

LORD KILGOBBIN.

BY CHARLES LEVER.

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CHAPTER XLV.—Continued.

That breakfast at Kilgobbin had some heavy hearts around the board. There was not, with the exception of Walpole, one there who had not, in the doubts that beset his future, grave cause for anxiety; and yet to look at, still more to listen to them, you would have said that Walpole alone had any load of care upon his heart, and that the others were a light-hearted, happy set of people, with whom the world went always well. No cloud!—not even a shadow to darken the road before them. Of this levity—for I suppose I must give it a hard name—the source of much that is best and worst among us, our English rulers take no account, and are often as ready to charge us with a conviction, which was no more than a caprice, as they are to nail us down to some determination, which was simply a drollery; and until some intelligent traveller does for us what I lately perceived a clever tourist did for the Japanese, in explaining their modes of thought, impulses, and passions to the English, I despair of our being better known in Downing street than we now are.

Captain Curtis—for it is right to give him his rank—was fearfully nervous and uneasy, and though he tried to eat his breakfast with an air of unconcern and carelessness, he broke his egg with a tremulous hand, and listened with painful eagerness every time Walpole spoke.

"I wish somebody would send us the Standard, when it is known that the lord lieutenant's secretary has turned Fenian," said Kilgobbin. "Won't there be a grand Tory outcry over the unprincipled Whigs?"

"The papers need know nothing whatever of the incident," interposed Curtis, anxiously, "if old Flood is not busy enough to inform them."

"Who is old Flood?" asked Walpole. "A Tory J. P., who has copied out a considerable share of your correspondence," said Kilgobbin.

"And four letters in a lady's hand," added Dick, "that he imagines to be a treasonable correspondence by symbol."

"I hope Mr. Walpole," said Kate, "will rather accept felony to the law than falsehood to the lady."

"You don't mean to say—" began Walpole, angrily; then, correcting his irritable manner he added: "Am I to suppose my letters have been read?"

"Well, roughly looked through," said Curtis. "Just a glance here and there to catch what they meant."

"Which I must say was quite unnecessary," said Walpole haughtily.

"It was a sort of journal of yours," blundered out Curtis, who had a most unhappy knack of committing himself. "that they opened first, and they saw an entry with Kilgobbin Castle at the top of it, and the date last July."

"There was nothing political in that, sure," said Walpole.

"No, not exactly, but a trifle rebellious all the same; the words 'We this evening learned a Fenian song, 'The time to begin,' and rather suspect it is time leave off; the Greek better-looking than ever, and more dangerous.'"

Curtis's last words were drowned in the laugh that now shook the table; indeed, except Walpole and Nina herself, they actually roared with laughter which burst out afresh, as Curtis, in his innocence, said: "We couldn't make out about the Greek, but we hoped we'd find out later on."

"And I fervently trust you did," said Kilgobbin.

"I'm afraid not; there was something about somebody called Joe, that the Greek wouldn't have him, or disliked him, or snubbed him—indeed I forget the words."

"You are quite right sir, to distrust your memory," said Walpole; "it has betrayed you most egregiously already."

"On the contrary," burst in Kilgobbin, "I am delighted with this proof of the captain's acuteness; tell us something more, Curtis."

"There was then 'From the upper castleyard, Maud,' whoever Maude is, says, 'Deny it all, and say you never

were there," not so easy as she thinks, with a broken right arm, and a heart not quite so whole as it ought to be."

"There, sir—with the permission of my friends here—I will ask you to conclude your reminiscences of my private papers, which can have no possible interest for any one but myself."

"Quite wrong in that," cried Kilgobbin, wiping his eyes, which had run over with laughter. "There's nothing I'd like so much as to hear more of them."

"What was that about his heart?" whispered Curtis to Kate; "was he wounded in the side also?"

"I believe so," said she, dryly; "but I believe he has got quite over it by this time."

"Will you say a word or two about me, Miss Kearney?" whispered he again; "I'm not sure I improved my case by talking so freely; but as I saw you all so outspoken, I thought I'd fall into your ways."

"Captain Curtis is much concerned for any fault he may have committed in this unhappy business," said Kate; "and he trusts that the agitation and excitement of the Donogan case will excuse him."

"That's your policy now," interrupted Kilgobbin. "Catch the Fenian fellow, and nobody will remember the other incident."

