de-camp, who contrived to furnish him with a tolerable breakfast, which went far to cement their acquaintance.

The camp broke up, and the long column crept cautiously along the track, covered by a cloud of skirmishers with a rocket-troop and horse artillery. Right and left flew the rockets, while the shells dropped here and there into the mealie-fields, and now and again into the long grass, and as they crept on it became speedily apparent that, although carefully masked, the enemy were in considerable force in front of them. They did not like the shells, still bore them with tolerable equanimity, but the rockets seemed to demoralise them, and more than once considerable number broke from their cover and retreated with more rapidity than military etiquette sanctions.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the general as he caught sight of a strong body of the dusky foe, retiring in a manner that almost savoured of flight, "What a dressing we will give these fellows to-morrow morning, if they will only stand. Signal to Etshowe to make a sortie in their rear as soon as the sound of our guns tells them we are thoroughly engaged."

Steadily the advance continued, the Zulus retiring before them as they pushed onward. That the enemy was in considerable force there could be little doubt. He was evidently extremely anxious to conceal his numbers. The rockets and shells here and there forced small bodies to abandon the cover, and discover themselves, but it was always very temporarily, and the mass of the foe had carefully refrained from exhibiting itself. Still no soldier could fail to understand that he was driving a large force of the enemy before him, neither routed nor demoralised, but retiring leisurely in their own fashion and for their own reasons.

"These fellows don't mean to let us get to Etshowe without fighting," said the general, "but they mean to fight on ground of their own choosing: they can't surely be such fools as to make their stand under the guns of the fort. What do you

think, Mr. Enderby?" he continued; "can you make any guess where they will fix their stand?"

"Not in the least, sir," replied Maurice, "but, from what I've seen of them, they won't retire much further before they attack."

When they had arrived within some nine or ten miles of Etshowe the general sounded a halt, and, although it was only midday, gave the order to laager and encamp for the night. He confided to his staff that his men would be all fresh by these means for a night attack, and if the enemy did not think fit to make that he would have a long day before him to fight his way through to the walls of Etshowe. The camp was formed with the greatest possible care. Pickets and scouts were thrown out around it, and the strictest vigilance enjoined on all those whose duty it was to watch. They had had a long afternoon in which to prepare, and, as the general at sundown made his final rounds in person, he felt confident that, in the event of a night attack, his foes would be, so to speak, running their heads against a brick wall.

Maurice stretched himself under a waggon by the side of his new friend, who, curiously enough, turned out to be a younger brother of Bob Grafton. A more light-hearted dragoon than Charlie Grafton never held her Majesty's commission, and when the two had made each other out they fraternized immediately.

"It's a precious little bit of earth this old planet of ours," laughed the dragoon as he lit his pipe. "If you're only a sociable beggar you can't go anywhere without tumbling over somebody you know. Lord! how often I've heard Bob talk of you. He was never tired of telling the story of Mrs. Enderby's wedding-present. But I say, how did you come out here? you were in a very different line the last time I heard of you."

"Yes," said Maurice, as a cloud of smoke rolled from under his moustache, "I started in the wrong groove. Pray don't think I've a word to say against religion simply because I found I wasn't fit to be one of its ministers. As an old friend of your brother and mine said, 'You may make a dragoon, but you'll never make a parson.' A fellow must be made for something in this world, and I'm trying to see whether he is right."

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"Jolliest life out," replied the other, "whether on service or in garrison; but you must get into the regulars, you know. Just at present, I take it, you belong to nothing?"

"No," said Maurice, "I'm a sort of half orderly, half aide-de-camp, with no exact position. However, the chief is very good to me, and usually finds me something to do."

"I suppose you can't guess where these fellows will make their stand?"

"Well, I fancy that they did mean that you should have marched into the middle of them by this, but the general is too old a hand for that. The advance was much too guarded to have fallen into an ambuscade; I think, judging from past experience, that we shall hear plenty of them before morning."

"Ah, well! they won't find us asleep, and it ought to cost them pretty dear if they venture to attack the laager. Good-night." And rolling himself in his cloak Charlie Grafton was speedily wrapped in slumber.

Maurice soon followed his example, and, tired out more by the excitement than the fatigues of the day, slept soundly. He was awoke by a hand being laid on his arm, and looking up found the dragoon stooping over him.

"The word's passed," he said, "to stand to our arms. One or two of the picket have just come in with a message from the officer in charge, to the effect that he believes the enemy to be closing in in force on our front and right flank."

"Let's creep out and have a look at them," replied Maurice, springing to his feet, and in another two or three minutes he and Charlie Grafton had passed without the improvised walls of their temporary citadel, and were stealing along through the rough, coarse grass that surrounded it.

The training of the last few weeks stood Maurice in good stead. He had a keen eye for their subtle enemy, and was quick to detect these dusky warriors, as, taking advantage of every bit of cover, they crept within springing distance of their foes. They had not gone far before he suddenly gripped Grafton's arm, and then, crouching on his knees, whispered—

"Hist! they're coming and no mistake. I'm dreadfully afraid they have got round the picket. I can swear I saw a fellow slip behind that big boulder about fifty yards in front of us. Ah!" he continued, "the game's begun, as three or four rifle-shots rang sharp and shrill on the night air. A hoarse

cry of—"Stand to your arms," was heard from the laager, and in another instant rapid flashing of the rifles showed that the pickets were in quick retreat all round.

"Come along, we must run for it, we're only in the way out here."

They didn't start a minute too soon, and it was well for them that they had not far to go, for scores of their active foes started from the grass behind them and came bounding forward in pursuit. As they regained the laager, the bugle sounded the "fire," and in another second the side of the square became a blaze of musketry. The Zulus now came on openly and in great numbers. Many of them were armed with rifles, which perhaps rather served to lessen the dash of their attack, inasmuch as, understanding nothing about "the sights," their fire was comparatively innocuous, and not so much to be dreaded as the terrible assegais at close quarters. Still, mowed down though they were, they advanced with unflinching resolution; reckless of the deadly rifle fire that decimated them, or of the murderous discharges of grape poured in from the guns at the salients, they fought their way determinedly up to the waggons, and sent a very cloud of assegais among the defenders. So determined were their rushes that more than once a small party obtained a footing within the camp, only however to perish to a man.

It was in one of these rushes that Charlie Grafton, who, at the head of some of his dismounted dragoons, had been doing good service on the like occasions, came perilously near making an end of it. Having emptied his revolver he threw himself, sabre in hand, in front of a gigantic chief who was leading the assault; as he made a furious lunge at his foe his foot slipped, and the Zulu, taking advantage of the accident, sprang within his guard, and, quick as lightning, dashed him to the ground; shortening his assegai, with a fierce yell, he was about to drive it through the prostrate man when Maurice's sabre swung keenly through the air, and the Zulu fell dead over his victim, with a fearful sword-cut in the head. But his followers closed rapidly in upon Enderby, and, ere his own people could interfere, Maurice fell, bleeding and prostrate, across the body of his late antagonist. A few minutes and the luckless Zulus had paid the penalty of their brief success, and the victors had a few minutes' time in which to reckon up their losses.

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"This one's got it bad," exclaimed a bluff infantry sergeant, as he picked up Maurice and drew him clear of the little ring of killed and wounded; "it's the gentleman who came in from Etshowe; fetch a doctor here some of you; he's grit, every inch of him, and has been right in the thick of it all along."

"Confound it! Pull this black brute off the top of me, can't you?" exclaimed a voice somewhat impatiently from close beside them.

"Hurrah, lads!" cried a stalwart young trooper, as with the assistance of a comrade he tumbled the dead chief quickly on one side; "it's Mr. Grafton. May I never, sir, but I thought you was done. I could have sworn I saw that big Zulu send his spear right through you!"

"Done be d——d!" replied Charlie Grafton, shaking himself very much after the manner of a small dog who has been tumbled over in the roadside by a bigger of his species; "not but what I should have been if Mr. Enderby hadn't been a little quicker to chip in on my side than you fellows were. Where is he?"

"He's here, sir," replied the sergeant; "but I doubt he's badly hurt."

"By Jove! I hope not," retorted Charlie. "He saved me, and I trust——but here comes the doctor."

Young Grafton was a little fellow gifted with unbounded animal spirits, unflinching pluck, and untiring go. Foremost in every description of sport, and equally keen when it came to campaigning, regarding a "crumpler" after a jackal, a wet bivouac, a wearisome march, and a hard day's fighting, as all in the day's work, and things to be rather laughed at than otherwise. The "irrepressible sub." as his brother officers had christened this vivacious young gentleman, was an immense favourite in his regiment. The men of his troop, whom he was accustomed to address in a polite slang of his own, not in the least warranted by Her Majesty's Regulations, would do anything for him, although they could never quite refrain from grinning when he pitched into them in his racy vernacular, and they were most unmistakably glad now that "little cheeky," as they called him, had not come to grief.

Charlie Grafton is silent enough though now. For once his voluble tongue is stilled, and he anxiously awaits what the doctor has to say about this new friend of only some few hours



ago. Maurice lies very still; his face, pale, and the blood wells fitfully from the wound in his side. Quick as thought the keen surgical scissors rip open his patrol jacket. The surgeon takes a sponge, and gently wipes away the blood.

"An ugly wound," he mutters, "but, as far as I can judge, there is no internal hemorrhage."

"Do you think he'll live?" inquired Grafton, anxiously.

"Hard to say as yet," replied the surgeon, "but it doesn't look to me at all a hopeless case. Carry him across to the hospital-waggon at once and then I must set to work to stanch this bleeding. By his looks he should have youth and a good constitution on his side, and that goes for a good deal."

For more than an hour did the Zulus persist in their assault. At last they could stand the punishment so relentlessly dealt out to them no longer, and retired in sullen disorder. No attempt was made to pursue them, and when the day broke the thickly strewn dead showed how terrible the carnage had been, and with what gallantry and recklessness of life the assault had been persisted in. There had been fierce hand-to-hand fighting outside the laager, and the relieving column could get no bloodless victory. One of the most popular chiefs of the rifles had fallen while cheering his battalion to victory, and several officers of lower rank, to say nothing of the rank and file, attested to the severity of the struggle.

As the sun rose high in the heavens the heliograph from Etshowe flashed congratulations on the victory, which the garrison had already rightly interpreted from the steady and persistent firing.

"The battle's over," said the Etshowe commandant, who was anxiously watching from his ramparts the angry flashes of the guns. "No savages that ever were could have succeeded against such a continuous roll of musketry as that. The Zulus, gentlemen, will trouble us no longer."

## CHAPTER XLII.

## THE NEWS COMES HOME.

BESSIE had retired to Tunnleton to spend her temporary widowhood. It was near London and she could count now upon a few staunch friends there: General Shrewster, the Chyltons, and especially the Molecombes, could all be reckoned upon to welcome her kindly. The Praun faction had hardly done rubbing their hands and chuckling over Maurice's Ascot misfortunes when they were staggered by the intelligence that he had started as a volunteer in the Zulu War, and, though the veterans at first pooch-pooched the notion and declared that more useless lumber than volunteers, who knew nothing of their duties, never hampered a general, yet they were rather put down on this point by one of their own caste. Shrewster had had a turn at the Cape during the Kaffir war and therefore could speak with some authority upon present affairs in Zululand.

