

# A Hunting Morning

By MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.

(Copyright, 1902, by Martha McCulloch-Williams.)

Patricia's glance, long and level-headed, struck Rothwell fairly between wind and water. That is to say, without metaphor, between his weariness of a silly woman and his wariness of one over-bold. He half hated the pair of them—halfheartedly, halfheartedly, halfheartedly. He had come to Wake Forest hoping to forget—namely, that he was the best part of ten years. Worldly-wise matrons and virgins had made him so painfully conscious of the fact that the flag of the season had found him much in the lead to go to his beloved globe-trotting. Just then the Taplow laid violent hostilities upon him, whisking him away in a private car to meet the spring and the pines and yellow jessamine of their south-country place.

The foppish new, high-colored, many-gabled, seemed an affront to the splendid old avenue and the riotous richness of grounds and garden run wild for so many years. Rothwell wondered why the Taplow had not put something colonial—something at least decently reminiscent of the burned house, one of whose tall chimneys was still erect. Ivy and wilding vines had overrun it so picturesquely. Mrs. Taplow would not have it down. It was a monument, she said, to the old times, the old owners—the only either never even broke. Under all her gay loudness Molly Taplow had a heart of gold. She kept on doing kind things regardless of the fact that often she had not the doing got her into social hot water.

These a Taplow house party was morally certain to be a mixed affair. Missie Wade, the silly woman, made part of this one, because Molly knew in the Lenten begin the girl had nowhere else to go. Mrs. Loudon, whom men called disrespectfully the bold Loudon, was at Wake Forest because she chose instead of being chosen. A dashing widow, and rich, she had all the world before her. That ought to have hardened Molly's heart against her. In a manner it did—still, when Mrs. Loudon said calmly: "Molly, my Lenten sacrifice is—myself. I am coming with you to save you and Will from being bored to extinction." Molly had acquiesced, and when her husband protested, had even said: "Well, Clara's maid is a treasure—it will be a comfort to have her in the house, there where one is so far from everything."

Verna Ash, truly a golden girl—yellow-haired, with a million in her own right, had been asked, because Molly wanted to cross her with Tregars. Tregars was a cross-grained genius of whom Molly and Taplow both expected great things if he could be persuaded to give himself the leisure and liberty of riches. The other men besides Rothwell were Dick Morton, a fortunate broker, once Taplow's college chum; Van Rensselaer Lewis, Molly's brother, with leanings to reform and holy orders, and Hugh Anstruther, a Scotchman who had risen in twenty years from the forge and the furnace hearth to the control of unreckoned millions.

All had been at Wake Forest for a week before Patricia came. Patricia was to the manner born. Back in civil war times her father, Colonel Rhetts of the Palmetto Rifles, had saved the life of Major Taplow. When the major's widow, old Madame Taplow, found she could not turn her son from what she called his supreme folly of buying a Carolina estate, she charitably resolved to plant thorns in his chosen path. To that end she resurrected the story of reform and subsequent languid friendliness. No doubt the people were by this time more than ever impossible—but since Molly and Will had a taste for the impossible they must search out the Rhetts and do them such good turns as they might.

The quest proved distressingly easy. Colonel Rhetts had died ten years—so had his wife. His son had disappeared, but there was a daughter living in lonely independence upon the plantation. It lay some thirty miles off the millionaire colony. All through the first spring Will and Molly meant to go there, but somehow or other time, Madame Taplow fumed when she heard. "You must invite her to visit you next year," she said. "You cannot do less—though I know she has nothing to wear, and dare say often not enough to eat."

Molly wrote and was answered in advance of her own coming. Miss Rhetts went to Wake Forest for a fortnight, bringing her own hunter. The hunter staggered the Taplows a bit. Clara Loudon laughed sneeringly over it. "No doubt she will trot out a pack of bones that can hardly step over a road in the path," she said. "I know those southerners—grandiloquent fools, all of them. They feel, if only things sound big, nothing else matters."

Everybody was out when Patricia came. She rode a sleek mare, as did Betty Patterson when she set out for the ball where she was to captivate her Bonaparte. By way of further parallel, a black boy upon another mule fetched her frocks in two portmanteaus. The footman and butler, both much scandalized, had taken the riders for market, or the gypsies, and ordered them around to the back. Something in Patricia's voice showed them their mistake, even before she said: "I am Miss Rhetts, whom Mrs. Taplow is expecting."

