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Chapter 31 - Seeds Of The Future (First Sowing)

"NOT SO large as Windygates. But--shall we say snug, Jones?"

"And comfortable, Smith. I quite agree with you."

Such was the judgment pronounced by the two choral gentlemen on Julius Delamayn's house in Scotland. It was, as usual with Smith and Jones, a sound judgment--as far as it went. Swanhaven Lodge was not half the size of Windygates; but it had been inhabited for two centuries when the foundations of Windygates were first laid--and it possessed the advantages, without inheriting the drawbacks, of its age. There is in an old house a friendly adaptation to the human character, as there is in an old hat a friendly adaptation to the human head. The visitor who left Swanhaven quitted it with something like a sense of leaving home. Among the few houses not our own which take a strong hold on our sympathies this was one. The ornamental grounds were far inferior in size and splendor to the grounds at Windygates. But the park was beautiful--less carefully laid out, but also less monotonous than an English park. The lake on the northern boundary of the estate, famous for its breed of swans, was one of the curiosities of the neighborhood; and the house had a history, associating it with more than one celebrated Scottish name, which had been written and illustrated by Julius Delamayn. Visitors to Swanhaven Lodge were invariably presented with a copy of the volume (privately printed). One in twenty read it. The rest were "charmed," and looked at the pictures.

The day was the last day of August, and the occasion was the garden-party given by Mr. and Mrs. Delamayn.

Smith and Jones--following, with the other guests at Windygates, in Lady Lundie's train--exchanged their opinions on the merits of the house, standing on a terrace at the back, near a flight of steps which led down into the garden. They formed the van-guard of the visitors, appearing by twos and threes from the reception rooms, and all bent on going to see the swans before the amusements of the day began. Julius Delamayn came out with the first detachment, recruited Smith and Jones, and other wandering bachelors, by the way, and set forth for the lake. An interval of a minute or two passed--and the terrace remained empty. Then two ladies--at the head of a second detachment of visitors--appeared under the old stone porch which sheltered the entrance on that side of the house. One of the ladies was a modest, pleasant little person, very simply dressed. The other was of the tall and formidable type of "fine women," clad in dazzling array. The first was Mrs. Julius Delamayn. The second was Lady Lundie.

"Exquisite!" cried her ladyship, surveying the old mullioned windows of the house, with their framing of creepers, and the grand stone buttresses projecting at intervals from the wall, each with its bright little circle of flowers blooming round the base. "I am really grieved that Sir Patrick should have missed this."

"I think you said, Lady Lundie, that Sir Patrick had been called to Edinburgh by family business?"

"Business, Mrs. Delamayn, which is any thing but agreeable to me, as one member of the family. It has altered all my arrangements for the autumn. My step-daughter is to be married next week."

"Is it so near as that? May I ask who the gentleman is?"

"Mr. Arnold Brinkworth."

"Surely I have some association with that name?"

"You have probably heard of him, Mrs. Delamayn, as the heir to Miss Brinkworth's Scotch property?"

"Exactly! Have you brought Mr. Brinkworth here to-day?"

"I bring his apologies, as well as Sir Patrick's. They went to Edinburgh together the day before yesterday. The lawyers engage to have the settlements ready in three or four days more, if a personal consultation can be managed. Some formal question, I believe, connected with title-deeds. Sir Patrick thought the safest way and the speediest way would be to take Mr. Brinkworth with him to Edinburgh--to get the business over to-day--and to wait until we join them, on our way south, to-morrow."

"You leave Windygates, in this lovely weather?"

"Most unwillingly! The truth is, Mrs. Delamayn, I am at my step-daughter's mercy. Her uncle has the authority, as her guardian--and the use he makes of it is to give her her own way in every thing. It was only on Friday last that she consented to let the day be fixed--and even then she made it a positive condition that the marriage was not to take place in Scotland. Pure willfulness! But what can I do? Sir Patrick submits; and Mr. Brinkworth submits. If I am to be present at the marriage I must follow their example. I feel it my duty to be present--and, as a matter of course, I sacrifice myself. We start for London to-morrow."

"Is Miss Lundie to be married in London at this time of year?"

