



CHAPTER I.

"Jenny?" "Yes, Sergeant Lynn." His fine figure drawn to its full height, as rigidly as though the eyes of the adjutant were upon him, yet apparently straining every nerve to appear unobtrusively and at his ease, Sergeant Lynn was a man with whom any woman might be satisfied as a sweetheart. His features were good, if not refined, and the weakness of his mouth was hidden by a moustache as magnificent as that of any cavalry colonel in the service.

It was only pretty Jane Knox, the sergeant major's daughter, who seemed so impervious to his attractions and made him appear as witless and unobtrusive as the latest trooper who had joined the awkward squad. Hitherto, success had been so easy to the dashing sergeant. It could only be said of his over-eagerness to please that this time he had failed. She did not even dislike him, he told himself with angry surprise; it was merely indifference that she felt—indifference as gratifying as it was complete.

"Jane, don't be so provoking. You know I mean—"

"That it would be best for me to marry a sergeant. Well, I dare say it would," thoughtfully—"if—if I could only make up my mind."

"Try—only try, Jane. Love always comes after marriage," he argued, eagerly.

"Why don't you prove it by your own example?" she answered, negligently. "Marry some one you detest, and if—"

"You—you don't detest me?"—blankly. "Oh, no; but I don't love you, and there's no middle course in marriage, I think."

He was silenced for the time, and contented himself with watching her as she flitted about the room, arranging the bits of holly, with here and there a twig of the white berries intermingled.

Mrs. Knox, Miss Jane's mother, had been the daughter of a veterinary surgeon, and being left almost penniless at her father's death, had become a teacher in the village school. It had been a quiet, little-frequented spot, and until the age of twenty-nine she had not even the suspicion of a love affair to brighten the monotony of her existence.

Then the clergyman of their village came into a small fortune, sufficient to allow him to retire from his labors and put a curate in his place.

The man chosen was a bachelor, but that might well have been considered the only point in his favor. He was plain, elderly, and half-starved, as indeed he might well be, considering the miserable stipend he received. But to Jane's mother his charm was that he was a gentleman.

His manners had seemed to her the perfection of courtly breeding, and had he asked her she would have gladly become his wife, in spite of all the petty troubles which were attendant on genteel poverty.

But, either because his own heart was not sufficiently interested, or that, from mistaken selfishness, he hesitated to let her share his lot, he never did; and after three years of alternate hopes and fears on her side, another lover appeared upon the scene, and by his brisk wooing succeeded in winning her for his wife.

"A terrible match for her," people said—she, the educated woman, to bind herself to the rough if dashing hussar, who could offer her only the barest necessities, and at whose side she might have to encounter endless hardships; but equalized surely by the fact that she was faded and worn, and that he was a man in the prime of life, loving her passionately, oblivious of her vanished youth and indifference to him.

"Hold it a little higher, Jenny darling," whispered the Sergeant, audaciously, and coming close behind her, he attempted to encircle her waist.

But she wrenched herself away, and confronted him crimson with wrath and shame.

now Mrs. Knox placed herself only a little way apart from where the staff and officers of the regiment were seated. Jane was crimson with mortification, and would have given much to find herself safe back in her own home, away from those slighting sidelong glances of the women present, and the colder, admiring gaze of men.

She had turned her back on both, and strove to appear deeply interested in the polo-party that was going on, when presently a gentle, drawing voice sounded in her ear.

"How do you do, Miss Knox? Have you decided which is to be the winner?" It was Colonel Prinsep, the colonel of her father's regiment, the 13th Hussars.

"I was not thinking about the race," she confessed, blushing.

He did not press the subject but stood beside her, making a remark now and then, and listening courteously to the timidly hazarded replies. But when Mrs. Knox joined nervously in the conversation, he found his interest flag, and after a few desultory remarks moved away toward a group of three people, among whom was a young lady, who were standing several yards away.

Her eyes were fixed upon the ponies that were being walked up and down preparatory to a race, but she saw a little of what she looked at as Jane Knox had seen some twenty minutes before. Perhaps it was because all her thoughts were with the "what might have been" that she could not see what actually was. The most casual observer might have guessed she was a woman with a story—a story in which both her companions had played a part.

Nora Dene was not yet twenty-two, but looked older on account of the gravity of her expression, which seldom relaxed into a smile. Her mouth had a little pathetic droop which seemed to compel pity in spite of the pride which would not stoop to ask it. Her eyes were sad with the sadness of those which seldom or never weep, and are the "saddest eyes of all."

Her face lightened when Colonel Prinsep joined them, and she made a movement toward him, which he forestalled by quickening his pace. They were as good friends as it was possible for man and woman to be without protestations and with no thought of anything beyond.

"You are looking tired," he began. "Won't you come over to the seats?"

"Thank you, I think we have a better view from here, and I am interested in this race," she answered, only now beginning to see the ponies as they cantered up and down.

As she spoke one of the men—her husband—came and placed a chair beside her which he had brought over from the tents.