"We mean to give out that we know he has got clear away to America," said Curtis, with an air of intense cunning.

"And to lull his suspicions we have notices to print to say that no further rewards are to be given for his apprehension, so that he'll get a false confidence, and move about as before."

"With such acuteness as yours on his trail, his arrest is certain," said Walpole, gravely.

"Well, I hope so, too," said Curtis, in good faith for the compliment. "Didn't I take up nine men for the search of arms here, though there were only five? One of them turned evidence," added he gravely; "he was the fellow that swore Miss Kearney stood between you and the fire after they wounded you."

"You are determined to make Mr. Walpole your friend," whispered Nina in his ear; don't you see, sir, that you are ruining yourself?"

"I have been puzzled to explain how it was that crime went unpunished in Ireland," said Walpole, sententiously.

"And you know now?" asked Curtis. "Yes; in a great measure you have supplied me with the information."

"I believe it's all right now," muttered the captain to Kate. "If the swell owns that I have put him up to a thing or two, he'll not throw me over."

"Would you give me three minutes of your time?" whispered Gorman O'Shea to Lord Kilgobbin, as they arose from table.

"Half an hour, my boy, or more if you want it. Come along with me now into my study, and we'll be safe from all interruption."

CHAPTER XLVI.

SAGE ADVICE.

"So then you are in a hobble with your aunt," said Mr. Kearney, as he believed he had summed up the meaning of a very blundering explanation by Gorman O'Shea; "isn't that it?"

"Yes sir; I suppose it comes to that."

"The old story; I've no doubt, if we only knew it—as old as the patriarchs; the young ones go into debt, and think it very hard that the elders dislike the paying it."

"No, no; I have no debts—at least none to speak of."

"It's a woman then. Have you gone and married some good-looking girl, with no fortune and less family? Who is she?"

"Not even that, sir," said he, half impatient at seeing how little attention had been bestowed on his narrative.

"'Tis bad enough, no doubt," continued the old man, still in pursuit of his own reflections; not but there's scores of things worse; for if a man is a good fellow at heart, he'll treat the woman all the better for what she has cost him. That is one of the good sides of selfishness; and when you have lived as long as me Gorman, you'll find out how often there's something good to be squeezed out of a bad quality, just as though it were a bit of our nature that was depraved, but not gone to the devil entirely."

"There is no woman in the case here,

sir," said O'Shea, bluntly, for these speculations only irritated him.

"Ho, ho! I have it then," cried the old man. "You've been burning your fingers with rebellion. It's the Fenians have got a hold of you."

"Nothing of the kind, sir. If you'll just read these two letters. The one is mine, written on the morning I came here; here is my aunt's. The first is not word for word as I sent it, but as well as I can remember. At all events, it will show how little I had provoked the answer. There, that's the document that came along with my trunks, and I have never heard from her since."

"DEAR NEPHEW"—read out the old man, after patiently adjusting his spectacles—"O'Shea's Barn is not an inn. And more's the pity," added he; "for it would be a model house of entertainment. You'd say any one could have a sirloin of beef or a saddle of mutton; but where Miss Betty gets hers is quite beyond me. 'Nor are the horses at public livery,'" read he out. "I think I may say, if they were, that Kattoo won't be hired out again to the young man that took her over the fences. 'As you seem fond of warnings,'" continued he, aloud—"Ho, ho! that's at you for coming over here to tell me about the search-warrant; and she tells you to mind your own business; and droll enough it is. We always fancy we're saying an impertinence to a man when we tell him to attend to what concerns him most. It shows, at least, that we think meddling a luxury. And then she adds: 'Kilgobbin is welcome to you,' and I can only say you are welcome to Kilgobbin—ay, and in her own words—'with such regularity and order as the the meals succeed.'—All the luggage belonging to you," etc., and 'I am very respectfully, your aunt.' By my conscience, there was no need to sign it! That was old Miss Betty all the world over!" and he laughed till his eyes ran over, though the rueful face of young O'Shea was staring at him all the time.

"Don't look so gloomy, O'Shea," cried Kearney; "I have not so good a cook, nor, I'm sorry to say, so good a cellar, as at the Barn; but there are young faces, and young voices, and young laughter, and a light step on the stairs; and if I know anything, or rather, if I remember anything, these will warm a heart at your age better than '44 claret or the crustiest port that ever stained a decanter."