"No. We only pass through, on our way to Sir Patrick's place in Kent--the place that came to him with the title; the place associated with the last days of my beloved husband. Another trial for _me!_ The marriage is to be solemnized on the scene of my bereavement. My old wound is to be reopened on Monday next--simply because my step-daughter has taken a dislike to Windygates."

"This day week, then, is the day of the marriage?"

"Yes. This day week. There have been reasons for hurrying it which I need not trouble you with. No words can say how I wish it was over.--But, my dear Mrs. Delamayn, how thoughtless of me to assail _you_ with my family worries! You are so sympathetic. That is my only excuse. Don't let me keep you from your guests. I could linger in this sweet place forever! Where is Mrs. Glenarm?"

"I really don't know. I missed her when we came out on the terrace. She will very likely join us at the lake. Do you care about seeing the lake, Lady Lundie?"

"I adore the beauties of Nature, Mrs. Delamayn--especially lakes!"

"We have something to show you besides; we have a breed of swans on the lake, peculiar to the place. My husband has gone on with some of our friends; and I believe we are expected to follow, as soon as the rest of the party--in charge of my sister--have seen the house."

"And what a house, Mrs. Delamayn! Historical associations in every corner of it! It is such a relief to my mind to take refuge in the past. When I am far away from this sweet place I shall people Swanhaven with its departed inmates, and share the joys and sorrows of centuries since."

As Lady Lundie announced, in these terms, her intention of adding to the population of the past, the last of the guests who had been roaming over the old house appeared under the porch. Among the members forming this final addition to the garden-party were Blanche, and a friend of her own age whom she had met at Swanhaven. The two girls lagged behind the rest, talking confidentially, arm in arm--the subject (it is surely needless to add) being the coming marriage.

"But, dearest Blanche, why are you not to be married at Windygates?"

"I detest Windygates, Janet. I have the most miserable associations with the place. Don't ask me what they are! The effort of my life is not to think of them now. I long to see the last of Windygates. As for being married there, I have made it a condition that I am not to be married in Scotland at all."

"What has poor Scotland done to forfeit your good opinion, my dear?"

"Poor Scotland, Janet, is a place where people don't know whether they are married or not. I have heard all about it from my uncle. And I know somebody who has been a victim--an innocent victim--to a Scotch marriage."

"Absurd, Blanche! You are thinking of runaway matches, and making Scotland responsible for the difficulties of people who daren't own the truth!"

"I am not at all absurd. I am thinking of the dearest friend I have. If you only knew--"

"My dear! I am Scotch, remember! You can be married just as well--I really must insist on that--in Scotland as in England."

"I hate Scotland!"

"Blanche!"

"I never was so unhappy in my life as I have been in Scotland. I never want to see it again. I am determined to be married in England--from the dear old house where I used to live when I was a little girl. My uncle is quite willing. He understands me and feels for me."

"Is that as much as to say that I don't understand you and feel for you? Perhaps I had better relieve you of my company, Blanche?"

"If you are going to speak to me in that way, perhaps you had!"

"Am I to hear my native country run down and not to say a word in defense of it?"

"Oh! you Scotch people make such a fuss about your native country!"

"We Scotch people! you are of Scotch extraction yourself, and you ought to be ashamed to talk in that way. I wish you good-morning!"

"I wish you a better temper!"

A minute since the two young ladies had been like twin roses on one stalk. Now they parted with red cheeks and hostile sentiments and cutting words. How ardent is the warmth of youth! how unspeakably delicate the fragility of female friendship!

The flock of visitors followed Mrs. Delamayn to the shores of the lake. For a few minutes after the terrace was left a solitude. Then there appeared under the porch a single gentleman, lounging out with a flower in his mouth and his hands in his pockets. This was the strongest man at Swanhaven--otherwise, Geoffrey Delamayn.

After a moment a lady appeared behind him, walking softly, so as not to be heard. She was superbly dressed after the newest and the most costly Parisian design. The brooch on her bosom was a single diamond of resplendent water and great size. The fan in her hand was a master-piece of the finest Indian workmanship. She looked what she was, a person possessed of plenty of superfluous money, but not additionally blest with plenty of superfluous intelligence to correspond. This was the childless young widow of the great ironmaster--otherwise, Mrs. Glenarm.

