

LORD KILGOBBIN.

By CHARLES LEVER.

Author of "Harry Lorrequer," "Jack Hinton the Guardsman," "Charles O'Malley the Irish Dragoon," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLI—Continued.

"Meanwhile," he thought, and not only thought, but said, too—"meanwhile, I am on the world."

Up to this, she had allowed him a small yearly income. Father Luke, whose judgment on all things relating to Continental life was unimpeachable, had told her that anything like the reputation of being well off or connected with wealthy people would lead a young man into ruin in the Austrian service; that with a sum of 3,000 francs per annum—about £120—he would be in possession of something like the double of his pay, or rather more, and that with this he would be able to have all the necessaries and many of the comforts of his station, and still not be a mark for that high play and reckless style of living that certain young Hungarians of family and large fortune affected; and so far the priest was correct, for the young Gorman was wasteful and extravagant from disposition, and his quarter's allowance disappeared almost when it came. His money out, he fell back at once to the penurious habits of the poorest subaltern about him, and lived on his florin-and-half per diem till his resources came round again. He hoped—of course he hoped—that this momentary fit of temper would not extend to stopping his allowance.

"She knows as well as any one," muttered he, "that though the baker's son from Prague, or the Amtmann's nephew from a Bavarian Dorf, may manage to 'come through' with his pay, the young Englishman cannot. I can neither piece my own overalls, nor forswear stockings, nor can I persuade my stomach that it has had a full meal by tightening my girth-strap three or four holes."

"I'd go down to the ranks to-morrow rather than live the life of struggle and contrivance that reduces a man to playing a dreary game with himself, by which, while he feels like a pauper, he has to fancy he felt like a gentleman. No, no; I'll none of this. Scores of better men have served in the ranks. I'll just change my regiment. By a lucky chance, I don't know a man in the Walmoden Cuirassiers. I'll join them, and nobody will ever be the wiser."

There is a class of men who go through life building very small castles, and are no more discouraged by the frailty of the architecture than is a child with his toy-house. This was Gorman's case; and now that he had found a solution of his difficulties in the Walmoden Cuirassiers, he really dressed for dinner in very tolerable spirits. "It's droll enough," he thought, "to go down to dine among all these 'swells' and to think that the fellow behind my chair is better off than myself!" The very uncertainty of his fate supplied excitement to his spirits, for it is among the privileges of the young that mere flurry can be pleasurable.

When Gorman reached the drawing-room he found only one person. This was a young man in a shooting-coat, who, deep in the recess of a comfortable arm-chair, sat with the *Times* at his feet, and to all appearance as if half dozing.

He looked around, however, as young O'Shea came forward, and said, carelessly, "I suppose it's time to go and dress—if I could."

O'Shea making no reply, the other added, "That is, if I have not overslept dinner altogether."

"I hope not, sincerely," rejoined the other, "or I shall be a partner in the misfortune."

"Ah, you're the Austrian," said Walpole, as he stuck his glass in his eye and surveyed him.

"Yes; and you're the private secretary of the governor."

"Only we don't call him governor. We say viceroy here."

"With all my heart, viceroy be it."

There was a pause now, each, as it were, standing on his guard to resent any liberty of the other. At last Walpole said: "I don't think you were in the house when that stupid stipendiary fellow called here this morning?"

"No; I was strolling across the fields. He came with the police, I suppose?"

"Yes, he came on the track of some Fenian leader—a droll thought enough anywhere out of Ireland to search for a

rebel under a magistrate's roof; not but there was something still more Irish in the incident."

"How was that?" asked O'Shea, eagerly.

"I chanced to be out walking with the ladies when the escort came; and as they failed to find the man they were after, they proceeded to make diligent search for his papers and letters. That taste for practical joking that seems an instinct in this country suggested to Mr. Kearney to direct the fellows to my room; and what do you think they have done? Carried off bodily all my baggage, and left me with nothing but the clothes I'm wearing!"

"What a lark!" cried O'Shea, laughing.

"Yes, I take it that is the national way to look at these things; but that passion for absurdity and for ludicrous situations has not the same hold on us English."

"I know that. You are too well off to be droll."

"Not exactly that; but when we want to laugh we go to the Adelphi."

"Heaven help you if you have to pay people to make fun for you!"