She had got down, smiling a little whimsical smile, and seen to it that her dress was stripped of the mule and put properly away before going in. It was an English saddle—one of Whipple's best—and made to order. Patricia knew she could not ride as well in any other. Her mare, Ruby, was to be sent on next day. Rain had made the roads tremendously heavy—and since Patricia had a certain ambition to show Ruby at her best in the hunting, she had thought it best not to let the mare carry her weight through wet sands over such distance.

She had rested, dressing deliciously after her ride, then toward sundown had made herself a picture in faded pale blue china crepe and odorous pink hyacinths, and set herself at ease in a piazza box. A lightly jutting wall and sheltered her from casual eyes. Thus three of the riding party had set down a little way off, unconscious of her presence.

She looked at them as she might have watched a play. It was, indeed, better than play. It was, indeed, better than play to be thus the stranger-guest of a plant in her own land, and peeping into a fairy world, to which she herself was properly born. Rothwell interested her most—his face was so kind and strong and clean-cut, withal touched with impudence. Missie Wade, who affected kindling ways, was purring, glancing outside as she spoke: "Yes, I suppose it is rather nice, this rambling old place, but somehow it gives me the creeps. I'm sure every night there is a ghost in the big magnolia under my window. Now, Whitehurst is so different, with a languishing glance at Rothwell. "Whitehurst is heavenly—I don't see how you have managed to stay away from it so long. The dearest place. You have not seen it? Turn on to Missouri. It's quite like a castle—an English castle, you know—gray stone walls with towers and ivy and all that—and oh, peacocks screaming on the terrace above the rose garden—and the very loveliest velvet lawns—"

"Paradise minus Eve," Mrs. Loudon interrupted, wheeling to look full at Rothwell's eyes. "Or is it the Serpent who is lacking? Now I think of it, it must be the Serpent—we are proof positive that Eve is merely a question of the embarrassment of riches."

"I am too devoted to listen to such heresy

—particularly in Lent," Rothwell said, getting up precipitately. Patricia's glance had but just gone home. He knew nothing whatever about her, but something in her eyes, her delicately noble face, shamed him for the woman at his side.

"Now see what you have done, Clara! I hate you! You know Mr. Rothwell cannot bear to hear women say that sort of ruse, religious things," Missie said peevishly as she strode away. Mrs. Loudon laughed aloud. "You are a fool, Missie," she said, shrugging her fine shoulders. "And Langley Rothwell is another. I wonder if he thinks men are to keep on cornering the transgression market, and professing to save women by committing all the sins themselves? That is the man-of-the-world pose. I had thought he was above it. Depend on it, he left us not because he was shocked, but simply because he did not choose to stay."

"I do not choose to stay either. No lady ever says such a word as 'fool.' I am sure my Aunt Mary would disapprove my having you longer as a friend," Missie said, drawing her skirts about her much as a prim banian folds its wings. Mrs. Loudon also rose, her eyes narrowed till they showed only a spark of red fire between the lids. She opened her lips as though to speak, but ended by laughing a silent, cynical laugh. Her mind was made up to marry Rothwell. His bulk and stature, his wholesome blonde comeliness appealed to her even more than

his wealth and position. More than all there was the excitement of winning him in spite of himself. She understood him well enough to know that in the outset she repelled rather than attracted him.

She had dreaded nothing save another woman. Was that girl across the piazza the other woman? Rothwell had changed countenance at sight of her. She must be the native Molly had mentioned, but how did she make herself look as though she had come from the Sleeping Beauty's castle, instead of a remote, every-day plantation? She was individual, even distinguished. Mrs. Loudon was never weak enough to undervalue an adversary. She crossed the piazza with her haughty high manner and said, holding out her hand: "You must be very brave Miss Rhetts. I said as much when Molly told you we were coming. Somehow I half hoped you would stay away."

"Indeed? Why?" Patricia asked, rising, but overlooking the proffered hand. Upright she showed lovely tall and this almost to angularity. Her head, clouded over with dusky hair, sat on a long neck as a rose sits on its stem. She had fine dark brows, too—dark dark violet pupils underneath gave a sense of piquant surprise. Now the violet was a sort of luminous glow. Mrs. Loudon had somehow a sense that blackness was a danger signal.