The rich woman tapped the strong man coquettishly on the shoulder with her fan. "Ah! you bad boy!" she said, with a slightly-labored archness of look and manner. "Have I found you at last?"

Geoffrey sauntered on to the terrace--keeping the lady behind him with a thoroughly savage superiority to all civilized submission to the sex--and looked at his watch.

"I said I'd come here when I'd got half an hour to myself," he mumbled, turning the flower carelessly between his teeth. "I've got half an hour, and here I am."

"Did you come for the sake of seeing the visitors, or did you come for the sake of seeing Me?"

Geoffrey smiled graciously, and gave the flower another turn in his teeth. "You. Of course."

The iron-master's widow took his arm, and looked up at him--as only a young woman would have dared to look up--with the searching summer light streaming in its full brilliancy on her face.

Reduced to the plain expression of what it is really worth, the average English idea of beauty in women may be summed up in three words--youth, health, plumpness. The more spiritual charm of intelligence and vivacity, the subtler attraction of delicacy of line and fitness of detail, are little looked for and seldom appreciated by the mass of men in this island. It is impossible otherwise to account for the extraordinary blindness of perception which (to give one instance only) makes nine Englishmen out of ten who visit France come back declaring that they have not seen a single pretty Frenchwoman, in or out of Paris, in the whole country. Our popular type of beauty proclaims

itself, in its fullest material development, at every shop in which an illustration is sold. The same fleshy-faced girl, with the same radiant smile, and with no other expression whatever, appears under every form of illustration, week after week, and month after month, all the year round. Those who wish to know what Mrs. Glenarm was like, have only to go out and stop at any bookseller's or news-vendor's shop, and there they will see her in the first illustration, with a young woman in it, which they discover in the window. The one noticeable peculiarity in Mrs. Glenarm's purely commonplace and purely material beauty, which would have struck an observant and a cultivated man, was the curious girliness of her look and manner. No stranger speaking to this woman--who had been a wife at twenty, and who was now a widow at twenty-four--would ever have thought of addressing her otherwise than as "Miss."

"Is that the use you make of a flower when I give it to you?" she said to Geoffrey. "Mumbling it in your teeth, you wretch, as if you were a horse!"

"If you come to that," returned Geoffrey, "I'm more a horse than a man. I'm going to run in a race, and the public are betting on me. Haw! haw! Five to four."

"Five to four! I believe he thinks of nothing but betting. You great heavy creature, I can't move you. Don't you see I want to go like the rest of them to the lake? No! you're not to let go of my arm! You're to take me."

"Can't do it. Must be back with Perry in half an hour."

(Perry was the trainer from London. He had arrived sooner than he had been expected, and had entered on his functions three days since.)

"Don't talk to me about Perry! A little vulgar wretch. Put him off. You won't? Do you mean to say you are such a brute that you would rather be with Perry than be with me?"

"The betting's at five to four, my dear. And the race comes off in a month from this."

"Oh! go away to your beloved Perry! I hate you. I hope you'll lose the race. Stop in your cottage. Pray don't come back to the house. And--mind this!--don't presume to say 'my dear' to me again."

"It ain't presuming half far enough, is it? Wait a bit. Give me till the race is run--and then I'll presume to marry you."

"You! You will be as old as Methuselah, if you wait till I am your wife. I dare say Perry has got a sister. Suppose you ask him? She would be just the right person for you."

Geoffrey gave the flower another turn in his teeth, and looked as if he thought the idea worth considering.

"All right," he said. "Any thing to be agreeable to you. I'll ask Perry."

He turned away, as if he was going to do it at once. Mrs. Glenarm put out a little hand, ravishingly clothed in a blush-colored glove, and laid it on the athlete's mighty arm. She pinched those iron muscles (the pride and glory of England) gently. "What a man you are!" she said. "I never met with any body like you before!"

The whole secret of the power that Geoffrey had acquired over her was in those words.