"It's all very well to call them live lumber, Praun, but I tell you that any active young fellow who can ride, has a stout heart, a keen pair of eyes, and brains in his head, is well worth his salt out there. I'd ask for nothing better than three or four hundred such fellows as Maurice Enderby to mould into a regiment of irregular horse. They'd be rare scouts at the end of a few months, and, though roughish troopers to look at and of no use opposed to regulars, yet they'd be a valuable contingent in cutting up barbarians like the Zulus."

That the peppery Praun should dissent from this opinion need scarcely be observed, but then he disagreed with most people's, and even at times turned round upon himself. Still, General Shrewster was a man entitled to speak with authority; he had seen, in his time, more hard fighting than either Generals Maddox or Praun could lay claim to, and Tunnleton, as a rule, stood a little in awe of his quiet, self-possessed manner.

As for Bessie, hers was the fate of all women linked to the brethren of the sword. Great Britian, like ancient Rome, is

embroiled by perpetual wars. There is always hot water simmering in some of our numerous dependencies; a few lives are lost, and we hardly heed it; it is only when the simmer becomes a boil and the fingers of the cooks who are managing our affairs get grievously burnt, in short when disaster overtakes us and we hurry out all the available troops we can lay our hands on to avenge our outraged authority, that we begin to recognise we are really at war. Bessie's fate was in one respect hard. Her husband was under no orders but had proceeded to the banks of the Tugela of his own free will, and Maurice in this had been guided altogether by General Shrewster's advice.

"The great thing, my dear Enderby, is to be early in the field. Buy such kit as you think desirable; I should suggest the following," and here followed a list of articles such as from his former experience General Shrewster thought might be found useful. "I will forward you two or three letters of introduction to old friends of mine in high position at the front. I am sure they will advance your views and give you every chance. Luck, and your own right hand, must do the rest."

So far Maurice's luck seemed to have terminated with an assegai through his ribs, but this news had not as yet reached Tunnleton.

That the many warriors at the club followed the campaign with close interest may be easily imagined, and if there was one thing that irritated these critics it was the tardiness with which the disaster of Isandhlwana was being avenged. They were loud in their condemnation of the military chief out there, and in this respect they differed but little from the press and the rest of the country. The war indeed was beginning to assume proportions in the eyes of the public to which it was by no means entitled, and that the enemy, through numerous and after their fashion disciplined, were unskilled in the use of the rifle and destitute of artillery ran some danger of being forgotten. Our leaders out there were no doubt in some measure afraid to risk their *prestige* till reinforcements should make success a matter beyond doubt.

At length came home intelligence of the relief of Etshawe, and a brief account of the fierce, night-attack on the relieving column by the Zulu army which had immediately preceded it.

Bessie had good reason to believe that her husband was shut up in that fort. She knew that he had joined number one column, that he had been taken, as he himself described it, as half orderly, half aide-de-camp, by the officer commanding that force, who was an old friend of General Shrewster's. From himself she had received no letters since, but it was natural to suppose that he had shared the fate of those with whom his lot was thrown. It had taken much to reconcile her to his change of profession, but she had schooled herself to it at last, even to the fact that his only possibility of entering the army was by the way of active service. Even that did not quiet come home to her until it came to the saying "good-bye," and then poor Bessie gave way utterly. Still he had promised to write frequently, and that he should be in a position in which it would be impossible to keep his word was a thing she had never dreamt of. At first when his letters ceased she felt sure something must have happened to him; but then General Shrewster pointed out to her that there was no post running from Etshowe, and that till it was relieved it was impossible she could hear.

But by-and-by came fuller details—the graphic account of the battle almost within sight of Etshowe—how want of food was beginning to stare the garrison in the face, and that in short, had its relief been much longer delayed, its defenders would have had nothing for it but to sell their lives as dearly as they could. There was a long roll of the casualties which had taken place during the siege, and also a list of the killed and wounded of the relieving force, and in neither of these was any mention made of Maurice Enderby.

Besides his wife and his friends there was another person much dismayed at hearing nothing of Maurice, to wit, the impalpable WE, who controlled a leading London journal.

The fresh brilliant letters from "Our Own Correspondent in Zululand" had just arrested public attention, when, to the editorial disgust, they suddenly ceased. They had not much doubt at the office of the Heliograph as to what had become of their correspondent; but then, as the editor testily remarked—

"That's the worst of these young hands. Freshness and real power of description do not compensate for their ignorance

of their duties as journalists on the war-path. His first duty," continued this enthusiast, "is to his paper; his Queen and his country must for the time be a secondary consideration, and' especially should he be careful to avoid getting shut up in such places as Etshowe. A correspondent inside such a city as Paris may be doing good work, but what can there be to tell about the seige of a mere frontier fort?"

Many a mail was destined to pass before the ruler of the Heliograph received another letter from Maurice Enderby.

Bessie's first news of her husband came from Bob Grafton. She was astonished one morning by his unexpected arrival.

"I make no apology," he explained "for darting in upon you at this early hour, but the fact is I am down in the neighbourhood for a few days, and have come to hear the latest news of Maurice."

"I am very, very, anxious about him, Mr. Grafton," she rejoined; "I have heard nothing from him since, I presume, he was shut up in Etshowe; and, though it is now relieved, he is still silent. His name, thank Heaven! is not mentioned among the killed and wounded. You are staying at Bridge Court, I suppose?"

"Just so," replied Grafton. He was not, but he did not wish Mrs. Enderby to know that he had travelled down from the north expressly to tell her of her husband's mischance. "I can't help thinking, Mrs. Enderby," he continued, "that my news of Maurice may be latter than yours. You don't seem to be aware how he has distinguished himself. I had a letter the other day from my brother Charlie. As you know, he is a horse-soldier in those parts, and oddly enough has come across your husband; in short, Charlie is indebted to him for his life."

"His life! Your brother! To Maurice! Pray explain, Mr. Grafton," and Bessie's big brown eyes glistened with excitement.

"The shortest way is to read you Charlie's letter," replied Grafton, "always premising that Charlie, though peculiar in his phraseology, is accurate in the main. He is a sanguine young begger, and takes life's croppers pretty lightly—now for his letter."

"DEAR BOB,

"If you're not anxious you ought to be about how I am getting on in these parts, and it will soothe your agitated feelings to know that my scalp is not as yet whitening in a Zulu lodge. I don't know that he cared about my scalp, but a very long Zulu most decidedly went for my midriff the other day, and, but for your friend Maurice Enderby, would have probably extinguished one of the dawning lights of the British army. By jove! that fellow's born to good luck. He's done a thing that has set every one's tongue wagging. It seems they were getting rather hard up for grub in Etshowe, and, not being able to understand our signals, they gazetted Enderby honorary postman and sent him forth to tell us to 'hurry up.' Well! dashed if he didn't ride clean through the Zulu army, and come off with only the loss of his horse. It was a plucky thing to do, no doubt; and he showed plenty of head and judgment in doing it, but it was luck after all that pulled him through. Of course, a man who started with half 'the Wandering Nun' as a wedding-gift is bound to throw sixes. He had one or two turns up with the Zulus on his way, and, from the little he has said about his ride, they were bad for the Zulus. However, poor fellow, just now he has thrown deuce ace.

"I must tell you how it was, Bob. Enderby told us when he came in that the Zulus were swarming between us and Etshowe; and that we weren't likely to get there without a fight. Well, we couldn't bring 'em to book all that morning. They kept on retreating slowly before us; and, at last, our general made up his mind to halt for the night and have it out with them the next morning. A little before daybreak they came on like wolves; and, although we rolled them over in scores before they could close, they weren't to be denied. A few of them broke into our laager four or five times, and it was in stopping one of these rushes that your distinguished brother nearly came to grief. He was too big, Bob, and I ought to have left him to some one nearer his own weight; but, in spite of the lickings I used to get at school, I always pique myself upon my science, and thought I could pink the fellow before he could close. That was not destined to be decided, for my foot slipped, and before I knew where I was I was dashed to the ground, saw a spear gleam high in the air, and



felt that I was about to be spitted like a cockchafer, when Maurice suddenly chipped in with his sabre, and most obligingly dropped my big friend on the top of me. Being undermost, I saw no more, but conclude it was a sharp and merry mill while it lasted. When it ended, I am sorry to say, poor Enderby was at the top of the heap, having received a very awkward poke in the ribs from one of our black entertainers.

"Joking apart, I am sorry to say that Enderby is seriously wounded. Remember, the doctors by no means say that he will pull through, but make no disguise about his situation being critical. We have brought him on to Etshowe, where he'll have to stay for the present, but I suppose they'll send him down to Marietzburg as soon as they can move him."

Bessie listened in rapt attention as Grafton read, her eyes sparkled and her cheeks flushed at the account of Maurice's ride, only to turn pale as death as the next few lines bore record of his being struck down.

"Wounded!" she exclaimed, in a low tone, "in a critical state! I must go to him. Mr. Grafton, you must help me in this. As Maurice's dearest friend you will, won't you? Where is it they are taking him? Marie—Marietzburg. I must go there, and, oh! my God, if I should arrive too late," and here her sobs choked Bessie's utterance.

Like most men, there was nothing discomposed Bob Grafton more than a woman's tears, and it was in somewhat clumsy fashion he set himself to console the stricken woman before him.

"Of course I'll help you, Mrs. Enderby, but you mustn't take that view of it. Men get seriously hurt on these occasions no doubt, but most of them recover and in a marvellously short time too. By the time you reach Marietzburg you will find the only thing the matter with Maurice will be that he cannot get enough to eat. Your convalescents are always very cormorants."

"God grant it may be so," said Bessie, smiling sadly through her tears. "I shall trust everything to you, and you'll lose no time, will you?"

"I'm off to town by the next train," said Grafton, "to take your passage, if possible, in the next ship that sails. Make your preparations at once so as to be in readiness to join me in London as soon as I write to you; and now, for the present, good-bye.

"By Jove!" thought Grafton, "I do hope Maurice is all right. It would be an awful thing for this poor little woman if she should get to Marietzborg only to find that her husband is dead and she left all alone in the world," and, looking more serious than was his wont, Grafton made his way rapidly to the station.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

### CONVALESCENCE.

THE sun is pouring down upon the dusty streets of Marietzborg; the queer little colonial town is swarming with a tumultuous, prospering crowd, wanting apparently everything. In busy search of accommodation for man or beast, of food of tobacco, and of strong waters; much curiosity manifested, indeed; about this latter, as the military authorities have interposed some restrictions on their sale. Bluff teamsters, with their heavy ox-waggons laden with provisions, wearily working their way to the front; commissariat officers vainly endeavouring to hurry them forward; soldiers trying to discover billets that only exist in their imagination; officers in charge of them hurrying here and there in the endeavour to keep these tried sheep in hand, and also to feed them; a reek of tobacco, a buzz of language more pungent than classical, strange oaths, with a strong flavour of Dutch in them, and athletic blacks lounging about clothed in a sparse caricature of European costume. Such constitute the crowd that throng the streets of Marietzborg on this summer day. It is much the same as might be written of most towns of which the supplies of an army were being hurried to the front.

For the chiefs of the Cape had been spurred to extra exertion by the recent receipt of telegraph messages from their friends at home. The great democracy of England had risen in its wrath, like that of Athens of old, or like that later sterner democracy which in its death struggle of nearly a quarter of a century ago changed its generals pretty nearly as

soon as they were beaten. There was no more singular feature in the gigantic civil war in America than the rapidity with which the Northern States discarded their unsuccessful leaders. In like manner our military chiefs in Zululand were told by their friends in England that their successors were on their way, that the public were weary of their inactivity, that the English people in these days of telegraphs were impatient of reverses to their arms, unless speedily averaged. It was rumoured that a wire had come to the English general from a distinguished relative to this effect—

"Fight! above all fight! You'd better take a licking than continue this strategy, which is jerred at as an *armed neutrality*."

