

## LORD KILGOBBIN.

BY CHARLES LEVER.

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## CHAPTER LXXV.—(Continued.)

"You have enough if you marry a prudent girl," muttered Kearney, who was never happier than when advocating moderation and discretion.

"Enough, at least, not to look for money with a wife."

"I'm with you there heart and soul," cried Kearney. "Of all the shabby inventions of our civilization, I don't know one as mean as that custom of giving a marriage-portion with a girl. Is it to induce a man to take her? Is it to pay for her board and lodging? Is it because marriage is a partnership, and she must bring her share into the 'concern' or is it to provide for the day when they are to part company, and each go his own road? Take it how you like, it's bad and it's shabby. If you're rich enough to give your daughter twenty or thirty thousand pounds, wait for some little family festival—her birthday, or her husband's birthday, or a Christmas gathering, or maybe a christening—and put the notes in her hand. Oh, major dear," cried he, aloud, "if you knew how much of life you lose with lawyers, and what a deal of bad blood comes into the world by parchments, you'd see the wisdom of trusting more to human kindness and good feeling, and, above all, to the honor of gentlemen—things that nowadays we always hope to secure by Act of Parliament."

"I go with a great deal of what you say."

"Why not with all of it? What do we gain by trying to overreach each other? What advantage in a system where it's always the rogue that wins? If I was a king to-morrow, I'd rather fine a fellow for quoting Blackstone than for blasphemy, and I'd distribute all the law libraries in the kingdom as cheap fuel for the poor. We pray for peace and quietness, and we educate a special class of people to keep us always wrangling. Where's the sense of that?"

While Kearney poured out these words in a flow of fervid conviction, they had arrived at a little open space in the wood, from which various alleys led off in different directions. Along one of these two figures were slowly moving side by side, whom Lockwood quickly recognized as Walpole and Nina Kostalergi. Kearney did not see them, for his attention was suddenly called off by a shout from a distance, and his son Dick rode hastily up to the spot. "I have been in search of you all through the plantation," cried he. "I have brought back Holmes, the lawyer, from Tullamore, who wants to talk to you about this affair of Gorman's. It's going to be a bad business, I fear."

"Isn't that more of what I was saying?" said the old man, turning to the major. "There's a law for you?"

"They are making what they call a 'National' event of it," continued Dick. "The *Pike* has opened a column of subscriptions to defray the cost of proceedings, and they've engaged Battersby with a hundred-guinea retainer already."

It appeared from what tidings Dick brought back from the town that the Nationalists—to give them the much unmerited name by which they called themselves—were determined to show how they could dictate to a jury.

"There's a law for you!" cried the old man again.

"You'll have to take to vigilance committees, like the Yankees," said the major.

"We've had them for years; but they only shot their political opponents."

"They say, too," broke in the young man, "that Donogan is in the town, and that it is he who has organized the whole prosecution. In fact, he intends to make Battersby's speech for the plaintiff a great declaration of the wrongs of Ireland; and as Battersby hates the chief baron, who will try the cause, he is determined to insult the Bench, even at the cost of a commitment."

"What will he gain by that?" asked Lockwood.

"I'll tell you what he'll gain—he'll gain the election of Mallow," said Kearney. "Every one cannot have a father

that was hanged in '98; but any one can go to jail for blackguarding a chief justice."

For a moment or two the old man seemed ashamed at having been led to make these confessions to "the Saxon," and telling Lockwood where he would be likely to find a brace of cocks, he took his son's arm and turned homeward.

## CHAPTER LXXVI.

## VERY CONFIDENTIAL CONVERSATION.

When Lockwood returned, only in time to dress for dinner, Walpole, whose room adjoined his, threw open the door between them and entered. He had just accomplished a most careful "tie," and came in with the air of one fairly self-satisfied and happy.

"You look quite triumphant this evening," said the major, half sulkily.

"So I am, old fellow; and so I have a right to be. It's all done and settled."

"Already?"

"Ay, already. I asked her to take a stroll with me in the garden; but we sauntered off into the plantation. A woman always understands the exact amount of meaning a man has in a request of this kind, and her instinct reveals to her at once whether he is eager to tell her some bit of fatal scandal of one of her friends, or to make her a declaration."

A sort of sulky grunt was Lockwood's acknowledgment of this piece of abstract wisdom—a sort of knowledge he never listened to with much patience.

"I am aware," said Walpole, flippantly, "the female nature was an omitted part in your education, Lockwood; and you take small interest in those nice distinctive traits which, to a man of the world, are exactly what the stars are to the mariner."

"Finding out what a woman means by the stars does seem very poor fun."

"Perhaps you prefer the moon for your observation," replied Walpole; and the easy impertinence of his manner was almost too much for the other's patience.

"I don't care for your speculations—I want to hear what passed between you and the Greek girl."

"The Greek girl will in a few days be Mrs. Walpole, and I shall crave a little more deference for the mention of her."

"I forgot her name, or I should not have called her with such freedom. What is it?"

"Kostalergi. Her father is Kostalergi, Prince of Delos."

"All right; it will read well in the *Post*."

"My dear friend, there is that amount of sarcasm in your conversation this evening that to a plain man like myself, never ready at reply, and easily subdued by ridicule, is positively overwhelming. Has any disaster befallen you that you are become so satirical and severe?"

"Never mind me—tell me about yourself," was the blunt reply.

"I have not the slightest objection. When we had walked a little way together, and I felt that we were beyond the risk of interruption, I led her to the subject of my sudden reappearance here, and implied that she, at least, could not have felt much surprise. 'You remember,' said I, 'I promised to return?'"

"There is something so conventional," said she, "in these pledges that one comes to read them like the 'yours sincerely' at the foot of a letter."