They had been together at Swanhaven for little more than ten days; and in that time he had made the conquest of Mrs. Glenarm. On the day before the garden-party--in one of the leisure intervals allowed him by Perry--he had caught her alone, had taken her by the arm, and had asked her, in so many words, if she would marry him. Instances on record of women who have been wooed and won in ten days are--to speak it with all possible respect--not wanting. But an instance of a woman willing to have it known still remains to be discovered. The iron-master's widow exacted a promise of secrecy before she committed herself. When Geoffrey had pledged his word to hold his tongue in public until she gave him leave to speak, Mrs. Glenarm, without further hesitation, said Yes--having, be it observed, said No, in the course of the last two years, to at least half a dozen men who were Geoffrey's superiors in every conceivable respect, except personal comeliness and personal strength.

There is a reason for every thing; and there was a reason for this.

However persistently the epicene theorists of modern times may deny it, it is nevertheless a truth plainly visible in the whole past history of the sexes that the natural condition of a woman is to find her master in a man. Look in the face of any woman who is in no direct way dependent on a man: and, as certainly as you see the sun in a cloudless sky, you see a woman who is not happy. The want of a master is their great unknown want; the possession of a master is--unconsciously to themselves--the only possible completion of their lives. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this one primitive instinct is at the bottom of the otherwise inexplicable sacrifice, when we see a woman, of her own free will, throw herself away on a man who is unworthy of her. This one primitive instinct was at the bottom of the otherwise inexplicable facility of self-surrender exhibited by Mrs. Glenarm.

Up to the time of her meeting with Geoffrey, the young widow had gathered but one experience in her intercourse with the world--the experience of a chartered tyrant. In the brief six months of her married life with the man whose grand-daughter she might have been--and ought to have been--she had only to lift her finger to be obeyed. The doting old husband was the willing slave of the petulant young wife's slightest caprice. At a later period, when society offered its triple welcome to her birth, her beauty, and her wealth--go where she might, she found herself the object of the same prostrate admiration among the suitors who vied with each other in the rivalry for her hand. For the first time in her life she encountered a man with a will of his own when she met Geoffrey Delamayn at Swanhaven Lodge.

Geoffrey's occupation of the moment especially favored the conflict between the woman's assertion of her influence and the man's assertion of his will.

During the days that had intervened between his return to his brother's house and the arrival of the trainer, Geoffrey had submitted himself to all needful preliminaries of the physical discipline which was to prepare him for the race. He knew, by previous experience, what exercise he ought to take, what hours he ought to keep, what temptations at the table he was bound to resist. Over and over again Mrs. Glenarm tried to lure him into committing infractions of his own discipline--and over and over again the influence with men which had never failed her before failed her now. Nothing she could say, nothing she could do, would move _this_ man. Perry arrived; and Geoffrey's defiance of every attempted exercise of the charming feminine tyranny, to which every one else had bowed, grew more outrageous and more immovable than ever. Mrs. Glenarm became as jealous of Perry as if Perry had been a woman. She flew into passions; she burst into tears; she flirted with other men; she threatened to leave the house. All quite useless! Geoffrey never once missed an appointment with Perry; never once touched any thing to eat or drink that she could offer him, if Perry had forbidden it. No other human pursuit is so hostile to the influence of the sex as the pursuit of athletic sports. No men are so entirely beyond the reach of women as the men whose lives are passed in the cultivation of their own physical strength. Geoffrey resisted Mrs. Glenarm without the slightest effort. He casually extorted her admiration, and undesignedly forced her respect. She clung to him, as a hero; she recoiled from him, as a brute; she struggled with him, submitted to him, despised him, adored him, in a breath. And the clew to it all, confused and contradictory as it seemed, lay in one simple fact--Mrs. Glenarm had found her master.

"Take me to the lake, Geoffrey!" she said, with a little pleading pressure of the blush-colored hand.

Geoffrey looked at his watch. "Perry expects me in twenty minutes," he said.

"Perry again!"

"Yes."

Mrs. Glenarm raised her fan, in a sudden outburst of fury, and broke it with one smart blow on Geoffrey's face.

"There!" she cried, with a stamp of her foot. "My poor fan broken! You monster, all through you!"

