

LORD KILGOBBIN.

BY CHARLES LEVER.

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

CHAPTER L.—Continued.

"Why do I do what, sir? I am not aware of any action of mine you should question with such energy."

"I mean, if it only tends to ruin your prospects and disgust your family, why do you persist, sir? I was going to say more, and ask with what face you presume to come and tell these things to me?"

"I am really unable to understand you, sir."

"Mayhap, we are both of us in the same predicament," cried Kearney, as he wiped his brow in proof of his confusion.

"Had you accorded me a very little patience, I might, perhaps, have explained myself."

"Not trusting himself with a word, Kearney nodded, and the other went on: "The post this morning brought me, among other things, these two newspapers, with pen-marks in the margin to direct my attention. This is the Lily of Londonderry, a wild Orange print; this the Banner of Ulster, a journal of the same complexion. Here is what the Lily says: 'Our county member, Sir Jonas Gettering, is now in a position to call the attention of Parliament to a document which will distinctly show how her majesty's ministers are not only in close correspondence with the leaders of Fenianism, but that Irish rebellion receives its support and comfort from the present Cabinet. Grave as this charge is, and momentous as would be the consequences of such an allegation if unfounded, we repeat that such a document is in existence, and that we who write these lines have held it in our hands and have perused it.'"

"The Banner copies the paragraph, and adds: 'We give all the publicity in our power to a statement which, from our personal knowledge, we can declare to be true. If the disclosures which a debate on this subject must inevitably lead to will not convince Englishmen that Ireland is now governed by a party whose falsehood and subtlety not even Macchiavelli himself could justify, we are free to declare we are ready to join the Nationalists to-morrow, and to cry out for a Parliament in College Green, in preference to a Holy Inquisition at Westminster.'"

"That fellow has blood in him," cried Kearney, with enthusiasm, "and I go a long way with him."

"That may be, sir, and I am sorry to hear it," said Walpole, coldly; "but what I am concerned to tell you is, that the document or memorandum here alluded to was among my papers, and abstracted from them since I have been here."

"So that there was actually such a paper?" broke in Kearney.

"There was a paper which the malevolence of a party journalist could convert to the support of such a charge. What concerns me more immediately is, that it has been stolen from my dispatch-box."

"Are you certain of that?"

"I believe I can prove it. The only in day which I was busied with these papers I carried them down to the library, and with my own hands I brought them back to my room and placed them under lock and key at once. The box bears no trace of having been broken, so that the only solution is a key. Perhaps my own key may have been used to open it, for the document is gone."

"This is a bad business," said Kearney, sorrowfully.

"It is ruin to me," cried Walpole, with passion. "Here is a dispatch from Lord Danesbury commanding me immediately to go over to him in Wales, and I can guess easily what has occasioned the order."

"I'll send for a force of Dublin detectives. I'll write to the chief of police. I'll not rest till I have every one in the house examined on oath," cried Kearney. "What was it like? Was it a dispatch—was it in an envelope?"

"It was a mere memorandum—a piece of post paper, and headed: 'Draught of instruction touching D. D. Forward to

chief constable of police at Letterkenny. October 9th.'"

"But you had no direct correspondence with Donagan?"

"I believe, sir, I need not assure you I had not. The malevolence of party has alone the merit of such an imputation. For reasons of state we desired to observe a certain course toward the man, and Orange malignity is pleased to misrepresent and calumniate us."

"And can't you say so in Parliament?"

"So we will, sir, and the nation will believe us. Meanwhile, see the mischief that the miserable slander will reflect upon our administration here, and remember that the people who could alone contradict the story are those very Fenians who will benefit by its being believed."

"Do your suspicions point to any one in particular? Do you believe that Curtis—"

"I had it in my hand the day after he left."

"Was any one aware of its existence here but yourself?"

"None—wait, I am wrong. Your niece saw it. She was in the library one day. I was engaged in writing, and as we grew to talk over the country, I chanced to show her the dispatch."

"Let us ask her if she remembers whether any servant was about at the time, or happened to enter the room."

"I can myself answer that question. I know there was not."

"Let us call her down and see what she remembers," said Kearney.