That Sir Garnet Wolseley and a band of his favoured henchmen were on their way was well-known in the colony. Already the war correspondents had pronounced Zululand the grave of military reputations; one to all, from the general down to the junior brigadier, felt that it was incumbent to strike a fatal blow before the new men came upon the scene. The waves favoured them, and, thanks to the surf at Durban, the victory of Ulundi took place in the time to rehabilitate many a bespattered military name.

At a window on the first floor of a sort of half villa, half-farm-house in the suburbs, looking out over the burnt-up rolling prairie ground, sat Maurice Enderby. The pale face and sunken eyes showed that it had gone hard with him, and the thick black beard that now garnished his chin would have made the good people of Tunnleton stare at their late curate. Not that the brethren of the surplice by any means eschew beard and moustache in these days, but Tunnleton was an old-world place full of old-world prejudices, and about a quarter of a century behind the times, and one of its axioms was that its divines should be clean-shaved. Maurice is chafing terribly at his enforced idleness. He knows that he has distinguished himself, but he knows equally well that, if the first step in life is to attract his eyes of the chiefs of your vocation, the second is to keep yourself constantly before them. But no—the doctor say it will be six good weeks before he will be able to take charge of the saddle again; and, what is worse, he feels that it is true.

A light step behind him arrests his attention, and Bessie

glide quietly to his side with a tray containing nourishment of some kind. He looks fondly up at her as he says—

"Ah, Bess! if it hadn't been for your nursing I don't think I should have pulled through; and, though I fret here horribly at my enforced idleness, still I don't know if I was well to-morrow what I am to do."

"Do?" she replied, though her voice shook and her lips quivered as she said it. "You would rejoin your old chief, of course."

"Yes, no doubt that is what I ought to do from one point of view; but what's to become of you?"

"Me?" replied Bessie, with a rather forced sigh; "oh, I shall stop here, with my heart in my mouth, so as to be all ready when my services are required again."

Maurice looked at her for a moment, and then said,

"Ah, Bessie, Bessie, you will never make a soldier's wife."

"I don't know about that," replied Bessie, as the tears welled up in her eyes; "I don't think I have made a very bad beginning. I made what you call a forced march out here, and even the doctor says I am a capable nurse."

"Capable nurse!" exclaimed Maurice, "I would think you were indeed. Why the doctor told me the other day that I owed my life to your unceasing vigilance."

"I did my best," she replied meekly; but ah, Maurice, after snatching you from the very jaws of death can you wonder that the brine comes into my eyes at the idea of your going to the front again? Stop, let me finish!" she continued, as he was about to speak; "do not think that I wish to dissuade you from it. We made a false start, but you have now begun a new career, and I know that if a soldier is to make his mark in his profession he must not neglect his opportunities."

"Spoken like a sensible little woman," he rejoined, "and you'll promise——"

"Not to be more foolish than I can help," she interrupted; but, Maurice, I cannot be a Spartan matron, and am afraid I shall always cry a little when you go forth to battle."

"Pooh!" he said laughing, you must look upon me as insured. I have been hit once, and the odds are they won't hit me again."

"There's very little consolation in that," she replied, smiling, "but one comfort is, that you're not fit to start yet, and it

is possible that all this may be over before you are in the saddle again."

"And if it is," said Maurice, a little bitterly, "I shall have come all this way for nothing—and I know now Shrewster was right: I have the makings of a decent dragoon in me."

"Well crowed, Mr. Enderby," said a voice from the doorway; "when men feel that way they are bad to kill, and I'm thinking ye'll do now, but, as for making a dacent dragoon, I'd me doubts as to your ever doing that some few weeks back. Ah, Mrs. Enderby, you're patient's a credit to you! Feed him, ma'am, feed him with flesh, fowl, and good red wine. All we've got to do now is to remake the blood the Zulus let out."

"Well, Dr. Gabbet," said Bessie, "he can't complain about that, and he is becoming now a capital patient, for he's always ready to eat."

"It's the way with them all, ma'am; they're always anxious to make up for the time they lost during the fever; but you'll be asking me for news; they are all playing now the game of catch who catch can. There's the general-commanding doing all he can to get up to Ulundi before Sir Garnet Wolseley can join him; there's Sir Garnet, doing all he knows to join him before he gets up to Ulundi; and here's Cetewayo doing all he knows to be 'not-at-home' to either of them."

"And how will it end?" asked Maurice, laughing.

"Well, the deuce a one 'of them knows! It'll be bad for Sir Garnet if he don't catch 'em, it'll be worse for Thesiger if he is caught, and it'll be worse of all for Cetewayo when they happen to catch him; there ye are, sir, and there's never another man in the colony could have explained the position of affairs so tersely or so clearly as Mick Gabbet, though it's meself says so."

"But as soon as they have got Ulundi it'll be all over, doctor, eh?" said Mrs. Enderby.

"Tear an' ages, ma'am, don't think so manely of the natives! They're like one own countrymen, they can't get on without their diversions, and, as soon as the fighting's done in one place, they just set it going again in another. There's a broth of a boy called Sikukuni who has been trailing his coat these last three years, and we have to polish him off as soon as we have time to do so."

"Ah, that's the fellow we've never succeeded in doing any-

thing with. He's got a tremendous stronghold of his own, I believe, hasn't he?"

"That's just it," said the doctor, with a wink; "we've taken out a judgment summons and tried to put in a 'man-in-possession' a good many times, but he's as hard to deal with as a Galway squire; and now I'm off. "Feed him up, Mrs. Enderby, feed him up, and he'll soon be strong on his legs again."

It was dull work this convalescence at Marietzburg, but Maurice shook off his weariness considerably when Dr. Gabbet at length sanctioned his going for a short afternoon ride. From that out the horses came round every afternoon, and accompanied by Bessie, Maurice indulged in a good canter when the sun began to sink.

And now came the news of the fierce fight of Ulundi, where the Zulus fought their last battle in defence of their capital. That their defeat was crushing, their power broke, their army dispersed, and their king a fugitive, was speedily apparent as the sequence of this victory. Carping critics urged that it might have been done before, and there were cynics who chuckled with amusement because for once Sir Garnet had been too late. But, although the Zulus were effectually conquered, there was plenty of work to be done in restoring order through the land, and it was said pretty openly that our own troops flushed with their triumphs and successful campaign, had not yet been able to divest themselves of the idea that they were in an enemy's country, and, though they had recrossed the Tugela, were levying supplies with a high hand. There were rumours, too, of coming trouble in the Transvaal. The Boers, who had never been satisfied with annexation, were holding mass-meetings, at which the speakers once more claimed their independence. Sikukuni, with whom we had been carrying on a desultory war for months, was getting more restless and encroaching than usual. This marauder, who was a sort of South African Rob Roy, displayed laudable impartiality in his raids. Cattle-lifting was apparently his chief industry, and whether they were the cattle of Boers or British owners he never troubled his head to consider. The Boers had striven vainly to cope with him, and all attempts on our part to put him down had so far failed chiefly from the insufficiency of the force employed against him. Every available soldier had been wanted in Zululand, and, though the officer in charge of this suppression had once



actually lead his small force within a mile of Sikukuni's citadel, yet that pest of South Africa, a murrain amongst the horses, compelled him to retire. The battle of Ulundi had set free the greater part of the army in Zululand, and Sir Garnet now found himself able to turn his attention to these minor matters, and it was not likely that the chastisement of the marauding Sikukuni would be overlooked.

By this time Maurice was thoroughly restored, and, though he looked a bit pulled down, declared he was as good a man as ever. He had written to his old chief, reported himself quite fit for service, and begging to be allowed to resume his former post on his personal staff, and in due time received a letter which occasioned him no little elation.

"DEAR ENDERBY"—it ran—

"I am delighted to hear you are all right again. When I last saw you outside Etshowe the doctor spoke gravely of your case, and I was sorry to hear that you had afterwards a bad attack of fever consequent on your wound. However, I am truly glad that you are at last safe out of the wood. I should be only too glad to have you back with me, but it is all over up here. Ulundi completely crushed the Zulu nation, at all events for the time. The sole thing doing is the pursuit of Cetewayo, and though no doubt you would ask nothing better, we have dozens of volunteers for that work, and he will probably be captured before you could possibly arrive here. No ; I can do better for you than that ; a man who cut his way through the Zulu army is never likely to want employment. I have managed to get you transferred to General W.'s staff, who will be shortly settling with that very troublesome chief Sikukuni. He is just the man to appreciate a bit of dash like yours, and you need never fear you won't see fighting under him ; he revels in it, and will work his brigade into the thick of it somehow.

"Make your way to him at once ; he's somewhere now, I think, in the neighbourhood of Luneberg ; but he is not the man to dabble when he has got his force together.

"Good-bye ; I wish you every luck,

"Yours sincerely, F. P."

"Your name is mentioned in despatches, and I am glad to say your exploit thought highly of by every one."

At this moment Bessie entered the room. One glance at her husband's delighted face, another at the letter he held in his hand, told her all. She knew that she had again to wish him good-bye.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### TUNNLETON CHANGES ITS OPINION.

TUNNLETON was much excited when the story of Maurice's exploits appeared in the papers. That he had gone out as a volunteer to Zululand and that he had been severely wounded, Tunnleton was aware; that Mrs. Enderby had started at two or three days' notice for the purpose of nursing her husband was also currently known; but Bessie had seen but two or three of her intimate friends before leaving, and, except General Shrewster and Edith Bescombe, nobody had heard the details contained in Grafton's letters. But Maurice's brother correspondents were proud to put on record such a deed of daring—achieved, too, by one of their guild. Individual heroism is always telling in a war correspondent's letter, and it really was extraordinary the manner in which Maurice had made his way through the Zulus.

There is a great deal of the Pumblechook element about in this world! and Tunnleton, which not a year ago had cast him out from among them, now almost claimed Enderby as a fellow-citizen. It is astonishing when you have succeeded in this this world the number of people who are always convinced you "had it in you." It is true they had kept this knowledge carefully to themselves in the early part of your career, but they remind you of it now you have achieved fame, all the oftener, it is to be presumed, by way of making up for lost time. Tunnleton has quite made its mind now to regard Maurice as one of her own sons, and people vie with each other in exchanging reminiscences of the ex-curate's sayings and doings while resident among them. Although a reticent man, General Shrewster could not refrain from crowing a little over the exploits of his *protégé*.

"Aha! Praun," he exclaimed, "didn't I always tell you young Enderby would make a rattling dragoon?"

"I don't know that you did," snapped that irascible warrior, "but I am sure that I never said anything to the contrary. I only said that he was guilty of great impropriety of conduct as a curate. There are people," he continued snappishly, "who don't see any harm in gambling and horse-racing—I do," and to avoid rejoinder General Praun left the club morning-room a little precipitately.

It soon further leaked out that the spirited letters of some few weeks back in the *Heliograph* were from the pen of the dashing young volunteer who had carried the message from Etshowe, and then the Reverend Mr. Jarrow could no longer contain himself. The rector positively glowed with enthusiasm, and in the course of two or three days had thoroughly persuaded himself that he had no little to do with their composition.

