

LORD KILGOBBIN.

BY CHARLES LEVER.

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

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

She only shook her head, and said: 'Badate bene a quei chadico. I mean, said she, I'm right, but he's very nice for all that!' If I tell you this, Dick, it is just because I cannot get it out of my head, and I will keep saying over to myself: 'If Joe Atlee be what she expect, why does she call him very nice, for all that?' I say you intended to ask him down here next vacation, and she gave the drollest little laugh in the world, and does she not look lovely when she shows those small pearly teeth? Heaven help you, poor Dick, when you see her! but if I were you, I should leave Master Joe behind me, for she smiles, as she looks at his likeness, in a way that would certainly make me jealous, if I were only Joe's friend, and not himself.

"We sat up in Nina's room till night morning, and to-day I have scarcely seen her, for she wants to be let sleep, after that long and tiresome journey, and I take the opportunity to write you this very rambling epistle; for you may feel sure I shall be less of a correspondent now then when I was without companionship, and I counsel you to be very grateful if you hear from me soon again.

"Papa wants to take Duggan's farm from him and Lanty Moore's meadows, and throw them out the lawn; but I hope he won't persist in the plan; not alone because it is a mere extravagance, but that the county is very unsettled just now about land-tenure, and the people are hoping all sorts of things from Parliament, and any interference with them at this time would be ill taken. Father Cody was here yesterday, and told me, confidentially, to prevent papa—not so easy a thing as he thinks, particularly if he should come to suspect that any intimidation was intended—and Miss O'Shea unfortunately said something the other day that papa cannot get out of his head, and keeps on repeating: 'So then it's our turn now,' these fellow say; 'the landlords have had five hundred years of it; it's time we should come in.' And this he says over and over with a little laugh, and I wish to my heart Miss Betty had kept it to herself. By the way her nephew is to come on leave, and pass two months with her; and she says she hopes you will be here at the same time, to keep him company; but I have a notion that another playfellow may prove a dangerous rival to the Hungarian husband; perhaps, however, you would hand over Joe Atlee to him.

"Be sure you bring us some new books and some music, when you come, or send them, if you don't come soon. I am terrified lest Nina should think the place dreary, and I don't know how she is to live here if she does not take to the vulgar drudgeries that fill my own life. When she abruptly asked me: 'What do you do here?' I was sorely puzzled to know what to answer; and then she added quickly: 'For my own part, it's no great matter, for I can always dream. I'm a great dreamer!' Is it not lucky for her, Dick? She'll have ample time for it here. 'I suppose I never wrote so long a letter as this in my life; indeed, I never had a subject that had such a fascination for myself. Do you know, Dick, that though I promised to let her sleep on till night dinner-time, I find myself every now and then creeping up gently to her door, and only bethink me of my pledge when my hand is on the lock; and sometimes I even doubt if she is here at all, and I am half crazy at fearing it may be all a dream.

"One word for yourself, and I have done. Why have you not told us of the examination? It was to have been on the tenth, and we are now at the eighteenth. Have you got—whatever it was—the prize, or the medal, or—the reward, in short, we were so anxiously hoping for? It would be such cheery tidings for poor papa, who is very low and dispressed of late, and I see him always reading with such attention any notice of the college he can find in the newspaper. My dear, dear brother, how you would work hard if you only knew what a prize success in life might give you. Little as I have seen of her, I could guess that she will never bestow a thought on an undis-

tinguished man. Come down for one day, and tell me if ever, in all your ambition, you had such a goal before you as this.

"The hogs I sent in to Tullamore fair were not sold; but I believe Miss Betty's steward will take them, and, if so, I will send you ten pounds next week. I never knew the market so dull, and the English dealers now are only eager about horses, and I'm sure I couldn't part with any if I had them. With all my love, I am your ever affectionate sister.

"KATE KEARNEY.

"I have just stepped into Nina's room and stolen the photo I send you. I suppose the dress must have been for some fancy ball; but she is a hundred million times more beautiful. I don't know if I shall have courage to confess my theft to her."

"Is that your sister, Dick?" said Joe Atlee, as young Kearney withdrew the carte from the letter, and placed it face downward on the breakfast-table.

"No," replied he, bluntly, and continued to read on; while the other, in the spirit of that freedom that prevailed between them, stretched out his hand and took up the portrait.

"Who is this?" cried he, after some seconds. "She's an actress. That's something like what the girl wears in 'Don Cesar de Bazan.' To be sure, she is Maritana. She's stunningly beautiful. Do you mean to tell me, Dick, that there's a girl like that on your provincial boards?"

"I never said so, any more than I gave you leave to examine the contents of my letters," said the other, haughtily.

"Egad! I'd have smashed the seal any day to have caught a glimpse of such a face as that. I'll wager her eyes are blue-gray. Will you have a bet on it?"

"When you have done with your raptures, I'll thank you to hand the likeness to me."

