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## FRIENDSHIPS and ENMITIES

(Continued From Page 93)

The two men met on the platform for the 9.14 a.m. up-train, as usual. They exchanged greetings but Barnes did not, as usual, make his humorous remark (one of a set of six) about the weather. In Robertson's opinion George was not looking himself.

After they had entered the train Barnes said gloomily: "I've rather an unpleasant bit of business to get through."

"Ah?" said Robertson genially. "Well, what's your trouble?"

"I'm afraid I must ask you, James, to take back that pony of yours, and to return me my ten pounds."

The geniality was switched off instantly.

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Robertson icily.

"Then I'll tell you. That pony is lame, was lame when you sold him to me, and had been lame for some time."

"I don't know if the pony is lame now. He may be. He may have been knocked about by your son or your servants. If so, I'm sorry, but it's no affair of mine. But all the rest of your statement is untrue. My wife drove the pony on the very day I sold him to you, and if there had been anything wrong with him she would have told me instantly. My man Tilling (who worked six years in a racing stable before he took to motors) would have reported anything of the sort to me. And, lastly, I know as much about horses as you do—and perhaps a little more, and I know positively, and am prepared to swear it, that the pony was not lame when it was handed over to you. Make what you can of that, and then apologise for calling me a swindler."

"As I never called you a swindler, and never even thought you were, there's no necessity to talk about apologies. But I did think you had acted in ignorance and would be anxious to put the matter right. I'm not giving you my opinion at all. I have here a certificate from a duly qualified veterinary surgeon. There's no getting away from that. Just cast your eye over it."

Robertson merely glanced at the signature of the certificate.

"Well," he said, "of course that explains everything. Who on earth told you to go to that man Dinlees? Mind you, I went to him once myself, before I knew better. A valuable dog of my wife's was ill, and we called Dinlees in because he was the nearest man. The very first day he came I had the strongest suspicions of him. The next day, at 11 o'clock in the morning, the man arrived drunk, and of course was sent about his business at once. I then got Masham to see the dog. He's quite as well qualified as Dinlees and a good deal more experienced. He made no bones about it at all. He said that Dinlees's diagnosis was wrong and that even if the diagnosis had been right the treatment was wrong. As Masham cured the dog in a fortnight it looks as if he

knew what he was talking about. I don't suppose Dinlees ever forgave me. He's probably been trying to get his silly knife into me ever since. You got him to see the pony and he knew very well that you'd got the pony from me, and he thought that was his chance. You've been fooled, my poor friend, but it's not I who have fooled you."

"Won't do," said Mr. Barnes sulkily. "A man doesn't risk his professional income by signing a certificate like that unless there's truth in it. The sum at stake is of no great importance, but as a matter of principle I must ask you to return my ten pounds and take the pony back."

"You're quite right. The sum is of no very great importance. If you'd been short of money and had wanted ten pounds, or a hundred, or even more, I should have been very glad to have obliged you. But what you've got to see is that if I pay ten pounds in this case I am admitting that I was either a scoundrel or a fool, and as I happen to be neither, I won't do it. See? I won't do it."

"If you don't then you are calling me a fool or a scoundrel, and that's not language that I can take from any man—however long I may have known him."

"Then if you don't like it, don't ask for it."

"I don't require you to tell me how to talk, thank you. There's just a little more in this than you know yet. You tell me you understand a lot about horses. I've got your word for it and that's all. I also had your word for it that the pony was eleven years old. Dinlees is ready to go into the witness box and swear that the pony is over fourteen."

"I don't doubt Dinlees is. And with two more drinks inside him he'd swear that the pony was rising sixty-eight or any other old thing."

"Well, if you're going to talk in that foolish and fat-headed way you leave me no choice. I'm sorry, but I must go to my solicitor."

"You can go to the devil," said James Robertson and resumed his *Times* savagely and ostentatiously. George William Barnes, sad but determined, also transferred his attention to the leading article.

At the London terminus they parted without a word.

It had been their custom to return home in the same railway carriage by the 6.15. On this occasion Mr. Robertson took the 6.25 in order to avoid Mr. Barnes, and found Mr. Barnes had also taken the 6.25 in order to avoid Mr. Robertson. But they got into different carriages.

That night a gipsy of the name of Lovell called at Mr. Barnes's house and said that he understood that Mr. Barnes had a pony which he wished to sell. If that was so, Lovell was disposed to make an offer. Lovell had not been long in that suburb, but every gipsy knows by instinct where there is a chance of either