She had prided herself upon her fine presence—Patricia overlooked her by at least three inches and had besides something classic in pose and pose. But it was something in her gaze, steady, compelling, that forbade Mrs. Loudon to speak after her went, wholly brutal truth. To the woman of her fancy, the uncouth country girl or prim, pretentious spinster, she would have said simply: "I did not want you because I knew you would be in the way—and unhappy over it. Instead of that she answered Patricia's eyes rather than her question: "I did not know why—now I understand it was instinctive—I hated to have you make us rattapatties ashamed of ourselves."

"Why not rattapatties, if one may rattle gracefully and graciously?" Patricia asked. Molly dashed out to them, affect in apology. "I meant to be here—indeed I did, dear Miss Rhetts—but the afternoon and the ride were so heavenly—"

"If you had come back a minute before you were ready I should be implacable," Patricia said, softly patting Molly's hand. "I love our woods in springtime so well I cannot bear to have them neglected."

"Molly, I'm positively ravished—I shall ring for tea," Mrs. Loudon interposed. She caught up a silver lotus flower and began striking black chimneys.

Rothwell pre-empted the cushion nearest Patricia's feet, and sat watching her as though in a trance. In the deepest pine shade he was already drinking, yet pure red light filled all the west. Patricia fair in the shine of it, seemed somehow to make all the other women leaden. She slipped her tea, playing daintily between alps with her gold spoon, quite as though she had done it every day of her life. But when he would have brought a French cup, she shook her head, saying in a half-whisper: "I drank this only because it was part of the game."

"What game?" he asked in her own key. She smiled faintly. "The game of money-indulgence," she said. "I have always wanted a look in at it. Now I have to pinch myself occasionally to make sure I really am where I am."

"Come inside to the fire. The only excuse for country-house parties is sitting around a fire," Tregars said, strolling majestically. Molly pushed Verna Ash after him. While Taplow himself solicitously nudged the rest inside. Somehow Hugh Anstruther (cared against Patricia as they went through the window. Anstruther had a

our face, square-jawed, with lips shutting like a visor. He had the name of never speaking to a woman if he could get around it. Naturally everybody marvelled to see him sit down beside Patricia, uttering out: "I shall doubt ye forgive my slowness

unless you're willing to talk with me a bit."

"Oh, did you hear how she came?" Miss Ash asked in a low whisper. "The footman told my maid. Fancy! Nonsense! I'm sure she's not a proper person—"

"So am I! No woman can be a proper person, in the eyes of her sisters, who captures two most eligible men, almost in the wink of an eyelid," Tregars said, smiling grimly. Mrs. Loudon, who had been playing Miss Ash with questions, looked up at him, also smiling. "I would not ride a mule if that was the way to get to heaven," she said, leaning across to speak in Rothwell's ear. Tregars laughed. "Tell us things we do not know, hold one. Ten miles, or twenty, could not carry you heavenward—you know enough never to be a mule!"

"You mean I cannot bear to be lonely?" Mrs. Loudon said, her eyes darkling. "I am glad my devotion to my friends begins to be understood."

"Stop quarrelling, you two—I am going to say things to that girl," Verna said. "If Molly has no more sense than to have her here, somebody has got to teach her place."

Tregars frowned impatiently. Mrs. Loudon stirred as though the moment to rise, but Miss Ash was not to be stayed. She leaned toward Patricia, asking with a rasping accent which seemed to her tremendously superior: "O! Miss—er Brett, how do you crackers amuse yourselves? I believe crackers is the right name."

"It is a name of various application," Patricia said. Anstruther looked puzzled—he knew too little of the life about

about me? I bought Cairngorm three days back and have ridden him in my morning gallops ever since."

"Well! You have got a bad bargain—let's try to tell you so!" Rothwell said, trying to laugh. "Why did you not tell me you thought of buying? No doubt you paid a good price—but you truly got a bad horse for it."

"He suits me—goes like the wind and takes whatever I set him at without checking," Mrs. Loudon said. "As to telling you—why should I bother you with my small concerns? Since you have been under spell you have made me feel that even thought of friendship between us was an impertinence."