"Excellent, sir, so full of fire and vigour. I am proud to think that I first guided his steps in the path of literature; I looked over his early efforts when he was here and gave him the benefit of my advice and suggestions; I lent him the 'Verity Letters' to read, and I don't know—how does it strike you?—but it seems to me he caught my style a good deal. Now these letters in the *Heliograph* are characterised by a good deal of that vigorous thought and power of sarcasm which you may have observed in my own poor efforts," and the mock humility that characterised the rector as he uttered the concluding words was beautiful to witness.

On one point Tunnleton was unanimous, and that was, in their anxiety to hear tidings of the wounded man. Even those whose tongues had been most bitter against him were desirous to hear he was doing well. There could be no doubt he had done something of which his countrymen might well be proud, and most of us sink our dislikes when their object has come to grief on the battle-field.

A man who, rather to his astonishment, found himself suddenly a person of considerable importance in Tunnleton was Bob Grafton; he was staying for a few days, after his wont, at Bridge Court, and he walked into Tunnleton two or three times to call on Miss Molecombe, General Shrewster, and two or three other friends he had made of late in the little

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town. He had often walked in from Bridge Court before, and Tunnleton scarcely heeded his presence, in fact barely knew him by sight. But now, much to his surprise, he was constantly stopped by people, strangers to him, anxious to know if he had any news of Mr. Enderby. The first news of Maurice's mischance had come from him, and Tunnleton very naturally thought there was much likelihood of his hearing again—and Tunnleton was right.

It was during his stay at Bridge Court that the next news of Maurice came across the sea, and the letter was once more to Bob Grafton. This time it was Mrs. Enderby who wrote. There was a brief record of her journey out to begin with, and what kindness she had received in making her way up to Marietsburg; how she had found Maurice slowly struggling back to life after a severe attack of fever; how that he was now almost himself again; and, whether they knew it or not in England, that he was reckoned a hero out there.

"And now, Mr. Grafton," she continued, "comes the terrible hardship of being a soldier's wife. I have nursed him till his step is as firm and his figure as erect as ever it was; and now he is once more going to bid me good-bye. He has got what he calls another chance, and I suppose he ought to take it, but we poor women know what such chances are, and what a wailing the result of them means to us. I shall bear it, this time, worse than I did before, for the evil I dreaded has already once befallen me, and I shall tremble at the thought that it may do so again. One comfort is, that this time I shall be near at hand should he come to harm. Tell General Shrewster that Maurice is going with a column to beat up Sikukuni's quarters. He is not exactly a Zulu, as far as I can make out, but seems to be an independent freebooter who revels in little wars on his own account; at all events he has been giving a deal of trouble, and, so far, seems to have got the best of those who have been despatched to bring him to account. Good-bye. Love from us both to all old friends, especially the Chyltons, Edith Molecombe, and General Shrewster.

"Sincerely yours,

"BESSIE ENDERBY."

An idea flashed across Bob Grafton when he had finished this epistle, and that was, that he could not do better than call

upon Miss Molecombe and read her Mrs. Enderby's letter. He had got rather into the way of dropping into the banker's about luncheon time of late, and the Misses Balders rallied him not a little as to what was the attraction in Tunnleton.

Another thing too that was absorbing a good deal of Mr. Grafton's attention at this time was the approaching Leger. It may be remembered that Grafton had made arrangements on Maurice's behalf for the Ascot settling. Enderby had let no time grow under his feet, and a little more than a week after that disastrous meeting had sailed for the Cape. Hampton had readily acquiesced in Grafton's offer, namely, of taking nearly two-thirds of the debt, and allowing the remainder to stand over for some little time; and it was to the big race on Doncaster Moor that Grafton looked for the recovery, so to speak, of those Ascot losses. "The Wandering Nun" was a strong favourite for that prize, and, as far as Grafton could learn, was not only excessively well, but had undergone a most satisfactory preparation for the struggle on the town moor. The mare, although it was what is called the mares' month, was not a favourite with the general public; they could not forget her defeat in the Oaks, or understand her miserable display at Ascot. But amongst the shrewdest men on the turf she was a strong fancy, and there were very few of them who did not back "the Wandering Nun" for the St. Leger. Grafton himself was in this category, and had taken a pretty little bet about the mare at Goodwood.

However, putting his racing cares on one side, Bob Grafton strolled on through Tunnleton until he arrived at the Molecombes' house. Yes, Mrs. Molecombe was at home, and he was shown into the drawing-room, where he found Edith and her mother, and, the first greetings over, at once proceeded to read them Bessie's letter.

"How very terrible for Mrs. Enderby!" said the banker's wife, as Bob Grafton concluded. "If he is a hero, I declare I think she is a heroine. Fancy her—poor thing! she has no sooner cured her husband than she is left alone in the midst of all that bustle and turmoil to take care of herself."

"It is rather rough," said Grafton; "but I don't see how Maurice could help it."

"Of course he couldn't, and, though we all wronged him, and told horrible stories about him here—I was as bad as any-

body—he has made us feel mean enough now. As for Bessie, it is hard upon her,” said Edith, passionately; “but what woman, worth the name of one, would not wish to be within reach of her husband when she knew he was carrying his life in his hand?”

Grafton gazed at the girl with no little admiration as she spoke. “By Jove!” he thought, “how her face lights up when she is moved, she looks quite handsome at this moment.” “Yes,” he replied, “that’s all very well, but it was a mistake Mrs. Enderby’s going out. It was no use attempting to persuade her to stay here—go she would; and all one could do was to make things as smooth as possible.”

“I don’t agree with you, Mr. Grafton; I think it is more than likely she saved her husband’s life.”

“I grant you that her nursing perhaps contributed a good deal to his recovery, but I have no doubt Maurice wishes now that she was safe in Tunnleton. A man goes campaigning with a lighter heart when he knows those dear to him are safely harboured.”

“Had I been in Mrs. Enderby’s place, I should have done as Mrs. Enderby has done,” replied Edith defiantly.

“Which by no means follows you would have done what Mr. Enderby wished you,” replied Bob laughing.

“You’re too bad, Mr. Grafton, and I’ll argue with you no more. How much longer do you remain at Bridge Court?”

“Only a few days, and then I go north to attend the Doncaster meeting.”

“How I envy you!” exclaimed Edith. “How I did enjoy those two days at Ascot, and I am sure you would have too, mamma, if you had only been there.”

“Rather too tiring work for me, my dear, I should say from your description of it,” rejoined Mrs. Molecombe.

“And what do you think about the Leger, Mr. Grafton?” inquired Edith. “My very limited stock of knowledge concerning racing has almost evaporated since Ascot; but I do know that the Leger is the big race of the Doncaster Meeting.”

“Ah! I hope we are not going to have such a terrible time as we had in June. I have trusted our old friend ‘the Wandering Nun’ with my venture, and expect to see her turn out a very different mare from what she was at Ascot.”

“Ah! how nice it would be if the Enderbys were only safe



back from the Cape, and we were all going up to Yorkshire to see Bessie's mare win. It makes me sad to think about it," sighed Edith.

"And when Miss Molecombe takes to such wild castle-building as that, I feel it is time for me to go; besides, I have told you all the news."

"But we shall see you again before you leave Bridge Court!" said Edith, as she rose to say good-bye.

"Yes, most likely," replied Grafton. "Certainly, should I hear any more of Maurice, though that is hardly probable." And then Bob took his departure.

He had just reached the garden-gate when he heard his name called two or three times. Turning towards the direction from which the voice came, he saw Miss Molecombe, who had slipped out of one of the drawing-room windows, hurrying to meet him. "Mr. Grafton," she exclaimed, "one word before you go. I really can't help it. You see its Bessie's mare, and its only once in a way, you know, and I must have five pounds on it for the Leger. Will you do it for me?"

"Certainly," he replied laughing. "John Madingley has much to answer for. His 'Wandering Nun' seems to have turned all your heads, and developed the spirit of gambling wherever it was latent. Maurice first, and now you, Miss Molecombe. However, I will do your bidding at once, and do think this time we shall be victorious."

"Thank you so much," replied Edith, and, with a quick little nod of "good-bye," she turned and walked back towards the house.

"She's a rather nice girl that," remarked Grafton to himself, as he trudged homewards, "and I've no doubt old Molecombe can give her a very tidy bit of money if he likes. What an escape she had from that precious scoundrel Dick Madingley, if indeed that be his name." And, singular enough, before he had gone another half-mile that point was destined to be cleared up for him. As he passed the Tunnleton Club General Shrewster was just coming out.

"By Jove, Grafton!" he said, "have you heard the news? There's one of the cleverest turf frauds you ever heard of just come to light. A gang of fellows representing themselves to be betting-agents have got hold of a French lady of title, and have swindled her out of close upon thirty thousand pounds.

They've all two or three aliases, and amongst them is one who for some time has passed under the *soubriquet* of Richard Madingley. Go in and buy an evening paper as you pass the station, and you'll see a brief summary of it, but to-morrow morning we shall doubtless read a lengthy account of it."

Grafton followed the general's advice, and saw just enough to whet his curiosity.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

### THE LEGER.

WHEN Grafton opened his paper the next morning it was to read one of those astounding stories which exemplify the boundless credulity of human nature in the pursuit of wealth. A plausible set of adventurers, under the name of Bulow, Crofton, & Co., had, by specious and persistent advertising, seduced, doubtless, numberless minnows into their net, but they had at last hooked a big fish, and this latter, in its agonies, promised to prove too much for its captors. Messrs. Bulow, Crofton, & Co. continually asserted in the journals that they were in possession of such extensive and valuable information as made winning on the turf an absolute certainty. They advertised more largely in the foreign papers than in the English, and at length attracted the attention of the Comtesse de Mombel, an elderly French lady with a passion for speculation. It did not occur to the Comtesse that, under such circumstances, Messrs. Bulow and Crofton would probably work the gold-mine they had discovered without calling in the general public to help them. She appeared to have blindly trusted these adventurers, of whom she knew nothing, and it was not till she had been actually mulcted of thirty thousand pounds that she blenched, and confided the story of her losses to an old and trusted friend. He, being a man of the world, immediately put himself in communication with the French police; but Messrs. Bulow and Crofton were no 'prentice hands, and had for some time anticipated some such result as certain to

follow the plucking of the plumpest pigeon they had ever had in their nets. They got wind of the authorities being on their track, and at once transferred themselves across the Channel, where their partners were doing the best they could with the British public. It seemed incredible how the Comtesse could have been duped to the extent she had, how she could have been persuaded to lose sum after sum, but the old lady was a thorough gambler at heart, and knew what it was to fight the bank at Monaco; she was, however, vengeful in her wrath, and like a shrieking Mænad, now that her eyes were opened to the way in which she had been defrauded. She had money still left, and did not mind spending some of it to bring those who had robbed her to justice. She hounded on the French police, and they in their turn roused Scotland Yard. Messrs. Bulow, Crofton & Co. found the pursuit grew hot; they separated and dispersed all over England; but the sleuth-hounds of the law were on their trail; one by one they were apprehended, and were utterly astounded, when brought before the magistrate, to find how exceedingly well their biographies were known at Scotland Yard. They mostly rejoiced in aliases, and amongst them figured French, alias Jackson, alias Madingley, alias Bushman.