"Why did you not say you were tired, Nora?" he reproached her gently.

"Because I did not feel so—at least, not with standing. There is always a certain amount of fatigue in watching things like this. Don't you think so?"

"I dare say—at least—of course there is. Regimental sports are always an infliction. They are one of the sacrifices we feel obliged to make for the men, and for which we get no thanks." Then, as her husband fell back and resumed conversation with his companion, he added, in a lower voice, "Mrs. Dene, I want to interest you in some one if I can."

"Am I so difficult to interest in anything, that you take such a humble tone?" she asked, looking up at him in some amusement from the low seat of which, in spite of her denial of fatigue, she had availed herself.

"I am distrustful myself rather than you—I don't know whether I ought to ask it, in fact. She seems very quiet and refined, but I should never forgive myself if any unpleasantness came to you through granting my request."

"Are you speaking of the new quartermaster's daughter?"

"The very person—but you must be a witch to have found it out."

"Not a very wonderful discovery, considering you have been talking to her exclusively for the last half hour."

"Ten minutes, I assure you," smiling good-humoredly.

"I dare say it seemed no longer," dryly. "She is a very pretty girl."

"Is she? I scarcely noticed. I was sorry to see her and her mother standing all alone, and joined them out of pure pity."

"And you want me to emulate the nobility of your conduct?"

"I should like you to be good to them if you can. There is such an awkward position. You see they cannot associate with their old friends, and gain no new ones in place of those they lose."

"Of course I will be amiable if you wish; but, honestly, don't you think it a mistake—don't you think they will only be uncomfortable out of their proper sphere?"

"It is only the 'first step' that will 'cost' them anything. Women adapt themselves so readily to altered circumstances; and Mrs. Knox is considerably above her present position, I have heard."

She shrugged her shoulders, but did not attempt a verbal contradiction.

"You are not thinking of going home just yet, are you, Gerald?" she asked, turning to her husband.

"Not unless you wish it. I am at your service." (To be continued.)

OUR STORY TELLER



DRIVING FROM THE BACK SEAT.

DRIVING a horse is one of those simple processes, like sailing a boat, which anyone can master without previous experience. Everybody knows that there is nothing difficult about it, and those that have never done it are perfectly aware of their ability to do it, if they choose.

But "driving from the back seat" is quite a different thing; that is a grave and serious affair, an undertaking of tragic intensity. There is not one moment of calm, peaceful enjoyment for those so employed. Every circumstance and incident to them is vital and momentous; each turn in the road bids fair to be a certain pathway to destruction; every signboard is a false, deceitful snare set to mislead them, while each movement of the horse is but an index of vicious propensities about to be revealed. In fact, this method of driving is not only physically exhausting, but mentally depressing and spiritually demoralizing, and not alone does the driver suffer, but also all who are unfortunate enough to find themselves in the same vehicle with such a one.

Perhaps a brief description of my own will best serve to illustrate my theme.

I had run down to spend a couple of days with my friends the Graziers, who were occupying a charming country place for the summer. On the afternoon of my arrival my hostess suggested that possibly I might enjoy a drive over to Pine Knoll, which they deemed a most desirable point from which to view the country round about. I, of course, expressed myself delighted with the idea of a quiet country drive after the rush and turmoil of the city, from which I had just escaped.

Immediately after luncheon a light two-seated wagon drawn by a pair of spirited bays appeared at the door. Mrs. Grazier and I took our seats behind and Mr. Grazier, springing into the seat in front, took the reins and we were whirled away down the long, smooth driveway, beneath rows of fine old elms. I glanced admiringly at them as we passed along and turned to my hostess enthusiastically. "What magnificent trees these are," I ejaculated.

She, however, failed to respond, and I noticed that her lips were tightly compressed. "Be careful, Willard, when you turn into the road," she said warningly, and I perceived that we were approaching the picturesque stone gateway, over which much superb English ivy was gracefully twining.

"We're very proud of that ivy," Mr. Grazier remarked, eyeing it with satisfaction, as the bays turned smoothly out into the road.

"It is beautiful," I murmured, transferring my attention to his wife, who was holding her breath and firmly grasping her side of the wagon.

"Are you timid about driving?" I asked, sympathetically.

"Oh, no," she returned, "only my husband absolutely disregards every suggestion of mine," and she sighed deeply.

"Indeed," I said, lowering my tone, so that it might reach her ears alone, while I eyed the bays uneasily, "and isn't Mr. Grazier used to driving?"

"He ought to be," she responded, "for he has driven since he was a boy. I felt relieved, though still puzzled.

"But you are a great horsewoman yourself, then," I persisted.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Not in the least. I never touch the reins if I can help it," she concluded.

At this point I became convinced that Mr. Grazier had very sharp ears, for as I continued to regard her questioningly, he remarked lightly, "Mrs. Grazier drives from the back seat."

I laughed with all the fervor of one who does not see the joke, wondering meanwhile what he could mean. Before the afternoon was over, however, I understood his meaning perfectly.