"I am turned out, sir—sent adrift on the world," said the young man despondently.

"And it is not so bad a thing after all, take my word for it, boy. It's a great advantage now and then to begin life as a vagabond. It takes a deal of snobbery out of a fellow to lie under a haystack, and there's no better cure for pretension than a dinner of cold potatoes. Not that I say you need the treatment—far from it—but our distinguished friend Mr. Walpole wouldn't be a bit the worse of such an alternative."

"If I am left without a shilling in the world?"

"You must try what you can do on sixpence—the whole thing is how you begin. I used not to be able to eat my dinner when I did not see the fellow in a white tie standing before the sideboard, and the two flunkies in plush and silk stockings at either side of the table; and when I perceived that the decanters had taken their departure, and that it was beer I was given to drink, I felt as if I had dined, and was ready to go out and have a smoke in the open air; but a little time, even without any patience, but just time, does it all."

"Time won't teach a man to live upon nothing."

"It would be very hard for him if it did. Let him begin by having few wants, and work hard to supply means for them."

"Work hard! Why, sir, if I labored from daylight to dark, I'd not earn the wages of the humblest peasant, and I'd not know how to live on it."

"Well, I have given you all the philosophy in my budget, and to tell you the truth, Gorman, except so far as coming down in the world in spite of myself, I know mighty little about the fine precepts I have been giving you; but this I know, you have a roof over your head here, and you're heartily welcome to it; and who knows but your aunt may come to terms all the sooner because she sees you here."

"You are very generous to me, and I feel it deeply," said the young man;

but he was almost choked with the words."

"You have told me already, Gorman, that your aunt gave you no other reason against coming here than that I had not been to call on you; and I believe you—believe you thoroughly. But tell me now, with the same frankness, was there nothing passing in your own mind? had you no suspicions or misgivings, or something of the same kind, to keep you away? Be candid with me now, and speak it out freely."

"None on my honor. I was sorely grieved to be told I must not come, and thought very often of rebelling; so that, indeed, when I did rebel I was in a measure prepared for penalty, though scarcely so heavy as this."

"Don't take it to heart. It will come right yet. Everything comes right if we give it time; and there's plenty of time to the fellow who is not five-and-twenty. It's only the old dogs, like myself, who are always doing their match against time are in a hobble. To feel that every minute of the clock is something very like three weeks of the almanac flurries a man when he wants to be cool and collected. Put your hat on a peg, and make your home here. If you want to be of use, Kitty will show you scores of things to do about the the garden; and we never object to see a brace of snipe at the end of dinner, though there's nobody cares to shoot them; and bog trout, for all their dark color, are excellent eating, and I know you can throw a line. All I say is, do something, and something that takes you into the open air. Don't get to lying about in easy-chairs and reading novels; don't get to singing duets and philandering about with the girls. May I never, if I'd not rather find a brandy-flask in your pocket than Tennyson's poems!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

REPROOF.

"Say it out frankly," cried Nina, as with flashing eyes and heightened color she paced the drawing-room from end to end with that bold, sweeping stride which in moments of passion betrayed her. "Say it out. I know perfectly what you are hinting at."

"I never hint," said the other gravely; "least of all with those I love."

"So much the better. I detest an equivocal. If I am to be shot, let me look the fire in the face."

"There is no question of shooting at all. I think you are very angry for nothing."

"Angry for nothing! Do you call that studied coldness you have observed toward me all day yesterday nothing! In your ceremonious manner—exquisitely polite, I will not deny—is that nothing? Is your chilling salute when we met—I half believed you courtesied—nothing? That you shun me, that you take pains not to keep my company, never to be with me alone, is past denial."

"And I do not deny it," said Kate, with a voice of calm and quite meaning.

"At last then, I have the avowal. You own that you love me no longer."

"No; I own nothing of the kind; I love you very dearly; but I see that our ideas of life are so totally unlike, that, unless one should bend and conform to the other, we cannot blend our thoughts in that harmony which perfect confidence requires. You are so much above me in many things, so much more cultivated and gifted—I was going to say civilized, and I believe I might—"

"Ta-ta-ta," cried Nina, impatiently. "These flatteries are very ill-timed."

"So they would be if they were flatteries; but if you had patience to hear me out, you'd have learned that I meant a higher flattery for myself."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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