Geoffrey coolly took the broken fan and put it in his pocket. "I'll write to London," he said, "and get you another. Come along! Kiss, and make it up."

He looked over each shoulder, to make sure that they were alone then lifted her off the ground (she was no light weight), held her up in the air like a baby, and gave her a rough loud-sounding kiss on each cheek. "With kind compliments from yours truly!" he said--and burst out laughing, and put her down again.

"How dare you do that?" cried Mrs. Glenarm. "I shall claim Mrs. Delamayn's protection if I am to be insulted in this way! I will never forgive you, Sir!" As she said those indignant words she shot a look at him which flatly contradicted them. The next moment she was leaning on his arm, and was looking at him wonderingly, for the thousandth time, as an entire novelty in her experience of male human kind. "How rough you are, Geoffrey!" she said, softly. He smiled in recognition of that artless homage to the manly virtue of his character. She saw the smile, and instantly made another effort to dispute the hateful supremacy of Perry. "Put him off!" whispered the daughter of Eve, determined to lure Adam into taking a bite of the apple. "Come, Geoffrey, dear, never mind Perry, this once. Take me to the lake!"

Geoffrey looked at his watch. "Perry expects me in a quarter of an hour," he said.

Mrs. Glenarm's indignation assumed a new form. She burst out crying. Geoffrey surveyed her for a moment with a broad stare of surprise--and then took her by both arms, and shook her!

"Look here!" he said, impatiently. "Can you coach me through my training?"

"I would if I could!"

"That's nothing to do with it! Can you turn me out, fit, on the day of the race? Yes? or No?"

"No."

"Then dry your eyes and let Perry do it."

Mrs. Glenarm dried her eyes, and made another effort.

"I'm not fit to be seen," she said. "I'm so agitated, I don't know what to do. Come indoors, Geoffrey--and have a cup of tea."

Geoffrey shook his head. "Perry forbids tea," he said, "in the middle of the day."

"You brute!" cried Mrs. Glenarm.

"Do you want me to lose the race?" retorted Geoffrey.

"Yes!"

With that answer she left him at last, and ran back into the house.

Geoffrey took a turn on the terrace--considered a little--stopped--and looked at the porch under which the irate widow had disappeared from his view. "Ten thousand a year," he said, thinking of the matrimonial prospect which he was placing in peril. "And devilish well earned," he added, going into the house, under protest, to appease Mrs. Glenarm.

The offended lady was on a sofa, in the solitary drawing-room. Geoffrey sat down by her. She declined to look at him. "Don't be a fool!" said Geoffrey, in his most persuasive manner. Mrs. Glenarm put her handkerchief to her eyes. Geoffrey took it away again without ceremony. Mrs. Glenarm rose to leave the room. Geoffrey stopped her by main force. Mrs. Glenarm threatened to summon the servants. Geoffrey said, "All right! I don't care if the whole house knows I'm fond of you!" Mrs. Glenarm looked at the door, and whispered "Hush! for Heaven's sake!" Geoffrey put her arm in his, and said, "Come along with me: I've got something to say to you." Mrs. Glenarm drew back, and shook her head. Geoffrey put his arm round her waist, and walked her out of the room, and out of the house--taking the direction, not of the terrace, but of a fine plantation on the opposite side of the grounds. Arrived among the trees, he stopped and held up a warning forefinger before the offended lady's face. "You're just the sort of woman I like," he said; "and there ain't a man living who's half as sweet on you as I am. You leave off bullying me about Perry, and I'll tell you what I'll do--I'll let you see me take a Sprint."

He drew back a step, and fixed his big blue eyes on her, with a look which said, "You are a highly-favored woman, if ever there was one yet!" Curiosity instantly took the leading place among the emotions of Mrs. Glenarm. "What's a Sprint, Geoffrey?" she asked.

"A short run, to try me at the top of my speed. There ain't another living soul in all England that I'd let see it but you. _Now_ am I a brute?"

Mrs. Glenarm was conquered again, for the hundredth time at least. She said, softly, "Oh, Geoffrey, if you could only be always like this!" Her eyes lifted themselves admiringly to his. She took his arm again of her own accord, and pressed it with a loving clasp. Geoffrey prophetically felt the ten thousand a year in his pocket. "Do you really love me?" whispered Mrs. Glenarm. "Don't!" answered the hero. The peace was made, and the two walked on again.