"You have a talent for misunderstanding—but let that pass," Rothwell said. "What I cannot less pass is—that beast you are on. I know him of old—know him long before he was brought down here. He is all you say me to speed and action—when he chooses there is hardly a better hunter on top of ground. The trouble is he does not always not often choose. He's the worst rogue possible—may carry you like a lamb through parts of a run, then bore into a tree or fence or gatepost and dash out your brains."

"I suppose you mean to say he is as wilful as a man," Mrs. Loudon said, laughing recklessly. "Thank you very much for telling me all about him. I bought him because—well! because I wanted a horse of superior weight and substance."

"If you will not go back for a remount, at least change with me," Rothwell entreated. "That brown devil can outrun anything in the field today. When he runs Patricia's heart sank as looking over her shoulder she saw the brown had gained—Ruby's lead now was less than twenty yards. Patricia felt the laboring of her heart, the spasmodic panting breath. Suddenly the dog music fell to a mad jangle—as suddenly the pack went out of sight, then all in a twinkling, again struggled into the field of vision. Patricia wondered what it meant—the ground in front, no longer rising, seemed smooth and level. A dull, distant roar, heavy and vibrant, enlightened her—the chase had struck the deep out by which the railway slipped through the ploughland."

Patricia and quarry were safely over it. No horse ever foaled of mare could leap the cut, not even coming to it fresh—how much less, then, blown, at the end of a ringing run? Patricia reined in so sharply she brought Ruby to her haunches, half turned in her saddle and waved a warning, crying: "Mrs. Loudon! Stop! Pull up! At once! Hear the train coming!"

The dull roaring was louder, nearer. Mrs. Loudon's face blanched, but her eyes held their deadly glitter. She tried to pull up—to turn and ride down her adversary, as well might she have tried to rein fire in wind, Cairngorm had the bit in his teeth—he was no more angry with Ruby, but full of deadly rage against the rider who had slain his quarry. He meant to run and run until he found something high enough, stout enough to crush her. The cut lay less than 200 yards ahead—he would try to sweep it, fall inevitably—and

on your own head unless you clear my path!"

Patricia got white to the lips, but her eyes darkened, her hand on the rein did not shake. She knew Mrs. Loudon meant to ride her down, trusting to her horse's superior weight for her own safety. She should not do it—not if she herself and Ruby did for it. In firm going Ruby could easily beat the brown—but what of plowland where she sank fetlock deep at each stride? Cairngorm, bigger, stouter, with more driving power in quarters and stifles, had a clear advantage there. But Ruby had the fire and stay and spirit. Impulsively Patricia flung her weight forward, lying almost prone upon the mare's neck to whistle in her ear. It was due to feel Ruby answer—gallantly as she had been going, she had something left for that desperate call. She could not quicken stride—the plowland was too hard. But she could and did lie down to it, stretching stomach to earth in long greyhound leaps that devoured space as flame devours stubble.

Behind came the mad brown stallion, still screaming, still lashed by a madder rider. Dimly through a red, blurring mist she saw her prey, the woman she hated, the woman who had crossed her path; the woman she yearned to mangle and trample out of recognition. Some such purpose, unshaped, unworked, had been behind while Rothwell talked. Cairngorm's temper would be excuse enough for any accident—nothing but the bay mare could live the pace with him—what so natural, therefore, as that the bay and her rider should be the victims? It was all coming around beautifully, better, quicker than she had dared hope in the outset—there was risk to herself, of course—but what was she not ready to risk for vengeance on this interloper?

Patricia's heart sank as looking over her shoulder she saw the brown had gained—Ruby's lead now was less than twenty yards. Patricia felt the laboring of her heart, the spasmodic panting breath. Suddenly the dog music fell to a mad jangle—as suddenly the pack went out of sight, then all in a twinkling, again struggled into the field of vision. Patricia wondered what it meant—the ground in front, no longer rising, seemed smooth and level. A dull, distant roar, heavy and vibrant, enlightened her—the chase had struck the deep out by which the railway slipped through the ploughland."

Patricia and quarry were safely over it. No horse ever foaled of mare could leap the cut, not even coming to it fresh—how much less, then, blown, at the end of a ringing run? Patricia reined in so sharply she brought Ruby to her haunches, half turned in her saddle and waved a warning, crying: "Mrs. Loudon! Stop! Pull up! At once! Hear the train coming!"