"Well," said Grafton to himself, as he threw down the paper, "I have never thought much of Mr. Richard Madingley, as he chose to call himself, looking upon him as one of the outside ring; but I certainly should never have given him credit for being capable of such a gigantic fraud as this. However, the evidence so far goes to show that he was quite one of the minor actors in the drama; but I should think the whole lot are certain to be committed for trial."

That the case excited extraordinary interest in Tunnleton it is needless to say; and to many there it was a source of considerable annoyance. Nobody, perhaps, felt it more than the unfortunate Molecombes, who were conscious of how narrowly they had escaped connection with one of the criminals. How narrowly Edith only knew, and she grew hot with shame to think that her name had ever been coupled with such an one as Dick Madingley.

The papers all remarked on the plausible manners of the prisoners, and pointed out that they seemed to be of superior education. Still Edith felt that, though she really had only

been imposed upon like many other people in Tunntleton, yet she could not go about while Richard Madingley's name was upon everybody's lips.

Although Bob Grafton was again in Tunntleton before his departure for the north, he abstained from calling on the Molecombes. He felt that the whole of this exposure must be very annoying to Edith, and that to meet one who, like himself, was so thoroughly conversant with all the ins and outs of Mr. Richard Madingley's career would be only painful. He contented himself with a brief note, in which he informed her that he had obtained twenty pounds to five for her about "The Wandering Nun" for the Leger. It was a point more than the odds, for they had grown very short of late; but man is weak, and when the commission is given him by a young and good-looking woman, is sure to return a liberal price. Then Bob Grafton started for Yorkshire. He heard lots of South African gossip as he went through London. How Ulundi had been fought, and how Thesiger had promptly washed his hands of the whole business, this victory having been vouchsafed him; how there were many tangled skeins yet to unravel; and how the South African business generally promised to keep our people employed for some time to come.

He went to the War Office to try if he could hear anything of Maurice, but, Enderby being only a volunteer, they could give no accurate information concerning him. Then Grafton bethought himself of the Heliograph office, and there they told him that their valued correspondent was quite himself again, and once more on his way to the front.

But all this amounted to little more than Mrs. Enderby's letter had told him, so Grafton, as he had promised, dropped General Shrewster a line to say that he could gather no further tidings of Maurice in London.

When Grafton reached Doncaster he found the Tykes in all the simmer of excitement that the Leger always produces in that somnolent little town. It wakes from its slumbers for but this one week in the year, and then, from the Salutation to the Shakespeare siding, the assembled crowd ate, drink, and talk horse both day and night. Bed must be a mockery to many enthusiasts. What with watching the doings at the rooms over night; what with watching the morning gallops, attending the sale-ring before lunch, and spending the

afternoon on the town moor, from the Monday till the big race is over, the votaries of the turf knew but little rest.

The Yorkshiremen were all agog about "The Wandering Nun." She was a mare trained in their own county, and they vowed she looked fit to run for her life. She became a hotter favourite every hour. All Yorkshire bets, from the Lord Lieutenant of the county to the porters of the Shakespeare siding, and all Yorkshire was throwing in its lot with John Madingley's mare.

There was a hum of applause as the mare walked down the course preparatory to her preliminary canter, and Grafton, who had seen her in all her races, was fain to admit he had never seen her in such condition before. Her coat shone like satin, and she paced up the course quite cool and collected, looking proudly around as if to challenge any competitor to try conclusions with her to-day, while the winner of the Derby, who was also backed for a large sum, was fretful, uneasy, and lathered freely.

"If ever I saw a winner, that's one!" mutt red Grafton. "I think, Miss Molecombe, you and I are going to win our money this time."

"I'll tek' anyone's three croons to two the mare wins," shouted a burly farmer within a few yards of him.

As for the story of the race it is soon told. Never was a Leger galloped in which there were fewer vicissitudes—it might be said, none. "The Wandering Nun" got well off, lay over her field the whole way to the Red House Turn, when she came away, and, despite a resolute challenge by the Derby winner half way up the straight, won easily by a couple of lengths.

"It's come off handsomely this time," muttered Bob. "This will square up Maurice; it's bonnets for Miss Molecombe, or she can go for a sealskin if she likes it better; and for myself, well, I shall enjoy the luxury of betting the ring their own money back at Newmarket."

He strolled into Tattersall's ring in the course of the afternoon, when he fell across Hampton.

"Well, Mr. Grafton," exclaimed the bookmaker, with a beaming face, "you've had a good race of it no doubt."

"Very fair in my little way," replied Bob; "and you?"

"A rare good 'un, sir," replied the bookmaker; "I was sure

the summer form was all wrong, and I took all the long shots about 'The Wandering Nun' I could lay my hands on after she was beat at Ascot, and covered my money, by laying it back at the short odds they have been taking this week. Any horse of Mr. Madingley's, you see, sir, one knew would be run straight, and that mare when she's right is the best of her year, and she was about as fit to-day as ever I saw one."

"Yes," replied Grafton, "and another good winner on the race you'll be glad to hear of is Mr. Enderby; he is away in South Africa, as no doubt you know, but I've no doubt in the course of the next week or two I shall be able to hand you over the balance of his account."

"Don't talk of that, sir," replied the jubilant bookmaker. "When I read that account in the papers of his ride through all them Kafir fellows I'd have wiped the slate with pleasure. Do me a favour, Mr. Grafton. Just come right away now, and drink his health coupled with 'The Wandering Nun's' in a glass of champagne."

And that afternoon, though he may be destined perhaps never to know it, Maurice Enderby's health was enthusiastically drunk in the Grand Stand at Doncaster.

It was from General Shrewster Edith first learnt of John Madingley's victory. He had not known much of Miss Molecombe previously, but had become interested in her from the enthusiastic friendship she had developed of late for the Enderbys. Edith had gradually wormed out of Bessie before she felt how much she owed to Maurice's interference, and the girl's gratitude was unbounded. Shrewster had taken a great fancy to her; and, like all men who are choice in their friendships, was all the more prized by those whom they took the trouble to cultivate, and where he pleased there were few men could make themselves more agreeable than could the general. A well-read man, who had lived much of his life in the great London world, of which he had never altogether lost touch, he had plenty to say about pretty well everything and everybody, and Edith Molecombe never tired of sitting at the feet of Gamaliel.

The general was very pleased when the result of the race became known in Tunnleton. He liked to hear of his old friend winning, and chuckled as he thought of what a stake he would have won over it himself in the old days when he



used to bet so heavily. He had given up all that sort of thing now and was never seen upon a racecourse, but he still took the greatest interest in the fortunes of his personal friends who still continued their favourite pastime. Meeting Miss Molecombe that afternoon, he told her the news triumphantly, and was astonished at that young lady's clapping her hands and exclaiming,

"I knew she would ; I felt she would. Mr. Grafton said 'The Wandering Nun' was sure to win."

"Well," replied the general, laughing, "I think Mr. Grafton is too old a hand to express himself quite so positively ; but I suppose you won a lot of money ?"

"I won twenty pounds, general," replied Edith ; "Mr. Grafton made my bet for me."

"And this after your Ascot experiences ? Mark me," continued the general, with mock solemnity, "the turf will be your ruin !"

"Not this time, anyway," rejoined the young lady, as she nodded a merry good-bye and then tripped lightly on her way.

"Ha, principal turf adviser to a young lady ! A very comfortable appointment. There's only one thing, Master Bob : remember that racing often leads to match-making, and, by Jove, if it does in your case I shall say you've not done badly on the turf," and, with a smile at his own joke, the general strolled homewards.

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE BIVOUAC.

On the borderland abutting the Transvaal and the Zulu country are bivouaced a large force, concentrated with the immediate view to the suppression of Sikukuni ; clearly time, thinks Sir Garnet, that the defiant and audacious marauder should be brought to his marrowbones. While Cetewayo claimed all our attention this chieftain had had things a good deal his own way ; he had thrashed the Boers, when they had gone out against him ; and, though we had once worked our

way within a mile of his citadel, sickness, drought, and want of provisions had compelled us to fall back, and the enterprising Sikukuni had made that retreat very bitter to us, hanging on the trail of his invaders with the pertinacity of a bulldog, and making them feel for many a mile on their way back that they had stirred up a hornet's nest. But if settlement with Sikukuni had been postponed the British authorities had by no means forgotten his offending, a pretty accurate record had been kept of his raiding and plundering, and now the time had come to close accounts with him.

Lounging round the biyouac fire, wrapped in all the dreamy enjoyment of the evening pipe, were three men lazily discussing the prospects of the next two or three days.

"Do you think he'll make a stand?" asked Maurice Enderby. "These fellows can fight, we all know, but Sikukuni must have heard all about the battle of Ulundi at this time, and knows that Cetewayo is a prisoner and the Zulu army a thing of the past."

"You needn't fret yourself on that point," replied a stout, thickset, little officer of the Natal contingent. "I've been up here before, and I'll tell you his citadel is a pretty hard nut to crack. We had a good look at it last time, though we had to retreat without attempting it, but he hung on our skirts for many a mile as we fell back, and made things pretty lively for us. In fact it was a case of desultory fighting for some days. We shall have it of course this time; we've plenty of force and Sir Garnet means it, but it'll be a hottish fight, you may take your oath."

A tramp of horses' hoofs and the jingle of a sabre caused all three men to raise themselves on their elbows, and then a dragoon jogged quietly into the firelight, reined up his horse, and exclaimed in easy, nonchalant tones,

"Don't let me disturb you, gentlemen, but perhaps you can tell me where Mr. Enderby, on General W.'s staff, is spending his evening?"

"Charles Grafton!" exclaimed Maurice, as he sprang to his feet, and rushed eagerly forward to shake hands with the new comer. "What, have all your people got up?"

"Yes, old man, we've pushed along pretty sharp to join you. Our colonel had no idea of a row coming off without our being near it. And, when you've driven the beggars out of their

earths, we shall give a very tidy account of them in the open, you'll see. Bless you, you can't think what a lot of 'em us lancers poked out of the grass after Ulundi."

"Well, we shall be very glad of your help, but you must be dead tired; jump off and we'll do the best we can for you and your horse."

"Can't," replied young Grafton briefly; "I must go back to my own people, who are about half-a-mile away. I only rode on to bring you this letter and a couple of newspapers from Bob, but if you've got anything handy to drink I shall be very glad to wash my mouth out," and as he spoke, the lancer drew the papers from his sabretasche and handed them to Maurice. "Here's good news for you," he continued, "in Bob's letter, for 'the Wandering Nun' won the Leger, and the papers are full of a wonderful trial which he says will interest you. Thanks," he added, as he took the tumbler Maurice proffered him; "and now I'm off. I shall sleep without rocking as soon as we get littered down; we've been in the saddle a good many hours to-day. Good-night, gentlemen," and, turning his horse, the lancer disappeared in the gloaming.

Having satisfied his companions' curiosity as to who the newcomer was, and explained that his appearance was the announcement that the —th Lancers had joined the camp, Maurice proceeded to open his letter. This contained an account of the Leger, which Bob described with all the gusto of an enthusiast.

