

## LORD KILGOBBIN.

BY CHARLES LEVER.

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## CHAPTER LXX., Continued.

In the few words that passed between Lord Danesbury and himself on arriving he learned that there was but little chance of his winning his election for the borough. Indeed, he bore the disappointment jauntily and good-humoredly. That great philosophy of not attaching too much importance to any one thing in life sustained him in every venture. "Bet on the field—never back the favorite," was his formula for inculcating the wisdom of trusting to the general game of life, rather than to any particular emergency. "Back the field," he would say, "and you must be unlucky or you'll come right in the long run."

They dined that day alone—that is, they were but three at table; and Atlee enjoyed the unspeakable pleasure of hearing them talk with the freedom and unconstraint people only indulge in when "at home". Lord Danesbury discussed confidential questions of political importance; told how his colleagues agreed in this, or differed on that; adverted to the nice points of temperament, which made one man hopeful and that other despondent or distrustful; he exposed the difficulties they had to meet in the Commons, and where the Upper House was intractable; and even went so far in his confidence as to admit where the criticisms of the press were felt to be damaging to the administration.

"The real danger of ridicule," said he, is not the pungency of the satire, it is the facility with which it is remembered and circulated. The man who reads the strong leader in the Times may have some general impression of being convinced, but he cannot repeat its arguments or quote its expressions. The pasquinade or the squib gets a hold on the mind, and its very drollery will insure its being retained there."

Atlee was not a little gratified to hear that this opinion was delivered *a propos* to a short paper of his own, whose witty sarcasms on the Cabinet were exciting great amusement in town, and much curiosity as to the writer.

"He has not seen 'The Whitebait Dinner' yet," said Lady Maude: "the cleverest jeu d'esprit of the day."

"Ay, or of any day," broke in Lord Danesbury. "Even the Anti-Jacobin has nothing better. The notion is this. The devil happens to be taking a holiday, and he is in town just at the time of the Ministerial dinner, and, hearing that he is at Claridge's, the Cabinet, ashamed at the little attention bestowed on a crowned head, ask him down to Greenwich. He accepts, and to kill an hour—

"He strolled down, of course, To the Parliament House, And heard how England stood, As she has since the Flood, Without ally or friend to assist her. But while every persuasion Was full of invasion, From Russian or Prussian, Yet the only discussion Was, how should a gentleman marry his sister."

"Can you remember any more of it, my lord?" asked Atlee, on whose table at that moment were lying the proof-sheets of the production.

"Maude has it all somewhere. You must find it for him, and let him guess the writer—if he can."

"What do the clubs say?" asked Atlee.

"I think they are divided between Orlop and Bouverie. I'm told that the Garrick people say it's Sankey, a young fellow in F. O."

"You should see Aunt Jeringham about it, Mr. Atlee—her eagerness is driving her half mad."

"Take him out to 'Lebanon' on Sunday," said my lord; and Lady Maude agreed with a charming grace and courtesy, adding, as she left the room: "So remember you are engaged for Sunday." Atlee bowed as he held the door open for her to pass out, and threw into his glance what he desired might mean homage and eternal devotion.

"Now, then, for a little quiet confab," said my lord. "Let me hear what you

meant by your telegram. All I could make out was that you found our man."

"Yes; I found him, and passed several hours in his company."

"Was the fellow very much out at elbows, as usual?"

"No, my lord—thriving, and likely to thrive. He has just been named envoy to the Ottoman Court."

"Bah!" was all the reply his incredulity could permit.

"True, I assure you. Such is the estimation he is held in at Athens, the Greeks declare he has not his equal. You are aware that his name is Speridion Kostalergi, and he claims to be Prince of Delos."

"With all my heart. Our Hellenic friends never quarrel over their nobility. There are titles, and to spare, for everyone. Will he give us our papers?"

"Yes; but not without high terms. He declares, in fact, my lord, that you can no more return to the Bosphorus without him, than he can go there without you."

