

# LORD KILGOBBIN.

By CHARLES LEVER.

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

## CHAPTER LXVIII.—THOUGHTS ON MARRIAGE.

LOCKWOOD was seated at his fireside in his quarters, the Upper Castle Yard, when Walpole burst in upon him unexpectedly.

"What! you here?" cried the major. "Have you the courage to face Ireland again?"

"I see nothing that should prevent my coming here. Ireland certainly cannot pretend to lay a grievance to my charge."

"Maybe not. I don't understand these things. I only know what people say in the clubs and laugh over at dinner-tables."

"I cannot affect to be very sensitive as to these Celtic criticisms, and I shall not ask you to recall them."

"They say that Danesbury got kicked out all for your blunders?"

"Do they?" said Walpole, innocently.

"Yes; and they declare that if old Daney wasn't the most loyal fellow breathing, he'd have thrown you over, and owned that the whole mess was of your own brewing, and that he had nothing to do with it."

"Do they, indeed, say that?"

"That's not half of it, for they have a story about a woman—some woman you met down at Kilgobbin—who made you sing rebel songs and take a Fenian pledge, and give your word of honor that Donoghan should be let escape."

"Is that all?"

"Isn't it enough? A man must be a glutton for tomfoolery if he could not be satisfied with that."

"Perhaps you never heard that the chief of the Cabinet took a very different view of my Irish policy."

"Irish policy?" cried the other, with lifted eyebrows.

"I said Irish policy, and repeat the words. Whatever line of political action tends to bring legislation into more perfect harmony with the instincts and impulses of a very peculiar people, it is no presumption to call a policy."

"With all my heart. Do you mean to deal with that old Liverpool rascal for the furniture?"

"His offer is almost an insult."

"Well, you'll be gratified to know he retracts it. He says now he'll only give £35! And as for the screws, Bobbidge, of the Carbineers, will take them both for £50."

"Why, Lightfoot alone is worth the money!"

"Minus the sand-crack."

"I deny the sand-crack. She was pricked in the shoeing."

"Of course! I never knew a broken knee that wasn't got by striking the manger, nor a sand-crack that didn't come of an awkward smith."

"What a blessing it would be if all the bad reputations in society could be palliated as pleasantly!"

"Shall I tell Bobbidge you take his offer? He wants an answer at once."

"My dear major, don't you know that the fellow who says that simply means to say: 'Don't be too sure that I shall not change my mind! Look out that you take the ball at the hop!'"

"Lucky if it hops at all."

"Is that your experience of life?" said Walpole, inquiringly.

"It is one of them. Will you take £50 for the screws?"

"Yes; and as much more for the break and the dog-cart. I want every rap I can scrape together, Harry. I'm going out to Guatemala."

"I heard that."

"Infernal place; at least, I believe, in climate—reptiles—fevers—assassination—it stands without a rival."

"So they tell me."

"It was the only thing vacant; and they rather affected a difficulty about giving it."

"So they do when they send a man to the Gold Coast; and they tell the newspapers to say what a lucky dog he is."

"I can stand all that. What really kills me is giving a man the C. B. when

he is just booked for some home of yellow fever."

"They do that, too," gravely observed the other, who was beginning to feel the pace of the conversation rather too fast for him. "Don't you smoke?"

"I'm rather reducing myself to half batta in tobacco. I've thoughts of marrying."

"Don't do that."

"Why? It's not wrong."

"No, perhaps not; but it's stupid."

"Come now, old fellow, life out there in the tropics is not so jolly all alone. Alligators are interesting creatures, and cheetahs are pretty pets; but a man wants a little companionship of a more tender kind: and a nice girl who would link her fortune's with one's own, and help one through the sultry hours, is no bad thing."

"The nice girl wouldn't go there."

"I'm not so sure of that. With your great knowledge of life, you must know that there has been a glut in 'the nice-girl' market these years back. Prime lots are sold for a song occasionally, and first-rate samples sent as far as Calcutta. The truth is, the fellow who looks like a real buyer may have the pick of the fair, as they call it here."

"So he ought," growled out the major.

"The speech is not a gallant one. You are scarcely complimentary to the ladies, Lockwood."

"It was you who talked of a woman like a cow or a sack of corn, not I."

"I employed an illustration to answer one of your own arguments."

"Who is she to be?" bluntly asked the major.

"I'll tell you whom I mean to ask, for I have not put the question yet."

A long, fine whistle expressed the other's astonishment. "And are you sure she'll say yes?"

"I have no other assurance than the conviction that a woman might do worse."

"Humph! perhaps she might. I'm not quite certain; but who is she to be?"

"Do you remember a visit we made together to a certain Kilgobbin Castle?"

"To be sure I do. A rum old ruin it was."

"Do you remember two young ladies we met there?"

"Perfectly. Are you going to marry both of them?"

"My intention is to propose to one, and I imagine I need not tell you which?"

"Naturally, the Irish girl. She saved your life—"

"Pray let me undeceive you in a double error. It is not the Irish girl; nor did she save my life."

"Perhaps not; but she risked her own to save yours. You said so yourself at the time."

"We'll not discuss the point now. I hope I feel duly grateful for the young lady's heroism, though it is not exactly my intention to record my gratitude in a special license."