"It will enable you," continued the writer, "to square up comfortably with Hampton. I saw him at the Doncaster and told him as much, and he insisted on our having a bottle of champagne to drink your health in, and vowed that, after reading the account of your famous ride from Etshowe, he would willingly cry quits over the whole affair. It was a hot afternoon, Maurice; he had had a good race and 'wetted' it, in fact he had attained to the acme of geniality. As for your ride, sir, you can't think how it has been talked of. The usual version is, that you charged straight through the whole Zulu army, and people wrangle tremendously about the number that you sabred with your own hand; I only know that Shaw, the Life Guardsman, sinks into utter insignificance when his holocaust is compared with yours. As for Tunnleton, it has adopted you; it claims you as a son; I am not sure there were not

thoughts of canonising you; but you really may expect the freedom of the town in a gold box when you return; as for the Reverend Mr. Jarro, he smiles sweetly and says he made you, and on investigation I found it was not in your military capacity but in your literary one, for that you are war correspondent for the Heliograph has leaked out, and your spirited letters have taken us all much by surprise. Go on, my boy, and prosper. Bear in mind, my dear Maurice, that you have a wife, and therefore I don't think, in justice to her, you ought to fight the Zulu army single-handed. Excuse all my rubbish. Good-bye and God bless you. We shall all be delighted to take you by the hand again—the sooner the better.

Ever yours,

“BOB GRAFTON.

“Kindest regards to Mrs. Enderby.

“By the way, I send you a couple of papers that I think will interest you. They contain a conclusion of the Richard Madingley romance.”

“Ah! they must wait for the morning,” muttered Maurice. “I am very glad that I am now able to settle my liabilities. The sequel of that scamp Madingley's iniquities I am certainly curious to learn. To think what a fool I allowed him to make of me at Ascot. However, a good sleep is the thing one wants now,” and with that Maurice rolled himself in his cloak, and followed the example of his comrades.

The camp was astir betimes the next morning. Every one knew that they were within easy reach of Sikukuni's citadel, and that they would attack that place as soon as they reached it.

Maurice, who found himself an idle man for the present, sat quietly down to read his papers. It was with astonishment that he perused the account of the great De Mombel fraud, as the trial was headed. The extraordinary credulity displayed by the Comtesse made him think less harshly of his own weakness. There is much consolation in finding that we have fellows in our folly.

The police had tracked out the antecedents of all the prisoners, and they were, without exception, men of good education, and, in the case of two of them, certainly endowed with talents that should have guaranteed them success in any honest

calling. But, naturally, the biography that interested Maurice most was that of the *soi disant* Richard Madingley.

He was the son of a well-to-do auctioneer in a country town about four miles from Bingwell, and consequently from a boy had known the whole history of John Madingley. As he grew up, his father associated him with himself in the business, but Dick had already taken to horse-racing and dissolute courses. High words passed between father and son in consequence of the way in which the latter neglected his duties. His inattention, in fact, was seriously affecting the business, and the father soon found that it was hopeless to leave anything to Dick. A violent quarrel ensued between them at last.

The young man was attending a neighbouring race-meeting when he ought to have been "knocking down lots" in the big room of the George Hotel. The father, a stern, violent man, in his wrath told Dick that he might get his living how and where he pleased, but that he would maintain him no longer in idleness. Dick had a bit of his father's wayward temper, and left Beckington the next day, and, wishing to sever all connection with that place—for which he had good and sufficient reasons of his own—determined to change his name. While he was about it he resolved to do it handsomely, and it occurred to him that he could not do better than assume the name of Madingley. It was, the young man thought, a good travelling title. He knew that John Madingley rarely set foot upon a racecourse, and that if he passed himself off as a distant relation of his he was not likely to meet with exposure.

The police had traced Dick French's career with marvellous accuracy. They had followed him through various situations, in all of which he would have done well could he have made up his mind to stick to his work; but, just as he had lost the capital berth of superintendent of the Bristol restaurant from perpetually requesting leave to absent himself from his duties, so had been the case in all his other employments. There had never been anything against him, and it was not till he had left the Bristol that he had avowedly taken to the turf, though that had been the chief cause in reality of his so constantly absenting himself from his employment.

But Maurice had no time to read more, for the cavalry trumpets were sounding "boot and saddle," and the "assembly" was ringing through the infantry camp. The hive was all

astir, and about to move forward on most malevolent intentions, bent upon stinging to death Sikukuni and all his hoard.

Maurice called for his horse, and had just mounted, when Charlie Grafton cantered up.

"The game's about to begin," he cried, "and what a morning we've got for it. We're off at once, to cover your advance. Our vedettes report that they touched the enemy's outposts all night. He's all there, and means business. What did you think of the trial? It killed a dull day or two for us, I can tell you, on our way down, and Bob says that you and he know something of this French."

"Yes," rejoined Maurice, "we know a good deal about him, which I'll tell you when we've time. It's too long a story to enter upon just now."

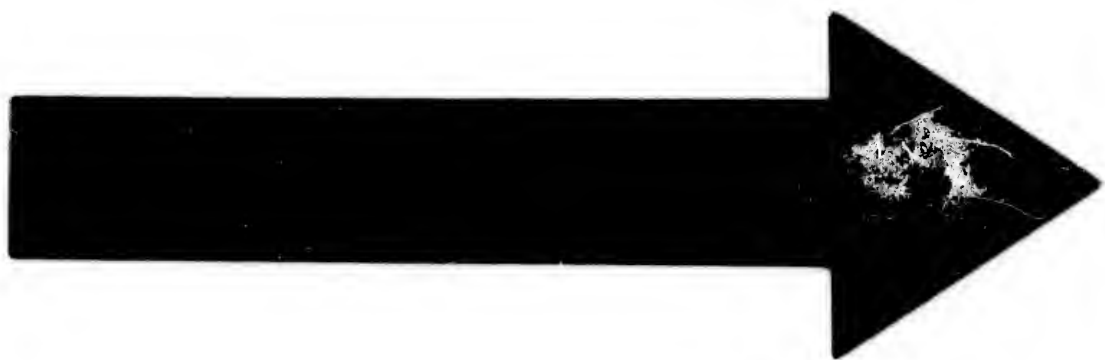
"Yes," laughed the other; "we have no time for yarning just now; I only cantered over just to look at you by daylight before we started—the work will be warm from all I hear."

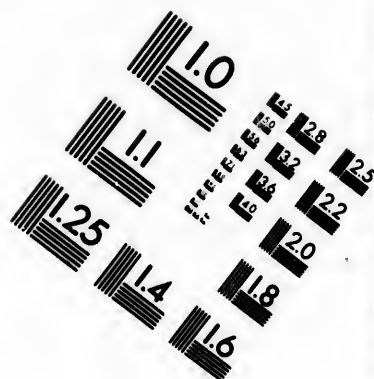
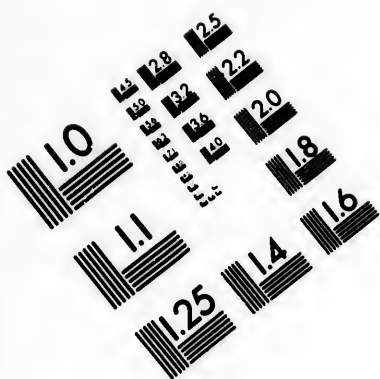
"I fancy so," replied Maurice; and the two rode away in opposite directions.

It was a pretty sight—the advance that clear autumn morning—the cavalry scouring those big rolling plains far in advance, diverging here and there on either flank to make good bits of bush, or to peep round the kopjes which occasionally cropped up. The enemy's skirmishers could be seen falling back and firing before the steady advance of our own people. At last they reach the mouth of the defile, which led immediately to Sikukuni's stronghold, and now the cavalry were promptly called in. In that broken ground which had now to be traversed, commanded by those quaint masses of rock and boulders called in the language of the country kopjes, there was no opportunity for the horsemen, and the infantry skirmishers now spread out in a cloud in their stead. They were no sooner well into the defile than that the enemy meant a stubborn resistance became a fact past all doubt. Every one of these singular hills, running many of them to some hundred feet in height, were crowned with the enemy, who kept up a sharp fire on the advancing column, and only yielded their position upon being fairly turned out by our skirmishers.

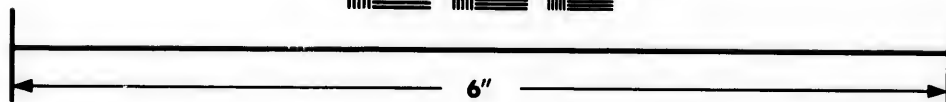
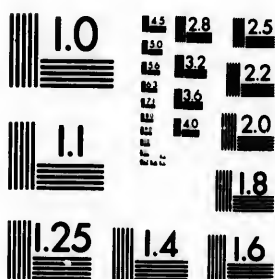
Steadily and persistently the force wound its way through the defile, but the advance was slower than had been anticipated. The enemy's fixed determination was beyond all praise.







# **IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



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Not only did they fight every kopje, but they disputed every boulder. Science, and even perhaps numbers, were against them ; but on the other hand the country gave them great natural advantages for defence, and they availed themselves of it as dexterously as if led by a skilled European. Stubbornly they resisted, unflinchingly they fought, for every quarter of a mile of that defile ; but the Anglo-Saxon won his way at last, and merged within sight of Sikukuni's citadel. Anxiously the military chiefs bent their field-glasses on this famous stronghold, but there could be no doubt that, should the resistance be as stubborn as that through the pass which they had just fought their way through, they had a tolerably stiff job before them.

Something like a mile of open plain now intervened between them and the place they had come to capture, dotted by the skirmishers, already half a mile ahead and now the guns, which had done good service in forcing the passage, emerged from the defile, and galloped sharply to the front, unlimbered, and began to shell the fortress. It consisted of a rocky hill some seven or eight hundred feet high, honeycombed with caves, and artificially terraced all the way up. At the base of the mountain lay the kraal or town, consisting of numberless groups of wattle screen huts, surmounted in many instances by palisading and stone walls. From behind each group of huts a direct or enfilade fire could be poured on the attacking party, while the huts themselves were thoroughly commanded by the rocks above. The whole town was encompassed by an impenetrable hedge of prickly pear, the single entrance to which was barricaded with timber, and led through a mixed avenue of prickly pear and cactus. A very ugly place indeed to get into for an enemy without artillery, but that certainly considerably curtailed its natural defences, for it was quite possible to shell the defenders out of their kraal before delivering the attack. Nevertheless, the caves, the bush-clothed crags, and the rocky terraces, gave promises of furnishing a toughish job to the invader.

"Well, Mr. Enderby," said the general, after a steady look at it, "I mean having it and Sikukuni himself to boot ; but it will cost us dear if these fellows fight, we've every reason to suppose they will. Just ride forward, tell Colonel Round he is making capital practice, and that I want that kraal cleared

before I slip the infantry. I wish to goodness I knew whether those fellows can retreat down the back of their mountain, but I suppose there is no doubt they can."

Maurice set spurs to his horse, and cantered gaily off to where Colonel Round's guns, with perfect accuracy, were dropping shell after shell into the town; but as he remarked upon receiving the general's message:

"Tell the chief, sir, I'm not producing so much effect as I expected. The town is evidently occupied by nothing but their warriors, and even they, I can't help fancying, don't hold it in any force. My men have got the range exactly, and, though I've already knocked down some half-score of their huts, yet the result has been the disturbance of very few of them. Now and again a shell makes a few of them shift their quarters, but I can't think there are many of them there."