"I ask for nothing better," said I, taking her up on her own words, "than to be 'yours sincerely.' It is to ratify that pledge by making you 'mine sincerely' that I am here."

"Indeed!" said she, slowly, and looking down.

"I swear it!" said I, kissing her hand, which, however, had a glove on."

"Why not her cheek?"

"That is not done, major mine, at such times."

"Well, go on."

"I can't recall the exact words, for I spoke rapidly; but I told her I was named minister at a foreign court, that my future career was assured, and that I was able to offer her a station, not, indeed, equal in her deserts, but that, occupied by her, would only be less than royal."

"At Guatemala!" exclaimed the other, derisively.

"Have the kindness to keep your geography to yourself," said Walpole. "I merely said in South America, and she had too much delicacy to ask more."

"But she said yes? She consented?"

"Yes, sir, she said she would venture to commit her future to my charge."



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"Didn't she ask you what means you had? what was your income?"

"Not exactly in the categorical way you put it, but she alluded to the possible style we should live in."

"I'll swear she did. That girl asked you, in plain words, how many hundreds or thousands you had a year?"

"And I told her. I said: 'It sounds humbly, dearest, to tell you we shall not have fully two thousand a year; but the place we are going to is the cheapest in the universe, and we shall have a small establishment of not more than forty black and about a dozen white servants, and at first only keep twenty horses, taking our carriages on job.'"

"What about pin-money?"

"There is not much extravagance in toilet, and so I said she must manage with a thousand a year."

"And she didn't laugh in your face?"

"No, sir; nor was there any strain upon her good breeding to induce her to laugh in my face."

"At all events, you discussed the matter in a fine practical spirit. Did you go into groceries? I hope you did not forget groceries?"

"My dear Lockwood, let me warn you against being droll. You ask me for a correct narrative, and when I give it you will not restrain that subtle sarcasm the mastery of which makes you unassailable."

"When is it to be? When is it to come off? Has she to write to his Serene Highness, the Prince What's-his-name?"

"No, the Prince of What's-his-name need not be consulted. Lord Kilgobbin will stand in the position of father to her."

Lockwood muttered something, in which "Give her away!" were the only words audible. "I must say," added he, aloud, "the wooing did not take long."

"You forget that there was an actual engagement between us when I left this for London. My circumstances at that time did not permit me to ask her at once to be my wife; but our affections were pledged, and—even if more tender sentiments did not determine—my feeling, as a man of honor, required I should come back here to make her this offer."

"All right; I suppose it will do—I hope it will do; and, after all, I take it, you are likely to understand each other better than others would."

"Such is our impression and belief."

"How will your own people—how will Danesbury like it?"

"For their sakes I trust they will like it very much; for mine, it is less than a matter of indifference to me."

"She, however—she will expect to be properly received among them?"

"Yes," cried Walpole, speaking for the first time in a perfectly natural tone, divested of all pomposity. "Yes, she sticks for that, Lockwood. It was the one point she seemed to stand out for. Of course I told her she would be received with open arms by my relatives—that my family would be overjoyed to receive her as one of them. I only hinted that my lord's gout might prevent him from being at the wedding. I'm not sure Uncle Danesbury would not come over."

"And the charming Lady Maude," asked she, "would she honor me so far as to be a bride-maid?"

"She didn't say that?"

"She did. She actually pushed me to promise I should ask her."

"Which you never would."

"Of that I will not affirm I am quite positive; but I certainly intend to press my uncle for some sort of recognition of the marriage—a civil note; better still, if it could be managed, an invitation to his house in town."

"You are a bold fellow to think of it."

"Not so bold as you imagine. Have you not often remarked that when a man of good connections is about to exile himself by accepting a far-away post, whether it be out of pure compassion or a feeling that it need never be done again, and that they are about to see the last of him, but, somehow—whatever the reason—his friends are marvellously civil and polite to him, just as some benevolent but eccentric folk send a partridge to the condemned felon for his last dinner?"

"They do that in France."

"Here it would be a rump-steak; but the sentiment is the same. At all events, the thing is as I told you, and I do not despair of Danesbury."

"For the letter, perhaps not; but he'll never ask you to Bruton street, nor if he did, could you accept."

"You are thinking of Lady Maude."

"I am."

"There would be no difficulty in that quarter. When a Whig becomes Tory, or a Tory Whig, the gentlemen of the party he has deserted never take umbrage in the same way as the vulgar dogs below the gangway; so it is in the world. The people who must meet, must dine together, sit side by side at flower-shows and garden parties, always manage to do their hatreds decorously, and only pay off their dislikes by installments. If Lady Maude were to receive my wife at all, it would be with a most winning politeness. All her malevolence would limit itself to making the supposed under-bred woman commit a 'gaucherie,' to do or say something that ought not to have been done or said; and as I know Nina can stand the test, I have no fears of the experiment."

A knock at the door apprised them that the dinner was waiting, neither having heard the bell which had summoned them a quarter of an hour before. "And I wanted to hear all about your progress," cried Walpole, as they descended the staircase together.

"I have none to report," was the gruff reply.

"Why, surely you have not passed the whole day in Kearney's company without some hint of what you came here for?"

But at the same moment they were in the dining-room.

"We are a man-party to-day, I am sorry to say," cried old Kearney, as they entered. "My niece and my daughter are keeping Miss O'Shea company upstairs. She is not well enough to come down to dinner, and they have scruples about leaving her in solitude."

"At least we'll have a cigar after dinner," was Dick's ungallant reflection, as they moved away.

(To be Continued.)

Logical—Effie: "Mummy, why do they hunt lions and tigers?" "Because they kill the poor little sheep, Effie." Effie (after a pause): "Then why don't they hunt the butchers, mummy?"