"A very equivocal sort of repayment," grumbled out Lockwood.

"You are epigrammatic this evening, major."

"So, then, it's the Greek you mean to marry?"

"It is the Greek I mean to ask."

"All right. I hope she'll take you. I think, on the whole, you suit each other. If I were at all disposed to that sort of bondage, I don't know a girl I'd rather risk the road with than the Irish cousin, Miss Kearney."

"She is very pretty, exceedingly obliging, and has most winning manners."

"She is good-tempered, and she is natural—the two best things a woman can be."

"Why not come down along with me and try your luck?"

"When do you go?"

"By the 10.30 train to-morrow. I

shall arrive at Moate by four o'clock, and reach the castle to dinner."

"They expect you?"

"Only so far that I have telegraphed a line to say I'm going down to bid 'good-bye' before I sail for Guatemala. I don't suspect they know where that is, but it's enough when they understand it is far away."

"I'll go with you."

"Will you, really?"

"I will. I'll not say on such an errand as your own, because that requires a second thought or two; but I'll reconnoitre, Master Cecil—I'll reconnoitre."

"I suppose you know there is no money?"

"I should think money most unlikely in such a quarter, and it's better she should have none than a small fortune. I'm an old whist-player, and when I play dummy there's nothing I hate more than to see two or three small trumps in my partner's hand."

"I imagine you'll not be distressed in that way here."

"I've got enough to come through with—that is, the thing can be done if there be no extravagances."

"Does one want for more?" cried Walpole, theatrically.

"I don't know that. If it were only ask and have, I should like to be tempted."

"I have no such ambition. I firmly believe that the moderate limits a man sets to his daily wants constitute the real liberty of his intellect and his intellectual nature."

"Perhaps I've no intellectual nature, then," growled out Lockwood, "for I know how I should like to spend fifteen thousand a year. I suppose I shall have to live on as many hundreds."

"It can be done."

"Perhaps it may. Have another weed?"

"No. I told you already I have begun a tobacco reformation."

"Does she object to the pipe?"

"I cannot tell you. The fact is, Lockwood, my future and its fortunes are just as uncertain as your own. This day week will probably have decided the destiny of each of us."

"To our success, then!" cried the major, filling both their glasses.

"To our success!" said Walpole, as he drained his, and placed it upside down on the table.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

AT KILGOBBIN CASTLE.

The Blue Goat at Moate was destined once more to receive the same travelers whom we presented to our readers at a very early stage of this history.

"Not much change here," cried Lockwood, as he strode into the little sitting-room and sat down. "I miss the old fellow's picture, that's all."

"Ah, by the way," said Walpole to the landlord, "you had my Lord Kilgobbin's portrait up there the last time I came through here."

"Yes indeed, sir," said the man, smoothing down his hair and looking apologetically. "But the Goats and my lord, who was the Buck Goat, got into a little disagreement, and they sent away his picture, and his lordship retired from the club, and—and—that was the way of it."

"A heavy blow to your town, I take it," said the major, as he poured out his beer.

"Well, indeed, your honor, I won't say it was. You see, sir, times is changed in Ireland. We don't care as much as we used about the 'neighbouring gentry,' as they called them once; and as for the lord there, he doesn't spend a hundred a year in Moate."

"How is that?"

"They get what they want by rail from Dublin, your honor, and he might as well not be here at all."

"Can we have a car to carry us over to the castle?" asked Walpole, who did not care to hear more of local grievances.

"Sure, isn't my lord's car waiting for you since two o'clock?" said the host, spitefully, for he was not conciliated by a courtesy that was to lose him a fifteen-shilling fare. "Not that there's much of a horse between the shafts, or that old Daly himself is an elegant coachman," continued the host; "but they're ready in the yard when you want them."

The travelers had no reason to delay them in their present quarters, and, taking their places on the car, set out for the castle.

"I scarcely thought when I last drove this road," said Walpole, "that the next

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time I was to come should be on such an errand as my present one."

"Humph!" ejaculated the other. "Our noble relative that is to be does not shine in equipage. The beast is dead lame."

"If we had our deserts, Lockwood, we should be drawn by a team of doves, with the god Cupid on the box."

"I'd rather have two posters and a yellow post-chase."

A drizzling rain that now began to fall interrupted all conversation, and each sunk back into his own thoughts for the rest of the way.

Lord Kilgobbin, with his daughter at his side, watched the car from the terrace of the castle as it slowly wound its way along the bog road.

As well as I can see, Kate, there is a man on each side of the car," said Kearney, as he handed his field-glass to his daughter.

"Yes, papa, I see there are two travelers."

"And I don't well know why there should be even one! There was no such great friendship between us that he need come all the way to bid us good-bye."

"Considering the mishap that befell him here, it is a mark of good feeling to desire to see us all once more—don't you think so?"

"Maybe so," muttered he, drearily. "At all events, it's not a pleasant house he's coming to. Young O'Shea there upstairs, just out of a fever; and old Miss Betty, that may arrive any moment."

(To be Continued.)

The New Special: Tell me candidly, is there anything original in that manuscript? The Editor: Yes; the spelling.

Mrs. Jay: I understand that she married one of the landed gentry. Mr. Jay: He was when she landed him.