"I will tell the general what you say, sir," replied Maurice, as he touched his cap, and, turning his horse sharply round, he galloped back to his chief.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

### THE STORMING OF THE KRAAL.

BEFORE Maurice had regained the general's staff the infantry were advancing steadily across the plain towards the kraal. Sikukuni's people made no sign, that is, in the town that lay at the foot of the mountain; still, it was evidently not deserted, for as Colonel Rumford had said, his shells every now and then unearthed a few of them, and sent them scampering elsewhere for shelter; but on the rocky terraces above the enemy showed themselves freely, and were evidently preparing for resistance. Steadily the troops advanced, the guns playing over their heads, but without much apparent effect, although shell after shell was pitched into the kraal, upon which all eyes were riveted. The attacking party had now got within some couple of hundred yards, when suddenly the quick eye of the officer who was leading the stormers caught the gleam of steel from behind that hedge of prickly pear.

"Lie down!" he thundered; and the bugler at his side sounded the order—sounding, poor lad, his own *requiem* as he did so—for as the storming party dropped in obedience to his command a volley of musketry swept over them, which, however, claimed but one victim as its result.

"Axes to the front!" cried their leader; "now then my lads, up and at them before they have time to load again. Hold your fire till you are up to the hedge. Forward! Charge!" and waving his sword he dashed forward at a steady run.

The Kafirs had by no means abandoned the town, but were formed up behind the hedge, which now became the scene of a desperate hand-to-hand struggle. Several of the men had been armed with axes, with a view to hewing their way through the barrier, and succeeded in making a gap which they soon enlarged sufficiently to enable the greater part of their companions to force their way through.

Still, inside, the garrison made a most stubborn resistance, but the supports were promptly hurried up, and after a quarter of an hour's fierce fighting the kraal was in the hands of the English; the enemy retreating up the mountain. The battle had now begun in earnest; large gaps were speedily opened through the pear and cactus hedge. The infantry were poured rapidly into the place, only to find themselves under a heavy fire from the terraces immediately above them. No time was lost, and speedily the victors were swarming up the mountain in pursuit of their obstinate foe. When they gained the first terrace, which they did with considerable loss, it was only to encounter as obstinate a resistance as they had done down below; and it was clear that the storming of these successive terraces, enfiladed as they were in many instances by caves, the whereabouts of which were unknown to the assailants, was a tough business. The general's aides rode fast and far that day, for he rapidly recognised the exceptional strength of the position, and foresaw, if he meant to make, to use a homely phrase, "a good job of it," it would be necessary to employ all his infantry.

Slowly, but steadily, the British won their way up the mountain, though every terrace was desperately contested. The sun was now high in the heavens, and the troops had been, more or less, engaged since early morning, but the general saw now that it was a question of a short time only. The defence



began to wax somewhat weaker. You cannot drive a foe before you for hours without more or less demoralising him, and the last terrace taken had not been defended to the bitter end as the previous ones had been.

"Mr. Enderby," exclaimed the general, "ride down to Major Carlton and tell him to take his lancers round the mountain so as to cut off the enemy if he endeavours to escape on the other side, and then make your way up yonder," and he pointed to the mountain, "and bring me back word what they think of things in front. It looks to me as if we had pretty well taken the fight out of them."

Maurice rode off with his orders. "The general's right," he muttered; "the heart is about taken out of them now, and if the lancers are to cut off their retreat they'll have to look sharp."

He gave his message to Major Carlton, and then lingered to exchange a few words with Charlie Grafton.

"So you've brought us our orders to chip in again, we've had nothing to do but look on lately."

"No, the infantry have had toughish work driving those fellows up the mountain, and the general wants you fellows to catch them when they come down the other side; and now I'm off; my orders are to go and see how they are getting on up there."

"And we're off too," replied Charlie. "I think we shall have made a pretty clean business of it before another couple of hours are over, if we only find galloping ground when we get round by the hill."

Maurice nodded good-bye, and then pushed rapidly on to the kraal. He entered through one of the gaps that had been hewn in the prickly thorn edge, dismounted, and giving his horse in charge of some of the ambulance people, who were busy amongst the huts, commenced the ascent of the mountain. The spattering rifle fire was going on above him as the skirmishers pushed forward from rock to rock, preparatory to storming the last terrace but one. Ere Maurice could reach them he heard the cheer which told that they had closed in, and heralded the final rush; he pushed on as rapidly as he could, but they were a good bit above him, and though he gained rapidly upon them the yells and shouts told him they were already at close quarters, and he knew that the struggle

would be most likely over before he got up. It turned out as he expected, and when he arrived the assailants were in full possession of the terrace, and pausing for a few minutes previous to attacking the last one.

"What, it's you in command, Maitland!" he exclaimed, as he exchanged hand-grips with the sturdy Highlander who was in command of the party.

"Yes," he answered, glancing down at the crimsoned blade of his claymore, "these fellows have fought like wild cats, and it has cost us dear. But it is about over now, we've only that one more terrace to carry and they don't mean making much of a stand there; see, there's lots of them going over the crest of the hill now. - Now, my lads, spread out in skirmishing order, and push on as before. Sound the advance, bugler;" and again the Highlanders pushed on, using their rifles but little this time, and being met by only a spattering desultory fire from the final terrace. The short space of ground was quickly skirmished over; the bugle sounded the close, and Maitland with a cheer led his men in their rush. The fighting on this terrace was all over in two or three minutes; a handful of the Kafirs perished grimly in their obstinacy sooner than yield to the invader; and it was now obvious that the whole of Sikukuni's stronghold was in the hands of the English, his tribes scattered and dispersed over the crest of the hill.

"A very pretty eye this same Sikukuni had for a military position," said Maitland. "It's been a rare tough nut to crack, and, if the artillery had not dispersed them a good deal in the kraal, it would have cost us still more lives than it has."

"Yes," replied Maurice, as he stepped along the terrace; unluckily, a cave to his right attracted his attention and he advanced a few steps towards it. Suddenly four or five rifles were discharged from its interior, and with a stifled cry Maurice fell to the ground.

There was a rush of soldiers to the cave; a tumult mixed with shrill cries and savage execrations, and then all was still; and in another couple of minutes half-a-dozen grim veterans issued from its mouth and quietly wiped their bloodstained bayonets. Maitland had sprung forward in the meanwhile and raised Maurice. The wounded man was deadly pale, and a slight froth was oozing from his lips.

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"He's badly hit, sir, I'm thinking," said a bluff corporal to his officer, as he assisted him to place Maurice in what they deemed an easy position.

"Yes," rejoined Maitland; "away with you, Donald, and hurry up the doctor as quickly as you can. We must get him down this confounded place as soon as we can, but the surgeon had better see him first."

The corporal dashed down the terrace below him, where he soon found the surgeon busy in the exercise of his duties. The doctor responded promptly to the summons; quick as thought he was on his knees and tearing open the patrol jacket, cut away the shirt, and gazed anxiously into the two small wounds from which the blood was slowly oozing.

"That's nothing," he said, pointing to the upper one; "but there's trouble in this! of what nature it is difficult to say, till I've used the probe; but it must have hit some of the vital organs. We must get him down of course, but if you're a friend of his, Maitland, it's no use disguising from you that it's a bad case."

"I've not known him very long," replied the other, "but he's a right good fellow. It's Enderby, the man who did the famous ride from Etshowe, you know. I can't stay any longer, for I must scour the crest of the hill with my skirmishers. He is not in immediate danger, is he?"

"No," replied the doctor; "he is recovering now from the first shock, and curiously enough it's more that upper wound than the lower which has stretched him senseless. He'll soon come to when I administer him a stimulant."

Maitland had time for no more. "Forward, my lads," he exclaimed, and very soon he and his Highlanders had crowned the crest of the hill from whence they could descry their broken foe, retreating pell mell down the narrow and precipitate road that led to the plain on the other side. A stretcher party meanwhile bore Maurice down to the kraal. A temporary hospital was established there, and, after a tablespoonful or so of brandy had been forced down his throat, he opened his eyes, and began slowly to recover his senses.

"Don't talk—don't try to talk. You are badly hit, but we've given these Kafirs an awful dusting. What I want you to do is to lie as still as you can. Anything you want just whisper to me as shortly as you possibly can."

Maurice nodded assent, and then, in tones barely above a whisper, murmured,

"Charlie Grafton."

"I know," replied the surgeon. "He's in the —th Lancers. He shall be sent for at once, and will no doubt turn up as soon as he can."

"Done, doctor, eh?" whispered Maurice, interrogatively.

"Pooh! Mr. Enderby," rejoined the surgeon. "Knocked out of time for the present, but we shall patch you up, and you'll live to drink many a bumper in commemoration of this day's victory. Now swallow this. I want you to sleep and keep as quiet as you can till we get you to the waggons."

"All right, doctor!" murmured Maurice, with a faint smile. "I'll do my best, but my time has come. Poor Bessie!" and, having swallowed the potion the doctor proffered, he fell quietly back on the stretcher, and seemed to sleep.

Far away in the open plains at the back of the mountain the lancers rode hot and fiercely on the track of the flying enemy, but their defeat was thorough, and the demoralised Kafirs made the slightest attempt to stand; whether the famous robber Chetain had fallen or not in the day's battle, Major Carlton knew not, when he recalled his squadrons, their lances red with carnage. That Sikukuni was not his prisoner was all he could say positively on that point. Slowly the wearied lancers jogged back towards the camp, which was already formed in the plain fronting the mountain which had been the object of such fierce contention during the day, and they had hardly arrived there before the messenger from the general made his appearance, with an intimation that he wished a report sent to him at once of what they had done on the other side of the hill. The messenger further brought a note for Lieutenant Grafton, which briefly informed him that Maurice Enderby was badly wounded and anxious to see him, "so badly," added the writer, "that there is not very much time to be lost."

Charlie was much distressed at the intelligence, and went at once to his commanding officer for leave to ride across to headquarters, as soon as they had got the men camped down for the night.

"All right, Grafton," replied the Major, "I've got to send one of you with this report of our day's doings to the general

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He will probably ask you a few questions about what we did. Poor Enderby? I hope you will not find him quite so bad as you expect. Most promising young fellow that and I should like to have had him one of us."

Grafton touched his cap and without further word started on his errand. He had not seen much of Maurice, it was true, but there are circumstances under which a strong friendship springs up in a few hours such as might take months in the ordinary course of things. The light-hearted dragoon had taken a strange fancy to Maurice from the first, and it must be remembered that he had heard a great deal of Enderby from his brother, and then there was no manner of doubt that Maurice's sabre had saved his life on the occasion of the night attack outside Etshowe.

"There can be no hope," he thought; "poor fellow! he must have got his death-wound I suppose—the doctor would hardly have said 'no time to be lost' unless it had been pretty well all over." He made his way in the first place to the general's tent and gave his report.

"I had some hopes, Mr. Grafton, you might have brought me word that you had captured Sikukuni himself; the prisoners say he was commanding in person, but I am afraid now he has escaped us. However I am glad to hear that the casualties in your corps are slight," and a nod of farewell told Grafton that he was dismissed, and now he was free to go and see Enderby. He soon found the tent to which he had been carried. One of his brother aides-de-camps was watching by the bedside and rose as Charlie entered.

"Mr. Grafton, I presume. I am very glad you have come for he is very anxious to see you."

"Is it so very bad a business?" asked the lancer in a low tone, though not so low but what it caught the quick ears of the wounded man.

"Come here, Charlie," he said; "yes, I am going surely if slowly. The doctor owned as much when he was here some half-hour ago, and I can feel myself that it is so. I am not afraid to die, but when I think of my wife and child I am not sure that I had any business out here at all. Poor Bessie! she has come so far, and even now will be denied the satisfaction of receiving my farewell kiss. I don't know. I got a false start somehow to begin with, and then I began to go

wrong, and was afraid to trust myself amidst all the racing. The work out here kept me straight, you see "

"Yes," interrupted Grafton, as he clasped the dying man's hand, "we all know how well you've done your work too, and are proud of you."