"I'd rather not, sir. A mere question in such a case would be offensive, and I would not risk the chance. What I would most wish is, to place my dispatch box, with the key, in your keeping, for the purposes of the inquiry, for I must start in half an hour. I have sent for post-horses to Moate, and ordered a special train to town. I shall, I hope, catch the eight o'clock boat for Holyhead, and be with his lordship before this time to-morrow. If I do not see the ladies, for I believe they are out walking, will you make my excuse and my adieux; my confusion and my discomfiture will, I feel sure, plead for me? It would not be, perhaps, too much to ask for any information that a police inquiry might elicit; and if either of the young ladies would vouchsafe me a line to say what, if anything, has been discovered, I should feel deeply gratified."

"I'll look to that. You shall be informed."

"There was another question that I much desired to speak of," and here he hesitated and faltered; "but, perhaps, on every score, it is as well I should defer it till my return to Ireland."

"You know best, whatever it is," said the old man, dryly.

"Yes, I think so. I am sure of it." A hurried shake-hands followed, and he was gone.

It is but right to add that a glance at the moment through the window had shown him the wearer of a muslin dress turning into the copse outside the garden, and Walpole dashed down the stairs, and hurried in the direction he saw Nina take, with all the speed he could.

"Get my luggage on the carriage, and have everything ready," said he, as the horses were drawn up at the door. "I shall return in a moment."

CHAPTER LI.

AWAKENINGS.

When Walpole hurried into the beech alley, which he had seen Nina take, and followed her in all haste, he did not stop to question himself why he did so. Indeed, if prudence were to be consulted, there was every reason in the world why he should rather have left his leave-takings to the care of Mr. Kearney than assume the charge of them himself; but if young gentlemen who fall in love were only to be logical or "consequent," the tender passion would soon lose some of the contingencies which give it much of its charm, and people who follow such occupations as mine would discover that they had lost one of the principal employments of their lifetime.

As he went along, however, he thought him that as it was to say goodbye he now followed her, it behooved him to blend his leave-taking with that pledge of a speedy return which, like the effects of light in landscape, bring out the various tints in the richest coloring, and mark more distinctly all that is in shadow. "I shall at least see," muttered he to himself, "how far my presence here serves to brighten her

daily life, and what amount of gloom my absence will suggest." Cecil Walpole was one of a class—and I hasten to say it is a class—who, if not very lavish of their own affections, or accustomed to draw largely on their own emotions, are very fond of being loved themselves, and not only are they convinced that as there can be nothing more natural or reasonable than to love them, it is still a highly commendable feature in the person who carries that love to the extent of a small idolatry, and makes it the business of a life. To worship the men of this order constitutes in their eyes a species of intellectual superiority for which they are grateful, and this same gratitude represents to themselves all of love their natures are capable of feeling.

He knew thoroughly that Nina was not alone the most beautiful woman he had ever seen; that the fascinations of her manner, and her grace of movement and gesture, exercised a sway that was almost magic; that in quickness to apprehend and readiness to reply she scarcely had an equal; and that, whether she smiled, or looked pensive, or listened, or spoke, there was an absorbing charm about her, and unable to see any but her; and yet, with all this consciousness, he recognized no trait about her so thoroughly attractive as that she admired him.

Let me not be misunderstood. This same sentiment can be at times something very different from a mere egotism—not that I mean to say it was such in the present case. Cecil Walpole fully represented the order he belonged to, and was a most well-looking, well-dressed, and well-bred young gentleman, only suggesting the reflection that to live among such a class pure and undiluted would be little better than a life passed in the midst of French communism.

I have said that, after his fashion, he was "in love" with her, and so, after his fashion, he wanted to say that he was going away, and to tell her not to be utterly disconsolate till he came back again. "I can imagine," thought he, "how I made her life here; how, in developing the features that attract me, I made her a very different creature to herself."

It was not at all unpleasant to him to think that the people who should surround her were so unlike herself. "The barbarians," as he courteously called them to himself, "will be very hard to endure. Nor am I very sorry for it; only she must catch nothing of their traits in accommodating herself to their habits. On that I must strongly insist. Whether it be by singing their silly ballads—that four-note melody they call 'Irish music'—or through mere imitation, she has already caught a slight accent of the country. She must get rid of this. She will have to divest herself of all her 'Kilgobbinries' ere I present her to my friends in town." Apart from these disparagements, she could, as he expressed it, "hold her own;" and people take a very narrow view of the social dealings of the world who fail to see how much occasion a woman has for the exercise of tact and temper and discretion and ready-wittedness and generosity in all the well-bred intercourse of life. Just as Walpole had arrived at that stage of reflection to recognize that she was exactly the woman to suit him and push his fortunes with the world, he reached a part of the wood where a little space had been cleared, and a few rustic seats scattered about to make a halting-place. The sound of voices caught his ear, and he stopped; and now, looking stealthily through the brush-wood, he saw Gorman O'Shea as he lay in a lounging attitude on a bench and smoked his cigar, while Nina Kostalergi was busily engaged in pinning up the skirt of her dress in a festoon fashion, which, to Cecil's idea at least, displayed more of a marvelously pretty instep and ankle than he thought strictly warranted. Puzzling as this seemed, the first words she spoke gave the expression.