"Is the fellow insolent enough to make this ground?"

"That is he. In fact, he presumes to talk as your lordship's colleague, and hints at the several points in which you may act in concert."

"It is very Greek, all this."

"His terms are ten thousand pounds in cash, and—"

"There, there, that will do. Why not fifty—why not a hundred thousand?"

"He affects a desire to be moderate, my lord."

"I hope you withdrew at once, after such a proposal? I trust you did not prolong the interview a moment longer?"

"I arose, indeed, and declared that the mere mention of such terms was like a refusal to treat at all."

"And you retired?"

"I gained the door, when he detained me. He has, I must admit, a marvelous plausibility, for, though at first he seemed to rely on the all-importance of these documents to your lordship, how far they would compromise you in the past and impede you for the future; how they would impair your influence, and excite the animosity of many who were freely canvassed and discussed in them—yet he abandoned all that at the end of our interview, and restricted himself to the plea that the sum, if a large one, could not be a serious difficulty to a great English noble, and would be the crowning fortune of a poor Greek gentleman, who merely desired to secure a marriage portion for his only daughter."

"And you believed this?"

"I so far believe him that I have his pledge in writing, that, when he has your lordship's assurance that you will comply with his terms—and he only asks that much—he will deposit the papers in the hands of the minister at Athens, and constitute your lordship the trustee of the amount in favor of his daughter, the sum only to be paid on her marriage."

"How can it possibly concern me that he has a daughter; or why should I accept such a trust?"

"The proposition had no other meaning than to guarantee the good faith on which his demand is made."

"I don't believe in the daughter."

"That is, that there is one?"

"No. I am persuaded that she has no existence. It is some question of a mistress or a dependent; and, if so, the sentimentality, which would seem to have appealed so forcibly to you, fails at once."

"That is quite true, my lord; and I cannot deny the weakness you accuse me of. There may be no daughter in the question."

"Ah! You begin to perceive now that you surrendered your convictions too easily, Atlee. You failed in that element of 'restless distrust' that Talleyrand used to call the temper of the diplomatist."

"It is not the first time I have had to feel I am your lordship's inferior."

"My education was not made in a day, Atlee. It need be no discouragement to you that you are not as long-sighted as I am. No, no; rely upon it, there is no daughter in the case."

"With that conviction, my lord, what is easier than to make your adhesion to his terms conditional on his truth? You agree, if his statement be in all respects verified."

"Which implies that it is of the least consequence to me whether the fellow has a daughter or not?"

"It is so only as the guarantee of the man's veracity."

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"And shall I give ten thousand pounds to test that?"

"No, my lord; but to repossess yourself of what, in very doubtful hands, might prove a great scandal and a great disaster."

"Ten thousand pounds! ten thousand pounds!"

"Why not eight, perhaps five? I have not your lordship's great knowledge to guide me, and I cannot tell when these men really mean to maintain their ground. From my own very meagre experiences I should say he was not a very tractable individual. He sees some promise of better fortune before him, and like a genuine gambler—as I hear he is—he determines to back his luck."

"Ten thousand pounds!" muttered the other, below his breath.

"As regards the money, my lord, I take it that these same papers were documents which more or less concerned the public service—they were in no sense personal, although meant to be private; and although in my ignorance I may be mistaken, it seems to me that the fund devoted to secret services could not be more fittingly appropriated than in acquiring documents whose publicity could prove a national injury."

"Totally wrong—utterly wrong. The money could never be paid on such a pretense—the 'Office' would not sanction—no minister would dare to advise it."

"Then I come back to my original suggestion. I should give a conditional acceptance, and treat for a reduction of the amount."

"You would say five?"

"I opine, my lord, eight would have more chance of success."