The dull roaring was louder, nearer. Mrs. Loudon's face blanched, but her eyes held their deadly glitter. She tried to pull up—to turn and ride down her adversary, as well might she have tried to rein fire in wind, Cairngorm had the bit in his teeth—he was no more angry with Ruby, but full of deadly rage against the rider who had slain his quarry. He meant to run and run until he found something high enough, stout enough to crush her. The cut lay less than 200 yards ahead—he would try to sweep it, fall inevitably—and

on your own head unless you clear my path!"

Patricia got white to the lips, but her eyes darkened, her hand on the rein did not shake. She knew Mrs. Loudon meant to ride her down, trusting to her horse's superior weight for her own safety. She should not do it—not if she herself and Ruby did for it. In firm going Ruby could easily beat the brown—but what of plowland where she sank fetlock deep at each stride? Cairngorm, bigger, stouter, with more driving power in quarters and stifles, had a clear advantage there. But Ruby had the fire and stay and spirit. Impulsively Patricia flung her weight forward, lying almost prone upon the mare's neck to whistle in her ear. It was due to feel Ruby answer—gallantly as she had been going, she had something left for that desperate call. She could not quicken stride—the plowland was too hard. But she could and did lie down to it, stretching stomach to earth in long greyhound leaps that devoured space as flame devours stubble.

Behind came the mad brown stallion, still screaming, still lashed by a madder rider. Dimly through a red, blurring mist she saw her prey, the woman she hated, the woman who had crossed her path; the woman she yearned to mangle and trample out of recognition. Some such purpose, unshaped, unworked, had been behind while Rothwell talked. Cairngorm's temper would be excuse enough for any accident—nothing but the bay mare could live the pace with him—what so natural, therefore, as that the bay and her rider should be the victims? It was all coming around beautifully, better, quicker than she had dared hope in the outset—there was risk to herself, of course—but what was she not ready to risk for vengeance on this interloper?

Patricia's heart sank as looking over her shoulder she saw the brown had gained—Ruby's lead now was less than twenty yards. Patricia felt the laboring of her heart, the spasmodic panting breath. Suddenly the dog music fell to a mad jangle—as suddenly the pack went out of sight, then all in a twinkling, again struggled into the field of vision. Patricia wondered what it meant—the ground in front, no longer rising, seemed smooth and level. A dull, distant roar, heavy and vibrant, enlightened her—the chase had struck the deep out by which the railway slipped through the ploughland."

Patricia and quarry were safely over it. No horse ever foaled of mare could leap the cut, not even coming to it fresh—how much less, then, blown, at the end of a ringing run? Patricia reined in so sharply she brought Ruby to her haunches, half turned in her saddle and waved a warning, crying: "Mrs. Loudon! Stop! Pull up! At once! Hear the train coming!"

The dull roaring was louder, nearer. Mrs. Loudon's face blanched, but her eyes held their deadly glitter. She tried to pull up—to turn and ride down her adversary, as well might she have tried to rein fire in wind, Cairngorm had the bit in his teeth—he was no more angry with Ruby, but full of deadly rage against the rider who had slain his quarry. He meant to run and run until he found something high enough, stout enough to crush her. The cut lay less than 200 yards ahead—he would try to sweep it, fall inevitably—and

on your own head unless you clear my path!"

Patricia got white to the lips, but her eyes darkened, her hand on the rein did not shake. She knew Mrs. Loudon meant to ride her down, trusting to her horse's superior weight for her own safety. She should not do it—not if she herself and Ruby did for it. In firm going Ruby could easily beat the brown—but what of plowland where she sank fetlock deep at each stride? Cairngorm, bigger, stouter, with more driving power in quarters and stifles, had a clear advantage there. But Ruby had the fire and stay and spirit. Impulsively Patricia flung her weight forward, lying almost prone upon the mare's neck to whistle in her ear. It was due to feel Ruby answer—gallantly as she had been going, she had something left for that desperate call. She could not quicken stride—the plowland was too hard. But she could and did lie down to it, stretching stomach to earth in long greyhound leaps that devoured space as flame devours stubble.