"But who is she? what is she? where is she? Is she the Greek?"

"When a fellow can help himself so coolly to his information as you do, I scarcely think he deserves much aid from others; but, I may tell you, she is not Maritana, nor a provincial actress at all, but a young lady of good blood and birth, and my own first cousin."

"On my oath, it's the best thing I ever knew of you."

Kearney laughed out at this moment at something in the letter, and did not hear the other's remark.

"It seems, Master Joe, that the young lady did not reciprocate the rapturous delight you feel, at sight of your picture. My sister says—I'll read you her very words—'she does not like the portrait of your friend Atlee; he may be clever and amusing, she says, but he is undeniably false.' Mind that—undeniably false."

"That's all the fault of the artist. The stupid dog would place me in so strong a light that I kept blinking."

"No, no. She reads you like a book," said the other.

"I wished to Heaven she would, if she would hold me like one."

"And the nice way she qualifies your cleverness, by calling you amusing."

"She could certainly spare that reproach to her Cousin Dick," said he, laughing; "but no more of this sparring. When do you mean to take me down to the country with you? The term will be up on Tuesday."

"That will demand a little consideration now. In the fall of the year, perhaps. When the sun is less powerful the light will be more favorable to your features."

"My poor Dick, I cram you with good advice every day; but one counsel I never cease repeating: 'Never try to be witty.' A dull fellow only cuts his finger with a joke, he never catches it by the handle. Hand me over that letter of your sister's: I like the way she writes. All that about the pigs and poultry is as good as the Farmer's Chronicle."

The other made no other reply than by coolly folding up the letter and placing it in his pocket; and then, after a pause, he said:

"I shall tell Miss Kearney the favorable impression her epistolary powers have produced on my very clever and accomplished chum, Mr. Atlee."

"Do so: and say if she'd take me for a correspondent instead of you, she'd be exchanging with a difference." On my oath," said he, seriously, "I believe a most finished education might be affected in letter-writing. I'd engage to take a clever girl through a whole course of Latin and Greek, and a fair share of

mathematics and logic, in a series of letters, and her replies would be the fairest test of her acquirement."

"Shall I propose this to my sister?"

"Do so, or to your cousin. I suspect Maritana would be an apter pupil."

"The bell has stopped. We shall be late at the hall," said Kearney, throwing on his gown hurriedly and hastening away; while Atlee, taking some proof-sheets from the chimney-piece, proceeded to correct them, a slight flicker of a smile still lingering over his dark but handsome face.

Though such little jarring passages as that we have recorded were nothing uncommon between these two young men; they were very good friends on the whole, the very dissimilarity that provoked their squabbles saving them from any more serious rivalry. In reality, no two people could be less alike: Kearney being a slow, plodding, self-satisfied, dull man, of very ordinary faculties; while the other was an indolent, discursive, sharp-witted fellow, mastering whatever he addressed himself to with ease, but so enamored of novelty that he rarely went beyond a smattering of anything. He carried away college honors apparently at will, and might, many thought, have won a fellowship with little effort; but his passion was for change. Whatever bore upon the rogueries of letters, the frauds of literature, had an irresistible charm for him; and he once declared that he would rather have been Ireland than Shakespeare; and then it was his delight to write Greek versions of a poem that might attach the mark of plagiarism to Tennyson, or show, by a Scandinavian lyric, how the laureate had been poaching from the Northman. Now it was a mock pastoral in most ecclesiastical Latin that set the whole Church in arms; now a mock dispatch of Baron Beust's that actually deceived the Deux Mondes, and caused quite a panic at the Tuileries. He had established such relations with foreign journals that he could at any moment command insertion for a paper, now in the Memorial Diplomatique now in the Golois of St. Petersburg, or the Allegmeine Zeitung; while the comment, written also by himself, would appear in the Kreuz Zeitung or the Times; and the mystification became such that the shrewdest and keenest heads were constantly misled, to which side to incline in a controversy where all the wires were pulled by one hand. Many a discussion on the authenticity of a document, or the veracity of a conversation, would take place between the two young men. Kearney not having the vaguest suspicion that the author of the point in debat was then sitting opposite to him sometimes seeming to share the very doubts and difficulties that were then puzzling himself.

While Atlee knew Kearney in every fold and fibre of his nature, Kearney had not the very vaguest conception of him with whom he sat every day at meals, and communed though almost every hour of life. He treated Joe, indeed, with a sort of proud protection, thinking him a sharp, clever, idle fellow, who would never come to anything higher than bookseller's hack, or an "occasional correspondent." He liked his ready speech and his fun, but he would not consent to see in either evidence of anything beyond the amusing qualities of a very light intelligence. On the whole he looked down upon him, as very properly the slow and ponderous people in life do look down upon their more volatile brethren and vote them triflers. Long may it be so? There would be more sun-strokes in the world if it were not that the shadows of dull men made such nice cool place for the others to walk in.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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