"You are a warm advocate for your client," said his lordship, laughing; and though the shot was merely a random one, it went so true to the mark that Atlee flushed up and became crimson all over. "Don't mistake me, Atlee," said his lordship, in a kindly tone. "I know thoroughly how my interests, and only mine, have any claim on your attention. This Greek fellow must be less than nothing to you. Tell me now frankly, do you believe one word he has told you? Is he really named as minister to Turkey?"

"That much I can answer for—he is."

"What of the daughter—is there a daughter?"

"I suspect there may be. However, the matter admits of an easy proof. He has given me names and addresses in Ireland of relatives with whom she is living. Now I am thoroughly conversant with Ireland, and, by the indications in my power, I can pledge myself to learn all, not only about the existence of this person, but of such family circumstances as might serve to guide you in your resolve. Time is what is most to be thought of here. Kostalergi requires a prompt answer—first of all, your assurance that you will support his claim to be received by the sultan. Well, my lord, if you refuse, Mouravieff will do it. You know better than me how impolitic it might be to throw these Turks more into Russian influence—"

Never mind that, Atlee. Don't distress yourself about the political aspect of the question."

"I promised a telegraphic line to say would you or would you not sustain his nomination. It was to be yes or no—not more."

"Say yes. I'll not split hairs about what Greek best represents his nation. Say yes."

"I am sure, my lord, you do wisely. He is evidently a man of ability, and, I

suspect, not morally much worse than his countrymen in general."

"Say yes; and then"—he mused for some minutes before he continued—"and then run over to Ireland; learn something, if you can, of this girl, with whom she is staying, in what position, what guarantees, if any, could be had for the due employment and destination of a sum of money, in the event of our agreeing to pay it. Mind, it is simply as a gauge of the fellow's veracity that this story has any value for us. Daughter or no daughter is not of any moment to me; but I want to test the problem—can he tell one word of truth about anything? You are shrewd enough to see the bearing of this narrative on all he has told you—where it sustains, where it accuses him."

"Shall I set out at once, my lord?"

"No. Next week will do. We'll leave him to ruminate over your telegram. That will show him we have entertained his project; and he is too practised a hand not to know the value of an opened negotiation. Cradock and Melish, and one or two more, wish to talk with you about Turkey. Graydon, too, has some questions to ask you about Suez. They dine here on Monday. Tuesday we are to have the Hargraves and Lord Masham, and a couple of Under-Secretaries of State; and Lady Maude will tell us about Wednesday, for all these people, Atlee, are coming to see you. The newspapers have so persistently been keeping you before the world, everyone wants to see you."

Atlee might have told his lordship—but but he did not—by what agency it chanced that his journeys and his jests were so thoroughly known to the press of every capital in Europe.

(To be Continued.)

## FRENCHMEN RESPECT NUNS.

The Theatre Francais, the famous house of Moliere, and the venerable home of the best European school of classical comedy, has made an error of judgment in producing a one-act comedy entitled "Le Voile," by the Belgian poet, George Rodenback. The story, according to the correspondent of the Catholic Times, is of a nursing Sister in charge of a sick woman whose nephew, by daily association with the nun, conceives a romantic passion for her. The play is of a morbid and melancholy character, and is rendered particularly distasteful by the constant allusion to religious things, and even to the recital of the Lord's Prayer and making the sign of the cross. The author has no offensive intention, but the nature of the sketch makes it inevitable. On the second performance the play was hissed. Frenchmen are bad enough in too many cases, heaven knows, but they look up to nuns with reverence and respect. There is a halo about the cornette which brings out the best feelings of this volatile people, and they will have no mimicry or caricature of the Sister of Charity. The religieuse is associated with their childhood, their schools, their homes, their sick beds, their battle fields, and it is a consoling and pleasing circumstance to be able to record that even a well meant effort to treat the nun on the stage at once meets with reprobation.—*Sacred Heart Review*.

Excused.—Mother: Good gracious! How did you get so muddy? Small Son: Runnin' home to see if there was anything you wanted me to do.