"Don't flatter yourself, most valiant soldier, that you are going to teach me the 'Czardasz.' I learned it years ago from Tassilo Esterhazy; but I asked you to come here to set me right about that half-minute step that begins it. I believe I have got into the habit of doing the man's part, for I used to be Pauline Esterhazy's partner after Tassilo went away."

"You had a precious dancing-master in Tassilo," growled out O'Shea. "The greatest scamp in the Austrian army."

"I know nothing of the moralities of

the Austrian army, but the count was a perfect gentleman, and a special friend of mine."

"I am sorry for it," was the gruff rejoinder.

"You have nothing to grieve for, sir. You have no vested interest to be imperiled by anything that I do."

"Let us not quarrel, at all events," said he, as he arose with some alacrity and flung away his cigar; and Walpole turned away, as little pleased with what he had heard, as dissatisfied with himself for having listened. "And we call these things accidents," muttered he; "but I believe fortune means more generously by us when she crosses our path in this wise. I almost wish I had gone a step further, and stood before them. At least it would have finished this episode, and without a word. As it is, a mere phrase will do it—the simple question as to what progress she makes in dancing will show I know all. But do I know all?" Thus speculating and ruminating, he went his way till he reached the carriage, and drove off at speed, for the first time in his life really and deeply in love!

He made his journey safely, and arrived at Holyhead by daybreak. He had meant to go over deliberately all that he should say to the viceroy, when questioned, as he expected to be, on the condition of Ireland. It was an old story, and with very few variations to enliven it.

How was it that, with all his Irish intelligence well arranged in his mind—the agrarian crime, the ineffective police, the timid juries, the insolence of the popular press, and the arrogant demands of the priesthood—how was it that, ready to state all these obstacles to right government, and prepared to show that it was only by "out-jockeying" the parties he could hope to win in Ireland still—that Greek girl, and what he called her perfidy, would occupy a most disproportionate share of his thoughts, and a large place in his heart also? The simple truth is, that though up to this Walpole found immense pleasure in his flirtation with Nina Kostalergi, yet his feeling for her now was nearer love than anything he had experienced before. The bare suspicion that a woman could jilt him, or the possible thought that a rival could be found to supplant him, gave, by the very pain it occasioned, such an interest to the episode, that he could scarcely think of anything else. That the most effectual way to deal with the Greek was to renew his old relations with his cousin, Lady Maude, was clear enough. "At least I shall seem to be the traitor," thought he; "and she shall not glory in the thought of having deceived me." While he was still revolving these thoughts he arrived at the Castle, and learned, as he crossed the door, that his lordship was impatient to see him.

Lord Danesbury had never been a fluent speaker in public, while in private life a natural incivility of disposition, improved, so to say, by an Eastern life, had made him so sparing of his words that at times, when he was ill or indisposed, he could never be said to converse at all, and his talk consisted of very short sentences strung loosely together, and not unfrequently so ill connected as to show that an unexpressed thought very often intervened between the uttered fragments. Except to men who, like Walpole, knew him intimately, he was all but unintelligible. The private secretary, however, understood how to fill up the blanks in any discourse, and so follow out indications which, to less practiced eyes, left no foot-marks behind them.

His excellency, slowly recovering from a sharp attack of gout, was propped by pillows, and smoking a long Turkish pipe, as Cecil entered the room and saluted him. "Come at last," was his lordship's greeting. "Ought to have been here weeks ago. Read that." And he pushed toward him a Times, with a mark on the margin: "To ask the secretary for Ireland whether the statement made by certain newspapers in the North of a correspondence between the Castle authorities and the Fenian leader was true, and whether such correspondence could be laid on the table of the House?"

(To be continued.)

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