They passed through the plantation, and came out on some open ground, rising and falling prettily, in little hillocks and hollows. The last of the hillocks sloped down into a smooth level plain, with a fringe of sheltering trees on its farther side--with a snug little stone cottage among the trees--and with a smart little man, walking up and down before the cottage, holding his hands behind him. The level plain was the hero's exercising ground; the cottage was the hero's retreat; and the smart little man was the hero's trainer.

If Mrs. Glenarm hated Perry, Perry (judging by appearances) was in no danger of loving Mrs. Glenarm. As Geoffrey approached with his companion, the trainer came to a stand-still, and stared silently at the lady. The lady, on her side, declined to observe that any such person as the trainer was then in existence, and present in bodily form

on the scene.

"How about time?" said Geoffrey.

Perry consulted an elaborate watch, constructed to mark time to the fifth of a second, and answered Geoffrey, with his eye all the while on Mrs. Glenarm.

"You've got five minutes to spare."

"Show me where you run, I'm dying to see it!" said the eager widow, taking possession of Geoffrey's arm with both hands.

Geoffrey led her back to a place (marked by a sapling with a little flag attached to it) at some short distance from the cottage. She glided along by his side, with subtle undulations of movement which appeared to complete the exasperation of Perry. He waited until she was out of hearing--and then he invoked (let us say) the blasts of heaven on the fashionably-dressed head of Mrs. Glenarm.

"You take your place there," said Geoffrey, posting her by the sapling. "When I pass you--" He stopped, and surveyed her with a good-humored masculine pity. "How the devil am I to make you understand it?" he went on. "Look here! when I pass you, it will be at what you would call (if I was a horse) full gallop. Hold your tongue--I haven't done yet. You're to look on after me as I leave you, to where the edge of the cottage wall cuts the trees. When you have lost sight of me behind the wall, you'll have seen me run my three hundred yards from this flag. You're in luck's way! Perry tries me at the long Sprint to-day. You understand you're to stop here? Very well then--let me go and get my toggery on."

"Sha'n't I see you again, Geoffrey?"

"Haven't I just told you that you'll see me run?"

"Yes--but after that?"

"After that, I'm sponged and rubbed down--and rest in the cottage."

"You'll come to us this evening?"

He nodded, and left her. The face of Perry looked unutterable things when he and Geoffrey met at the door of the cottage.

"I've got a question to ask you, Mr. Delamayn," said the trainer. "Do you want me? or don't you?"

"Of course I want you."

"What did I say when I first come here?" proceeded Perry, sternly. "I said, 'I won't have nobody a looking on at a man I'm training. These here ladies and gentlemen may all have made up their minds to see you. I've made up my mind not to have no lookers-on. I won't have you timed at your work by nobody but me. I won't have every blessed yard of ground you cover put in the noospapers. I won't have a living soul in the secret of what you can do, and what you can't, except our two selves.'--Did I say that, Mr. Delamayn? or didn't I?"

"All right!"

"Did I say it? or didn't I?"

"Of course you did!"

"Then don't you bring no more women here. It's clean against rules. And I won't have it."

Any other living creature adopting this tone of remonstrance would probably have had reason to repent it. But Geoffrey himself was afraid to show his temper in the presence of Perry. In view of the coming race, the first and foremost of British trainers was not to be trifled with, even by the first and foremost of British athletes.

"She won't come again," said Geoffrey. "She's going away from Swanhaven in two days' time."

"I've put every shilling I'm worth in the world on you," pursued Perry, relapsing into tenderness. "And I tell you I felt it! It cut me to the heart when I see you coming along with a woman at your heels. It's a fraud on his backers, I says to myself--that's what it is, a fraud on his backers!"

"Shut up!" said Geoffrey. "And come and help me to win your money." He kicked open the door of the cottage--and athlete and trainer disappeared from view.