Behind came the mad brown stallion, still screaming, still lashed by a madder rider. Dimly through a red, blurring mist she saw her prey, the woman she hated, the woman who had crossed her path; the woman she yearned to mangle and trample out of recognition. Some such purpose, unshaped, unworked, had been behind while Rothwell talked. Cairngorm's temper would be excuse enough for any accident—nothing but the bay mare could live the pace with him—what so natural, therefore, as that the bay and her rider should be the victims? It was all coming around beautifully, better, quicker than she had dared hope in the outset—there was risk to herself, of course—but what was she not ready to risk for vengeance on this interloper?

Patricia's heart sank as looking over her shoulder she saw the brown had gained—Ruby's lead now was less than twenty yards. Patricia felt the laboring of her heart, the spasmodic panting breath. Suddenly the dog music fell to a mad jangle—as suddenly the pack went out of sight, then all in a twinkling, again struggled into the field of vision. Patricia wondered what it meant—the ground in front, no longer rising, seemed smooth and level. A dull, distant roar, heavy and vibrant, enlightened her—the chase had struck the deep out by which the railway slipped through the ploughland."

Patricia and quarry were safely over it. No horse ever foaled of mare could leap the cut, not even coming to it fresh—how much less, then, blown, at the end of a ringing run? Patricia reined in so sharply she brought Ruby to her haunches, half turned in her saddle and waved a warning, crying: "Mrs. Loudon! Stop! Pull up! At once! Hear the train coming!"

The dull roaring was louder, nearer. Mrs. Loudon's face blanched, but her eyes held their deadly glitter. She tried to pull up—to turn and ride down her adversary, as well might she have tried to rein fire in wind, Cairngorm had the bit in his teeth—he was no more angry with Ruby, but full of deadly rage against the rider who had slain his quarry. He meant to run and run until he found something high enough, stout enough to crush her. The cut lay less than 200 yards ahead—he would try to sweep it, fall inevitably—and

on your own head unless you clear my path!"

about me? I bought Cairngorm three days back and have ridden him in my morning gallops ever since."

"Well! You have got a bad bargain—let's try to tell you so!" Rothwell said, trying to laugh. "Why did you not tell me you thought of buying? No doubt you paid a good price—but you truly got a bad horse for it."

"He suits me—goes like the wind and takes whatever I set him at without checking," Mrs. Loudon said. "As to telling you—why should I bother you with my small concerns? Since you have been under spell you have made me feel that even thought of friendship between us was an impertinence."

"You have a talent for misunderstanding—but let that pass," Rothwell said. "What I cannot less pass is—that beast you are on. I know him of old—know him long before he was brought down here. He is all you say me to speed and action—when he chooses there is hardly a better hunter on top of ground. The trouble is he does not always not often choose. He's the worst rogue possible—may carry you like a lamb through parts of a run, then bore into a tree or fence or gatepost and dash out your brains."

"I suppose you mean to say he is as wilful as a man," Mrs. Loudon said, laughing recklessly. "Thank you very much for telling me all about him. I bought him because—well! because I wanted a horse of superior weight and substance."

"If you will not go back for a remount, at least change with me," Rothwell entreated. "That brown devil can outrun anything in the field today. When he runs Patricia's heart sank as looking over her shoulder she saw the brown had gained—Ruby's lead now was less than twenty yards. Patricia felt the laboring of her heart, the spasmodic panting breath. Suddenly the dog music fell to a mad jangle—as suddenly the pack went out of sight, then all in a twinkling, again struggled into the field of vision. Patricia wondered what it meant—the ground in front, no longer rising, seemed smooth and level. A dull, distant roar, heavy and vibrant, enlightened her—the chase had struck the deep out by which the railway slipped through the ploughland."

Patricia and quarry were safely over it. No horse ever foaled of mare could leap the cut, not even coming to it fresh—how much less, then, blown, at the end of a ringing run? Patricia reined in so sharply she brought Ruby to her haunches, half turned in her saddle and waved a warning, crying: "Mrs. Loudon! Stop! Pull up! At once! Hear the train coming!"

The dull roaring was louder, nearer. Mrs. Loudon's face blanched, but her eyes held their deadly glitter. She tried to pull up—to turn and ride down her adversary, as well might she have tried to rein fire in wind, Cairngorm had the bit in his teeth—he was no more angry with Ruby, but full of deadly rage against the rider who had slain his quarry. He meant to run and run until he found something high enough, stout enough to crush her. The cut lay less than 200 yards ahead—he would try to sweep it, fall inevitably—and

on your own head unless you clear my path!"