A smile came over Maurice's face at the praise of his young comrade, and he whispered,

"Give me some more of that stuff to drink. I have one favour to ask of you ; I know its granted already if within your power."

"You're letting him talk too much," said the quiet voice of the doctor, who had glided noiselessly to the bedside.

"It makes very little difference, doctor," rejoined Maurice ; "a few hours more of life are of little consequence. I am ready to go, as it must be so, as soon as I have said what I want to Grafton. Listen, Charlie : I should think our work here was finished up to-day, and that fighting, at all events, is over for the present. I want you to go down to Marietzburg and take my last message to my wife. Tell her how I died, and that my last thought was of her. I made a will before I left England, and your brother is my executor and he knows all about everything. If you can get leave you will do this for me, won't you, and see poor Bessie off to England, as well ? If I struck a good blow for you that night by Etshowe you'll not fail me now."

"I promise you solemnly to do your bidding, Maurice," replied Charlie, as he pressed the dying man's hand.

"Good-bye ! Good-bye, doctor ! I am choking ! It was all a false start !" Then came a paroxysm of coughing, the blood gushed from his lips, one or two convulsive shivers of the strong frame, and Maurice Enderby's course was run.

"He was shot through the lungs," said the doctor, as he reverently closed the eyes, "and the internal hemorrhage has choked and killed him."

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## CONCLUSION.

THEY laid poor Maurice to rest, with many of his gallant comrades, at the foot of that rocky stronghold which had been the scene of such desperate fighting. Maitland, Charlie Grafton, the surgeon, and some half-dozen others, heard the last few prayers read over him, and then they left him to his last sleep in the wild, far-away land to which his fate had driven him.

As the dead man had foreseen, this victory finished up the war in that part of Zululand, and Charlie found but little difficulty in obtaining a month's leave, and then, with a sorrowful heart, he started on his journey to Marietzburg.

"Poor Maurice!" he muttered; "I am bound to do his bidding, but pegging one's way up that hill the other day would have been child's play compared to this. How I am to tell the poor little soul that she'll never see her husband again I'm sure I don't know. Its pretty bad when one has to break trouble to a pal, but it is nothing to this!"

As far as the lancer's experience on this point went, the breaking to one of his brother-officers that he had smashed the pipe or lamed the horse he had borrowed was about as much as he could speak to; but ill-news travels apace, and, some days before Charlie Grafton saw her, Bessie had heard of the capture of Sikukuni's stronghold and knew of the price it had cost her. She was stunned by the blow in the first place, but it is astonishing how these soft pliable women steel themselves to bear trouble when it comes, and, the first shock over, Bessie looked her great trouble steadily in the face. There was no more for her to do in this country; she was alone in the world once more; no, not quite; there was her child, and she must get back to it as quickly as might be. She had no idea how she was left with regard to worldly goods; she knew that Maurice had done the best he could for her before he left England, and that Mr. Grafton knew all about it. She would wait a little longer on the miserable chance that the news of Maurice's death might not be true; but she had little hope; she knew how rarely it was that these sinister rumours were contradicted;

a supplementary return of killed and wounded was far more common than a slight error with regard to the original list ; still, she was there, and whilst a glimmer of hope was left she was bound to wait. It was too hard ! She had come so far. She had nursed him back to life once, and yet she was destined to be far away from him when he died, not fated to have the sad satisfaction of hearing his farewell and receiving his last kiss. She was seated at the window looking out over those rolling plains across which, but a few weeks back, she had cantered so blithely with Maurice. She was musing over her short married life and thinking how, despite its troubles, what a happy time it had been to her. The tears welled to her eyes as she thought sadly of her present desolation, when the door suddenly opened and a servant announced, " Mr. Grafton."

She had never as yet seen Charlie, but of course had heard much of him from her husband, and rose at once to welcome him. She knew his errand, and he saw, both in her face and by her dress, that she did so. It was an immense relief to him and gave him courage to plunge *in medias res* at once.

" You know why I am here, Mrs. Enderby ? The terrible tidings have reached you, I can see, though I have ridden both fast and far to break them to you myself."

" Thank you," she replied gently as she sank back in her chair.

" I was with him to the last," continued Charlie, " and have brought you his last farewell, as I promised I would. ' Bid my wife good-bye for me,' he said, ' and tell her my last thought was of her.'"

Bessie's tears flowed fast, and there was a strange huskiness in Grafton's voice as he went on—

" I stood by his grave, Mrs. Enderby, and saw the dust fall on the stanchest friend I ever had—one who all but gave his life for mine. It was hard ; the day was over, the battle won, when poor Maurice, who was in the front as usual, came across four or five Kafirs skulking in a cave. Whether they were scared at finding themselves discovered or what, I don't know ; but they all discharged their guns and killed poor Maurice. It may be some slight consolation to you to know that every thing was done for him that could be done, and that he was spared much suffering." And here Charlie ceased speaking, and Bessie's sobs alone broke the silence of the apartment.

"Thank you, very much, Mr. Grafton," she said as soon as she could control her voice. "Leave me by myself, please, for a little, to think it all over. I didn't know till now how fondly I still clung to the hope that he might still be alive. I shall see you again, of course?"

"Yes, I shall be quite at your disposal for the next few days"; and so saying, Charlie left the room.

After the first few hours Bessie once more recovered herself, and set herself at once to work to make preparation for her departure. She was delayed for some two or three days, in consequence of the necessary arrangements for quitting Mari-etsburg requiring some little management, and during that time she never tired of hearing Charlie Grafton talk about her lost husband. She heard the story of the ride from Etshowe from a man who had all but witnessed it himself, and Charlie never wearied of descanting on the good qualities of the dead man.

"He could ride, Mrs. Enderby, and there wasn't a better swordsman in the cavalry brigade."

However, thanks to the lancer's exertions, they were off for Port Durban at last, where, true to his promise, Charlie had determined to see Mrs. Enderby safe on board ship, and she was naturally only too anxious to leave a land in which she had known such bitter sorrow.

The "Kangaroo's" anchor was atrip, the bluepeter was flying at the fore, and the hoarse cry of "for shore to the gangway" resounded through her decks.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Enderby," exclaimed Charlie Grafton. "May fair winds and a good voyage be your lot. I have kept it till to-day," he continued, as he placed a small packet in her hand, "but I brought down for you Maurice's watch, rings, and a few trifles of that sort; in fact we kept all we thought you would like to have. His sword, and a few of the larger things, have been forwarded to my brother; and now I must say good-bye. Remember me to Bob."

"Good-bye, Mrs. Grafton; and thank you very much for all the care you have taken of me."

"I have only done the very little I could to pay off the great debt I owed your husband," said Charlie, as he pressed her hand.

"Now then, look alive for shore," roared a hoarse voice be-

hind them, "we shall be moving through the water in another five minutes." Charlie lifted his cap and in another minute was slipping down the gangway into one of the surf-boats that lay alongside. A few minutes more, and a flutter of her handkerchief from Bessie as the steamer sped on her homeward voyage, and a wave of his cap from young Grafton as the rowers ploughed steadily back to the Natal coast, and their adieux were completed.

. . . . .

"Well, general, I've done it," exclaimed Bob Grafton, with an expression of comic despair, as he burst suddenly into the general's sanctuary, regardless of the efforts of the well-trained servitor, who vainly endeavoured to announce him. "I don't want to say a word against poor dear Maurice Enderby, but this is just what comes of ill-regulated young men who go off to the wars, and leave what Americans would call 'loose children' lying round."

"What on earth do you mean?" said General Shrewster, as in blank astonishment he removed the cigar from his lips.

"Just this," returned Grafton: "when Mrs. Enderby went off all in a hurry to look after her husband, Mrs. Molecombe volunteered to take care of the child till she came back. Well, you know what a woman is, under those circumstances. She swore-in all her friends to keep an eye on that boy. There was a perfect syndicate of us in the business, and the end of it is ——"

"That two of that syndicate have settled to become one," interposed the general laughing. "My dear Grafton, I heartily congratulate you. I've seen a good deal of Edith Molecombe lately, and she is a monstrous nice, sensible, ladylike girl, and, in a worldly point of view, is a very fair match for any man."

"Oh! it's all right," replied Bob; "don't think I've any misgivings about the matter. The only blessed thing I don't quite understand is, how I came to do it at all; you see I never counted upon 'plunging' in that way."

"I dare say not. I fancy there are a good many fellows who don't make up their minds till quite the last moment. A hot flirtation is like a good thing to hounds. You take fences you would not look at in cold blood. However, I've nothing

but congratulations for you. Have you any news of Mrs. Enderby?"

"Yes; I had a letter from Charlie only the other day, and she may be here any moment. He saw her off from Port Durban and it's a mere question whether the 'Kangaroo' or the mail steamer goes the fastest."

"She'll be made a great fuss with here," said Shrewster quietly; "when she does arrive. The feeling about poor Enderby is very strong. Tunnleton is very proud of his exploits in Zululand, and there is an idea that he was dealt rather hardly with about his Tunnleton doings. Poor fellow! I'm afraid my advice had something to say to sending him out to his doom."

"That's nonsense, general," replied Grafton; "as far as that goes, I had also something to say to it. But what was to be done. The man had made a false start in life. He was always fretting in his clerical harness, and the gossip here stung him to madness. Had he been spared, poor fellow, he would have made his mark in his new profession. Charlie's letter is full of his praises, and I fancy the men out there thought very highly of him, and that, had he lived, there would have been very little doubt about his obtaining the commission he desired."

"And when does your brother think of coming home?" asked the general.

"When this cruel war is over, as the song says," laughed Bob. "I've a sort of hazy idea that it never *is* quite over in those parts. They are always on the simmer, like a *pot au feu*, and boil over at periodical intervals."

As General Shrewster had predicted, Bessie's friends showed strong sympathy for her in her trouble, and the Molecombes insisted upon her making her home with them till, as Edith said, "she had time to look round," and Bessie willingly consented.

"I have," she said smiling, "some business matters to talk over with Mr. Grafton, and I should think there is no place where I am more likely to come across him than here."

"Perhaps not," rejoined Edith demurely, "he *is* here a good deal."

"Besides," continued Bessie, "I shall most probably settle in Tunnleton. I have a great many friends here, and I think can manage with my slender income."

But a letter from John Madingley very soon removed any fears Mrs Enderby might entertain regarding ways and means, for Uncle John, who had read of Maurice's exploits with the greatest pride, and who had felt most sincerely grieved at his untimely end, promised at once to make her a suitable allowance and to provide for her at his death.

"I don't ask you," he wrote, "to make your home with me, because it would be a dullish life for a girl like you to be buried in the country with an old fogey whose sole visitors are a few old gentlemen of his own standing, but I hope you'll pay me a visit every summer and stay just as long as it pleases you. Shrewster will tell you that I was only waiting for what, alas! was never to be, namely, to see your poor husband gazetted into the army, to allow him a moderate income, and this, my dear Bessie, will at once be expended to you. And now, may God bless and comfort you in your sorrow.

"Ever your affectionate Uncle,

"JOHN MADINGLEY."

"It is very kind of him," said Bessie; "everybody is very kind to me. Ah, Maurice, my dear, if you could but have lived to share it all with me!"

THE END.



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