After waiting a few minutes by the little flag, Mrs. Glenarm saw the two men approaching her from the cottage. Dressed in a close-fitting costume, light and elastic, adapting itself to every movement, and made to answer every purpose required by the exercise in which he was about to engage, Geoffrey's physical advantages showed themselves in their best and bravest aspect. His head sat proud and easy on his firm, white throat, bared to the air. The rising of his mighty chest, as he drew in deep draughts of the fragrant summer breeze; the play of his lithe and supple loins; the easy, elastic stride of his straight and shapely legs, presented a triumph of physical manhood in its highest type. Mrs. Glenarm's eyes devoured him in silent admiration. He looked like a young god of mythology--like a statue animated with color and life. "Oh, Geoffrey!" she exclaimed, softly, as he went by. He neither answered, nor looked: he had other business on hand than listening to soft nonsense. He was gathering himself up for the effort; his lips were set; his fists were lightly clenched. Perry posted himself at his place, grim and silent, with the watch in his hand. Geoffrey walked on beyond the flag, so as to give himself start enough to reach his full speed as he passed it. "Now then!" said Perry. In an instant more, he flew by (to Mrs. Glenarm's excited imagination) like an arrow from a bow. His action was perfect. His speed, at its utmost rate of exertion, preserved its rare underlying elements of strength and steadiness. Less and less and less he grew to the eyes that followed his course; still lightly flying over the ground, still firmly keeping the straight line. A moment more, and the runner vanished behind the wall of the cottage, and the stop-watch of the trainer returned to its place in his pocket.

In her eagerness to know the result, Mrs. Glenarm forgot her jealousy of Perry.

"How long has he been?" she asked.

"There's a good many besides you would be glad to know that," said Perry.

"Mr. Delamayn will tell me, you rude man!"

"That depends, ma'am, on whether _I_ tell _him_."

With this reply, Perry hurried back to the cottage.

Not a word passed while the trainer was attending to his man, and while the man was recovering his breath. When Geoffrey had been carefully rubbed down, and clothed again in his ordinary garments, Perry pulled a comfortable easy-chair out of a corner. Geoffrey fell into the chair, rather than sat down in it. Perry started, and looked at him attentively.

"Well?" said Geoffrey. "How about the time? Long? short? or middling?"

"Very good time," said Perry.

"How long?"

"When did you say the lady was going, Mr. Delamayn?"

"In two days."

"Very well, Sir. I'll tell you 'how long' when the lady's gone."

Geoffrey made no attempt to insist on an immediate reply. He smiled faintly. After an interval of less than ten minutes he stretched out his legs and closed his eyes.

"Going to sleep?" said Perry.

Geoffrey opened his eyes with an effort. "No," he said. The word had hardly passed his lips before his eyes closed again.

"Hullo!" said Perry, watching him. "I don't like that."

He went closer to the chair. There was no doubt about it. The man was asleep.

Perry emitted a long whistle under his breath. He stooped and laid two of his fingers softly on Geoffrey's pulse. The beat was slow, heavy, and labored. It was unmistakably the pulse of an exhausted man.

The trainer changed color, and took a turn in the room. He opened a cupboard, and produced from it his diary of the preceding year. The entries relating to the last occasion on which he had prepared Geoffrey for a foot-race included the fullest details. He turned to the report of the first trial, at three hundred yards, full speed. The time was, by one or two seconds, not so good as the time on this occasion. But the result, afterward, was utterly different. There it was, in Perry's own words: "Pulse good. Man in high spirits. Ready, if I would have let him, to run it over again."

Perry looked round at the same man, a year afterward--utterly worn out, and fast asleep in the chair.

He fetched pen, ink, and paper out of the cupboard, and wrote two letters--both marked "Private." The first was to a medical man, a great authority among trainers. The second was to Perry's own agent in London, whom he knew he could trust. The letter pledged the agent to the strictest secrecy, and directed him to back Geoffrey's opponent in the Foot-Race for a sum equal to the sum which Perry had betted on Geoffrey himself. "If you have got any money of your own on him," the letter concluded, "do as I do. 'Hedge'--and hold your tongue."

"Another of 'em gone stale!" said the trainer, looking round again at the sleeping man. "He'll lose the race."