Patricia got white to the lips, but her eyes darkened, her hand on the rein did not shake. She knew Mrs. Loudon meant to ride her down, trusting to her horse's superior weight for her own safety. She should not do it—not if she herself and Ruby did for it. In firm going Ruby could easily beat the brown—but what of plowland where she sank fetlock deep at each stride? Cairngorm, bigger, stouter, with more driving power in quarters and stifles, had a clear advantage there. But Ruby had the fire and stay and spirit. Impulsively Patricia flung her weight forward, lying almost prone upon the mare's neck to whistle in her ear. It was due to feel Ruby answer—gallantly as she had been going, she had something left for that desperate call. She could not quicken stride—the plowland was too hard. But she could and did lie down to it, stretching stomach to earth in long greyhound leaps that devoured space as flame devours stubble.

Behind came the mad brown stallion, still screaming, still lashed by a madder rider. Dimly through a red, blurring mist she saw her prey, the woman she hated, the woman who had crossed her path; the woman she yearned to mangle and trample out of recognition. Some such purpose, unshaped, unworked, had been behind while Rothwell talked. Cairngorm's temper would be excuse enough for any accident—nothing but the bay mare could live the pace with him—what so natural, therefore, as that the bay and her rider should be the victims? It was all coming around beautifully, better, quicker than she had dared hope in the outset—there was risk to herself, of course—but what was she not ready to risk for vengeance on this interloper?

Patricia's heart sank as looking over her shoulder she saw the brown had gained—Ruby's lead now was less than twenty yards. Patricia felt the laboring of her heart, the spasmodic panting breath. Suddenly the dog music fell to a mad jangle—as suddenly the pack went out of sight, then all in a twinkling, again struggled into the field of vision. Patricia wondered what it meant—the ground in front, no longer rising, seemed smooth and level. A dull, distant roar, heavy and vibrant, enlightened her—the chase had struck the deep out by which the railway slipped through the ploughland."

Patricia and quarry were safely over it. No horse ever foaled of mare could leap the cut, not even coming to it fresh—how much less, then, blown, at the end of a ringing run? Patricia reined in so sharply she brought Ruby to her haunches, half turned in her saddle and waved a warning, crying: "Mrs. Loudon! Stop! Pull up! At once! Hear the train coming!"

The dull roaring was louder, nearer. Mrs. Loudon's face blanched, but her eyes held their deadly glitter. She tried to pull up—to turn and ride down her adversary, as well might she have tried to rein fire in wind, Cairngorm had the bit in his teeth—he was no more angry with Ruby, but full of deadly rage against the rider who had slain his quarry. He meant to run and run until he found something high enough, stout enough to crush her. The cut lay less than 200 yards ahead—he would try to sweep it, fall inevitably—and

on your own head unless you clear my path!"

Patricia got white to the lips, but her eyes darkened, her hand on the rein did not shake. She knew Mrs. Loudon meant to ride her down, trusting to her horse's superior weight for her own safety. She should not do it—not if she herself and Ruby did for it. In firm going Ruby could easily beat the brown—but what of plowland where she sank fetlock deep at each stride? Cairngorm, bigger, stouter, with more driving power in quarters and stifles, had a clear advantage there. But Ruby had the fire and stay and spirit. Impulsively Patricia flung her weight forward, lying almost prone upon the mare's neck to whistle in her ear. It was due to feel Ruby answer—gallantly as she had been going, she had something left for that desperate call. She could not quicken stride—the plowland was too hard. But she could and did lie down to it, stretching stomach to earth in long greyhound leaps that devoured space as flame devours stubble.

Behind came the mad brown stallion, still screaming, still lashed by a madder rider. Dimly through a red, blurring mist she saw her prey, the woman she hated, the woman who had crossed her path; the woman she yearned to mangle and trample out of recognition. Some such purpose, unshaped, unworked, had been behind while Rothwell talked. Cairngorm's temper would be excuse enough for any accident—nothing but the bay mare could live the pace with him—what so natural, therefore, as that the bay and her rider should be the victims? It was all coming around beautifully, better, quicker than she had dared hope in the outset—there was risk to herself, of course—but what was she not ready to risk for vengeance on this interloper?

