



CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

"WELL, I was too polite to tell him that, but the fact is, I went into the garden after luncheon to pick a few laurel-leaves, and Jim was there, and of course we both talked over the luncheon."

"Well?"

"Well. My dear fiancé was in the window and saw the parlour-maid of a few minutes ago in confidential intercourse with the master of the house. Of course he was amazed. After all," with a judicial air, "I dare say under the circumstances that I should have been amazed too."

"How unfortunate that he should have seen you!"

"Yes, very. But that was not all. He accused me on the spot of being a disloyal servan. to your royal highness."

"What on earth are you talking about, Hilary?"

"About my future husband. He evidently thought I was behaving very badly toward you. Oh! Jim!" as Clifford enters the room, "come here."

"Jim, do you know what has happened?" says Diana. "Mr. Kerr saw you talking to Hilary in the shrubberies, and he thinks—"

"That Hilary is in love with me," says Clifford. "Well," thoughtfully, "I can't blame him."

"Jim!" says Hilary.

"Well, my dear!"

"You know he must have thought—idiot though he is—that it was *you* who were in love with me!"

"Ah! Don't make him out a greater idiot than he is," says Clifford sweetly.

Here Diana, who had been laughing a little, breaks into the discussion.

"It's all very well," says she, "but how are we going to meet him next week at Mrs. McIntyre's dance?"

"What!" exclaims Hilary. For the first time in all this wild adventure of hers she looks really stricken. "You don't mean to say he is going there?"

"Certainly he is. He told me so. He is going to Dublin on business to-morrow, but will be back in time for it."

"Chut! He'll never be back in time. What do you think, Jim?" turning to her brother-in-law, with much apparent courage, but evidently with a sinking heart.

"I don't know," says Clifford, with deep and depressing reserve, who feels this to be a likely moment in which to drop into deadliest gloom. "He was able to put in an appearance last time, though he arrived at midnight. I decline to give an opinion. One never knows what may happen. It is bad to be wildly previous."

"Oh! something will happen to prevent him," says Hilary. "It would be too much. How on earth could I meet him?"

"How indeed!" says Clifford, "after this base deception."

"You might stay at home," suggests Diana anxiously. "But I shouldn't like you to do that."

"Stay at home! From a dance! Never!" cries Hilary with decision. "If the worst

comes to the worst, why I'll meet him, and give him a dance or two!"

This audacity makes them laugh.

"I shall be the worst off," says poor Diana, sighing. "He will think me terribly to blame! And as for you, Jim, when he meets *you*—"

"Where, he *does*."

Mr. Clifford is now sitting in an arm-chair, teaching a little terrier to beg for his bread.

"But, my dear Jim, you will meet him at the McIntyres'."

Not if I know it. I'm going to play hide-and-seek that night in and out of the rooms—Sit up, Trot, can't you?—And I defy any one to catch me at *that* game once I put my mind to it. Oh, what a night I'm going to have! Such splendid exercise—"

"I think I'll play it, too," says Diana, with a rather faint laugh. "I don't believe I could meet him after this."

"I hope, Diana," says her husband severely, "that you will see your way to playing it with me."

"Oh, you can laugh," says Diana, growing rueful again, "but I know exactly how it will be. You and Hilary will be out of the way, and it will be left to *me* to explain to him this daring imposition."

She looks at Hilary, but that culprit's head is downcast, and no comforting words come from her.

"Well, look here," says Diana, taking a step forward, and growing endued suddenly with a touch of spirit, "I won't do it. No. Nothing shall induce me. I've told him so many things already, that I *can't* tell him any more."

"You needn't!" says Hilary; she too is looking distinctly uneasy, but a smile breaks through the little cloud that dims the brightness of her face. "You can leave it all to me. I'll tell him. I'll explain. When he sees me as Bridget—"

"Oh, Hilary, you *won't* appear again in that dress?" pointing to the dress Hilary has worn during the luncheon.

"I shall, indeed. He—" she stops short, "adores me in it," she was going to say, but found it impossible; she colours vividly, and says instead, "will probably have forgotten all about me."

"Oh, modesty, thy name is Woman!" says Clifford, who has now almost induced the terrier to wait for the infinitesimal part of a second before devouring the biscuit.