"Willard, here comes one of those dreadful coaches," his mentor began almost immediately. "Be sure that you turn out more than you did the other afternoon. I never saw a man take such risks."

In a few minutes one of the horses whisked his tail over one of the reins, which was promptly freed by Mr. Grazier; this gave his better half a chance to suggest that a tighter rein would have prevented the catastrophe. "Some one was telling me the other day, Willard," she went on, "that when a horse gets his tail over the reins no one knows what he may do; in fact, he is just as likely to run away as not."

A little later we reached the shore of a beautiful lake and I exclaimed with rapture over the slimness of the

stop and ask at the next Willard," my hostess announced, "my husband certainly are acquainted in your neighborhood."

"But he is a good fellow, when I know that the knoll is only half a mile from this very farm."

"So you know, Willard, but I think differently. He comes another man, and I am going to speak to him."

Man number two, however, did not wait to be spoken to, but accosted us with a broad smile.

"Good day, Mr. Grazier, going up to the Knoll again?"

Mr. Grazier nodded. "Is this the shortest road?" Mrs. Grazier inquired promptly.

"I reckon it's about the only one," he rejoined, grinning, as if he found the idea of a possible second road hugely amusing.

We drove on in silence for some few minutes before Mrs. Grazier spoke again; then she said, "Anyway, it's a relief to know that this is the road."

I answered fervently, but Mr. Grazier vouchsafed no reply.

Pine Knoll proved to be a truly lovely spot, but my memory of the way thither and back is clouded by my too vivid recollection of my hostess' participation in the management of the bays.

If we crossed a bridge Willard was reminded of the sign which directed us to "walk the horses." If we passed a wagoner in a narrow part of the road he was conjured not to tip up down the steep embankment. If the horses quickened their pace, it was cruel to drive so fast, and if they slowed up they were overhauled, or had, doubtless, stones in their feet.

At every water-tough Mrs. Grazier felt sure that they were dying of thirst, until at last we stopped, and after much delay and a struggle to unlash their checkreins we ascertained that neither of them could be induced to touch a drop.

The most trying time of all was probably when we turned around in a very limited space on top of Pine Knoll, but upon that I will not enlarge.

When we reached home I felt tired and exhausted, well nigh sick, while my hostess sighed deeply as she alighted, declaring that she couldn't understand why driving fatigued her so.

Even Mr. Grazier, despite his adamant nerves, appeared somewhat weary, as he replied: "It's not driving that tires you, but driving from the back seat Mrs. Grazier."

Since my country drive I have often observed people endowed with those characteristics so prominent in Mrs. Grazier. In every club, society or social gathering I have found them present; in fact, wherever human beings strive or struggle, wherever they congregate for work or for amusement, some are present who ever stand one side, their mission being to advise, direct and criticize. They make themselves generally useful by telling others what they ought to do and how to do it.

And as often as it is my misfortune to run across them, and their name is legion, I regret to say, my painful country drive rises before me, and I murmur: "I know you well, my friends; therefore I shun you, as I do all of your kind, who, like you, are driving from the back seat."—Boston Transcript.

Solving a Problem. Italian workmen are, as a rule, not fond of strikes; they usually resort to other means to get what they want. A company of Italian navvies, engaged in the construction of a railway in Germany, had their wages reduced. They said nothing, but during the night each of the men cut an inch off the end of his shovel. In reply to the engineer who took them to task about it, one of them said: "Not so much pay, not lift so much earth. So much longer last work. Italian no fool like German. Italian no strike."

Thomas Cat Shows Cunning. A Cincinnati tom cat has won fame by his habit of spreading bread crumbs for sparrows and then gobbling the birds.

Circus Elephant Shows Humor. One of the Arabs of the street had an experience with an elephant at the circus grounds the other day, says the Boston Record, which he is not likely to forget in a hurry. He was feeding the animal with peanuts and other indigestible things, when his elephantship thought he would do something to amuse the urchin. So he gently wound his proboscis about the boy's waist and lifted him up in the air above his head. The urchin was fairly livid with terror, but the elephant was in the best of humor, and slowly lowered the boy to his feet, much as a man would lower a baby he had been dandling on his shoulders.

Not that Kind of a Dog. "Do you see that Japanese pug waiting for us in the road," inquired an Iowa wheelman of his companion, as they spun along the road the other night. "Yes; what about him?" "Well, if he don't get out of the way I'm going over him. A few kinks in his back will teach him to stay at home. Hi, y! get out of there!" The dog did not run, but walked deliberately to the center of the road and stood in the moonlight. "Biff! Whew!" Half an hour later two wheelmen made a bonfire of two bicycle suits. The Japanese pug proved to be a small spotted skunk.

Up to His Business. Mr. Magnet—I want to get a steward for my yacht. Have you had any experience?

Applicant—Yes, sir. I have been a bar-keeper for three years.—Detroit Free Press.

Mutual. She—I've had no use for you since you lost your mustache.

He—And I've had no use for the mustache since I lost you.—Rochester Gazette.