Patricia's heart sank as looking over her shoulder she saw the brown had gained—Ruby's lead now was less than twenty yards. Patricia felt the laboring of her heart, the spasmodic panting breath. Suddenly the dog music fell to a mad jangle—as suddenly the pack went out of sight, then all in a twinkling, again struggled into the field of vision. Patricia wondered what it meant—the ground in front, no longer rising, seemed smooth and level. A dull, distant roar, heavy and vibrant, enlightened her—the chase had struck the deep out by which the railway slipped through the ploughland."

Patricia and quarry were safely over it. No horse ever foaled of mare could leap the cut, not even coming to it fresh—how much less, then, blown, at the end of a ringing run? Patricia reined in so sharply she brought Ruby to her haunches, half turned in her saddle and waved a warning, crying: "Mrs. Loudon! Stop! Pull up! At once! Hear the train coming!"

The dull roaring was louder, nearer. Mrs. Loudon's face blanched, but her eyes held their deadly glitter. She tried to pull up—to turn and ride down her adversary, as well might she have tried to rein fire in wind, Cairngorm had the bit in his teeth—he was no more angry with Ruby, but full of deadly rage against the rider who had slain his quarry. He meant to run and run until he found something high enough, stout enough to crush her. The cut lay less than 200 yards ahead—he would try to sweep it, fall inevitably—and

on your own head unless you clear my path!"

Patricia got white to the lips, but her eyes darkened, her hand on the rein did not shake. She knew Mrs. Loudon meant to ride her down, trusting to her horse's superior weight for her own safety. She should not do it—not if she herself and Ruby did for it. In firm going Ruby could easily beat the brown—but what of plowland where she sank fetlock deep at each stride? Cairngorm, bigger, stouter, with more driving power in quarters and stifles, had a clear advantage there. But Ruby had the fire and stay and spirit. Impulsively Patricia flung her weight forward, lying almost prone upon the mare's neck to whistle in her ear. It was due to feel Ruby answer—gallantly as she had been going, she had something left for that desperate call. She could not quicken stride—the plowland was too hard. But she could and did lie down to it, stretching stomach to earth in long greyhound leaps that devoured space as flame devours stubble.

Behind came the mad brown stallion, still screaming, still lashed by a madder rider. Dimly through a red, blurring mist she saw her prey, the woman she hated, the woman who had crossed her path; the woman she yearned to mangle and trample out of recognition. Some such purpose, unshaped, unworked, had been behind while Rothwell talked. Cairngorm's temper would be excuse enough for any accident—nothing but the bay mare could live the pace with him—what so natural, therefore, as that the bay and her rider should be the victims? It was all coming around beautifully, better, quicker than she had dared hope in the outset—there was risk to herself, of course—but what was she not ready to risk for vengeance on this interloper?

Patricia's heart sank as looking over her shoulder she saw the brown had gained—Ruby's lead now was less than twenty yards. Patricia felt the laboring of her heart, the spasmodic panting breath. Suddenly the dog music fell to a mad jangle—as suddenly the pack went out of sight, then all in a twinkling, again struggled into the field of vision. Patricia wondered what it meant—the ground in front, no longer rising, seemed smooth and level. A dull, distant roar, heavy and vibrant, enlightened her—the chase had struck the deep out by which the railway slipped through the ploughland."

Patricia and quarry were safely over it. No horse ever foaled of mare could leap the cut, not even coming to it fresh—how much less, then, blown, at the end of a ringing run? Patricia reined in so sharply she brought Ruby to her haunches, half turned in her saddle and waved a warning, crying: "Mrs. Loudon! Stop! Pull up! At once! Hear the train coming!"

The dull roaring was louder, nearer. Mrs. Loudon's face blanched, but her eyes held their deadly glitter. She tried to pull up—to turn and ride down her adversary, as well might she have tried to rein fire in wind, Cairngorm had the bit in his teeth—he was no more angry with Ruby, but full of deadly rage against the rider who had slain his quarry. He meant to run and run until he found something high enough, stout enough to crush her. The cut lay less than 200 yards ahead—he would try to sweep it, fall inevitably—and