Before Walpole could make rejoinder, the door opened to admit the ladies, closely followed by Mr. Kearney and Dick.

"Not mine the fault if I disgrace your dinner table by such a costume as this," cried Walpole.

"I'd have given twenty pounds if they'd have carried off yourself as the rebel!" said the old man, shaking with laughter. "But there's the soup on the table. Take my niece, Mr. Walpole. Gorman, give your arm to my daughter. Dick and I will bring up the rear."

CHAPTER XLII.

AN EVENING IN THE DRAWING-ROOM.

The fatalism of youth, unlike that of age, is all rose colored. That which is coming, and is decreed to come, cannot be very disagreeable. This is the theory of the young, and differs terribly from the experiences of after life. Gorman O'Shea had gone to dinner with about as heavy a misfortune as could well befall him, so far as his future in life was concerned. All he looked forward to and hoped for was lost to him: the aunt who, for so many years, had stood to him in place of all family, had suddenly thrown him off, and declared that she would see him no more; the allowance she had hitherto given him withdrawn, it was impossible he could continue to hold his place in his regiment. Should he determine not to return, it was desertion; should he go back, it must be to declare that he was a ruined man, and could only serve in the ranks. These were the thoughts he revolved while he dressed for dinner, and dressed, let it be owned, with peculiar care; but when the task had been accomplished, and he descended to the drawing-room, such was the elasticity of his young temperament, every thought of coming evil was merged in the sense of present enjoyment, and the merry laughter which he overheard as he opened the door obliterated all notion that life had anything before him except what was agreeable and pleasant.

"We want to know if you play croquet, Mr. O'Shea?" said Nina, as he entered. "And we want also to know, are you a captain, or a drill-master, or a major? You can scarcely be a colonel."

"Your last guess I answer first. I am only a lieutenant, and even that very lately. As to croquet, if it be not your foreign mode of pronouncing cricket, I never even saw it."

"It is not my foreign mode of pronouncing cricket, Herr Lieutenant," said she, pertly, "but I guessed already you had never heard of it."

"It is an out-of-door affair," said Dick, indolently, "made for the diffusion of worked petticoats and Balmoral boots."

"I should say it is the game of billiards brought down to universal suffrage and the million," lisped out Walpole.

"Faith," cried old Kearney, "I'd say it was just foot-ball with a stick."

"At all events," said Kate, "we purpose to have a grand match to-morrow. Mr. Walpole and I are against Nina and Dick, and we are to draw lots for you, Mr. O'Shea."

"My position, if I understand it aright, is not a flattering one," said he, laughing.

"We'll take him," said Nina at once. "I'll give him a private lesson in the morning, and I'll answer for his per-

formance. These creatures," added she, in a whisper, "are so drilled in Austria, you can teach them anything."

Now, as the words were spoken, Gorman caught them, and drawing close to her—"I do hope I'll justify that flattering opinion." But her only recognition was a look of half-defiant astonishment at his boldness.

A very noisy discussion now ensued as to whether croquet was worthy to be called a game or not, and what were its laws and rules—points which Gorman followed with due attention, but very little profit; all Kate's good sense and clearness being cruelly dashed by Nina's ingenious interruptions, and Walpole's attempts to be smart and witty, even where opportunity scarcely offered the chance.

"Next to looking on at the game," cried old Kearney at last, "the most tiresome thing I know of is to hear it talked over. Come, Nina, and give me a song."

"What shall it be, uncle?" said she, as she opened the piano.

"Something Irish I'd say, if I were to choose for myself. We've plenty of old tunes, Mr. Walpole," said Kearney, turning to that gentleman, "that rebellion, as you call it, has never got hold of. There's 'Oushla Macree' and the 'Cailan deas cruidhte na Mba.'"

"Very like hard swearing that," said Walpole to Nina, but his simper and soft accent were only met by a cold, blank look, as though she had not understood his liberty in addressing her. Indeed, in her distant manner and even repellent coldness, there was what might have disconcerted any composure less consummate than his own. It was, however, evidently Walpole's aim to assume that she felt her relation toward him, and not altogether without some cause, while she, on her part, desired to repel the insinuation by a show of utter indifference. She would willingly, in this contingency, have encouraged her cousin, Dick Kearney, and even led him on to little displays of attention; but Dick held aloof, as though not knowing the meaning of this favourable turn toward him. He would not be cheated by coquetry. How many men are of this temper, and who never understand that it is by surrendering ourselves to numberless little voluntary deceptions of this sort, we arrive at intimacies the most real and most truthful.