"I'm not going to be ashamed of anything," says Hilary perversely. "Why should I? I think I have been such a *good* girl all through. I have helped you out of your difficulty with your parlour-maid. I helped *him* to everything I could think of—I even gave him his stick. What more does he want?"

"Nothing, I hope," says Clifford. "Or he must be the most unreasonable fellow alive. And I wouldn't marry an unreasonable fellow if I were you, Hilary."

"As to marrying him, that is out of the question," says Hilary warmly. "There is only the question of putting myself straight with him. That I can easily do."

"Yes, I'm afraid the marriage question is at an end," says Diana sadly. "I told you, Hilary, that you should not have trifled with him in this way. And," sighing, "he would have been such a good match, too."

"Brilliant!" says Clifford. "Fiery!"

"Don't, Jim. I really wish to speak seriously to Hilary. He *would* be a good match."

"Well, my dear, am I not agreeing with you there? A match of the finest quality, I call him; warranted to—"

Here a sound, evidently coming from the lower regions, attracts their attention.

"Cook has come back," says Diana hurriedly. "For heaven's sake, Hilary, go and get that dress off before she sees you."

CHAPTER X.

"And now the hand of Fate is on the curtain,
And gives the scene to light."

THE first three dances are at an end; Hilary, as she enters the ball-room, can see this by the card hanging near the musicians. She can see, too, after a hurried glance over the room, that the Dyson-Moores and their party have not yet arrived. The fourth is a waltz—she has arrived just in time for it—and she gets through it with a tail Crusader, enjoyably enough, but always with a sense that she is watching the doorways.

The Crusader, who is young and immensely in earnest over his waltzing, which like himself has not yet come to perfection, permits her, toward the close of the dance, to rest a moment, and in that moment she knows that her fate is upon her.

Her heart almost stops beating. Yes, there is Mrs. Dyson-Moore, and Ker with her. Mr. Dyson-Moore is here too, straggling somewhat in the rear—he is always in the rear, poor man—and several other people, mostly men from the barracks in the next town. Hilary, however, sees only one man, and that is Ker; he is dressed as a cavalier, and looks absolutely handsome, a thing one would not have quite expected from him. He is now standing talking to Mrs. Dyson-Moore, and it suddenly occurs to Hilary that that elastic person is wearing the triumphant expression of one who has just added another scalp to her belt. Is it Ker's?

He seems at all events thoroughly content with his present position, and in no wise eager to withdraw from it. All his attention seems to be indeed given to his hostess, who has discarded the Amazonian dress, and is now declaring herself to an admiring, if slightly astonished crowd, as Folly! By this change she has added considerably to her charms, but unfortunately nothing to her skirts, the ends of which are to-night even perilously closer to her knees. She has just whispered something to Ker, and Hilary, who has drawn back into the shadow of a curtain, can see that they are both laughing in an irrepressible sort of way.

Never was there so radiant a Folly—or so picturesque a one. She seems to gather a fund of joy from the sensation she is so evidently creating, and especially from the withering glances of old Miss Kinsella, who is staring at her through her gold-rimmed glasses from the distant doorway with stern and open disapproval. Miss Kinsella always stands near the doorway wherever she goes; it gives one so much a better chance of seeing each new arrival, and the manner of their reception, etc. Nothing escapes Miss Kinsella.

Mrs. Dyson-Moore, who has been nodding and smiling at her from a low couch, with overflowing affection apparently, has now nearly gone into hysterics behind her fan over the return she has had.

(To be continued.)

A CHANCE FOR US ALL.

THE possibilities of winter comfort seem now to be only limited by the extent of the spruce trees in the land. So long as a "wooden cloth" (and this is practically what Fibre Chamois is), can be had for a trifling expense to line our outer garments with, no one need ever suffer from the sharpest winds or frostiest air of winter. An absolute non-conductor of heat and cold, Fibre Chamois is also durable, light and pliable so that the presence of a layer of it through a coat is never felt save by the protection it gives from a roaring gale or icy temperature. As its thorough worth has long since been proved there is no possible chance of disappointment in preparing to enjoy the healthful warmth it always provides.