She next tried Gorman, and here her success was complete. All those womanly prettinesses, which are so many modes of displaying graceful attraction of voice, look, gesture or attitude were especially dear to him. Not only they gave beauty its chief charm, but they constituted a sort of game whose address was quickness of eye, prompt reply, and that refined tact that can follow out one thought in a conversation just as you follow a melody through a mass of variations.

Perhaps the young soldier did not yield himself the less readily to these captivations that Kate Kearney's manner toward him was studiously cold and ceremonious.

"The other girl is more like the old friend," muttered he, as he chatted on with her about Rome and Florence and Venice, imperceptibly gliding into the language which the names of places suggested.

"If anyone had told me that I ever could have talked thus freely and openly with an Austrian soldier, I'd not have believed him," said she, at length, "for all my sympathies in Italy were with the national party."

"But we were not 'the Barbari' in your recollection, mademoiselle," said he. "We were out of Italy before you could have any feeling for either party."

"The tradition of all your cruelties has survived you; and I am sure if you were wearing your white coat still, I'd hate you."

"You are giving me another reason to ask for a longer leave of absence," said he, bowing courteously.

"And this leave of yours, how long does it last?"

"I am afraid to own to myself. Wednesday fortnight is the end of it; that is, it gives me four days after that to reach Vienna."

"And, presenting yourself in humble guise before your colonel, to say, 'Ich melde mich gehorsamst.'"

"Not exactly that, but something like it."

"I'll be the Herr Oberst Lieutenant," said she, laughing; "so come forward now, and clap your heels together, an

let us hear how you utter your few syllables in true abject fashion. I'll sit here and receive you." As she spoke she threw herself into an arm-chair, and, assuming a look of intense hauteur and defiance, affected to stroke an imaginary moustache with one hand, while with the other she waved a haughty gesture of welcome.

"I have outstaid my leave," muttered Gorman, in a tremulous tone. "I hope my colonel, with that bland mercy which characterizes him, will forgive my fault, and let me ask his pardon." And with this, he knelt down on one knee before her and kissed her hand.

"What liberties are these, sir?" cried she, so angrily that it was not easy to say whether the anger was not real.

"It is the latest rule introduced into our service," said he, with mock humility.

"Is that a comedy they are acting yonder," said Walpole, "or is it a proverb?"

"Whatever the drama," replied Kate, coldly, "I don't think they want a public."

"You may go back to your duty, Herr Lieutenant," said Nina, proudly, and with a significant glance toward Kate. "Indeed, I suspect you have been rather neglecting it of late." And with this she sailed majestically away toward the end of the room.

"I wish I could provoke even that much of jealousy from the other," muttered Gorman to himself, as he bit his lip in passion. And certainly, if a look and manner of calm unconcern meant anything, there was little that seemed less likely.

"I am glad you are going to the piano, Nina," said Kate. "Mr. Walpole has been asking me by what artifice you could be induced to sing something of Mendelssohn."

"I am going to sing an Irish ballad for that Austrian patriot, who, like his national poet, thinks Ireland a beautiful country to live out of." Though a haughty toss of the head accompanied these words, there was a glance in her eye toward Gorman that plainly invited a renewal of their half-firting hostilities.

"When I left it, you had not been here," said he, with an obsequious tone, and an air of deference only too marked in its courtesy.

A slight, very faint blush on her cheek showed that she rather resented than accepted the flattery; but she appeared to be occupied in looking through the music-books, and made no rejoinder.

"We want Mendelssohn, Nina," said Kate.

"Or at least Spohr," added Walpole.

"I never accept dictation about what I sing," muttered Nina, only loud enough to be overheard by Gorman. "People don't tell you what theme you are to talk on; they don't presume to say, 'Be serious, or be witty.' They don't tell you to come to the aid of their sluggish natures by passion, or to dispel their dreariness by flights of fancy; and why are they to dare all this to us who speak through song?"

"Just because you alone can do these things," said Gorman, in the same low voice as she had spoken in.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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