

THE LITTLE OLD SECRETARY

(CONTINUED.)

Kathleen perceived that, though they all joked about their chances, they were really anxious to win the great man's favor.

Eleanor's heaviest trouble was how to entertain him. "Only think," she said dolefully, "he positively will not allow any one to be asked to meet him! He wrote to my father expressly to tell him, he really wanted ten days of complete holidays from public life. This will sadly disappoint all our friends. Besides, those great people, though they say they want to come quite en famille, if everything is not made very pleasant and amusing, are sure to think themselves neglected."

"Take him out for rides and drives," suggested Kathleen, as the pleasantest thing she could imagine. "Oh! yes, the mornings are well filled up, there are plenty of show places, and beautiful drives in the neighborhood, and my father has secured some good horses."

"Suppose we were to have tableaux, one evening," suggested the beautiful Honora, who had arrived that morning, and who at this moment entered the room. She evidently trusted to her personal appearance for saving her any trouble in life.

"A capital idea," exclaimed Mary, clapping her hands. "We ought to settle them to-day though," she added gravely, "for there will be no time to-morrow. Farewell, liberty, for at least ten days."

The arrangements were all completed. The rooms for Lord Melton and his two secretaries had been scrutinized again and again; the elegant dejeuner ordered, which was to greet him at his first arrival by the one o'clock train next day.

Mr. Fitzgerald was to go in his own carriage and meet him at the station; and another carriage was to be in attendance for his suite. Mr. Fitzgerald was at last so worn out by the worry and bustle, that he declared he should go to bed early, and advised the young folks to do the same. The girls, however, only laughed as they kissed him and bade him "good night;" they had quite different views about making the most of the last evening they should have to themselves.

Miss Lavinia Plumtree had already retired to her room. Cousin Jack was not to arrive till to-morrow.

"There will not be a soul to disturb us," said Eleanor. "We will group for the tableaux in the drawing room, and we shall have the large mirror to help us in settling the grouping."

The four girls were in the highest spirits, and Kathleen entered into it all with the greatest zest. Her cousins found her artist's eye of great use to them and her ready and often quaint suggestions for the removal of difficulties raised frequent peals of merry laughter.

Any one who has ever assisted at the draping for tableaux will easily picture the wild confusion of Indian shawls, sham jewelry, ribbons, and silks, and appliances for hair-dressing which lay scattered around, while the young girls themselves in the maddest spirits were playing all kinds of tricks with their long tresses let loose from every sort of confinement.

They had sent Kathleen to the far end of the room, to criticise the effect of a tableau in which Honora was to appear as Jephthah's daughter surrounded by her weeping companions. Kathleen was suitably robed; a white dressing-gown being the foundation on which were to be draped the graceful folds of a Jewish maiden's dress. Loud complaints were being made that Mary

did not weep naturally, and Kathleen in a raised tone was dictating changes in the attitudes, when suddenly a noise of voices in the hall arrested their attention; there was a frightened look amongst the girls, a dead hush, a scuffle to the door, a *service qui peut* rush up the stairs, and before the terrified Kathleen could follow her companions she saw the footman approaching the door and heard him announce—"His Excellency the Earl of Melton."

CHAPTER IV.

"All common things, each day's events, That with the hours begin and end, Our pleasures and our disappointments, Are rounds by which we may ascend."—Longfellow.

Poor Kathleen! She could not sink into the earth; she was too late to follow her companions in their flight; to run away now would have carried her straight into the ranks of the enemy, for Lord Melton was closely followed by two gentlemen. She had nothing for it but to stand covered with blushes, while Lord Melton walked straight up to her and began apologizing, in a simple manly tone, for having come in upon them at such an unseasonable hour.

"I found they had got scarlet fever at the friend's house where we intended to have stopped for the night; so I thought it unwise to risk bringing infection, and came straight on."

His thoroughly gentlemanly manner restored Kathleen to her self-possession, and she was just beginning to assure him that his rooms were all ready for him, that her uncle would be delighted to see him, though a day earlier, when a twitching at the corners of his mouth and a remembrance of the absurdity of the scene struck her with such an irresistible burst of the ridiculous, that she burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

It was the best thing she possibly could have done, so far as the relief of all assembled was concerned; for the whole party joined in the laugh and laughed so heartily, that Kathleen felt as though she must die of it. She recovered herself first, however, and thinking the simple truth the best apology she said, as soon as she could speak, "We were arranging some tableaux."

"And we, like bears, broke into your secret bower and dispersed the fair company of nymphs. Well, I will go on bended knee to-morrow to ask forgiveness and to be allowed to see the tableaux."

Lord Melton spoke so merrily, and continued to chat so pleasantly, that though the time till Eleanor and her uncle appeared seemed an age, Kathleen found it a great deal easier to go on talking than to attempt an escape. As soon as they came to the rescue she slipped away, dexterously carrying with her the most conspicuous fragments of costume. In relating the scene to her mother afterwards, Kathleen told her, that she fully understood now what her country people meant by "a real gentleman, every inch of him;" and just a little thread of romance began to weave itself into the web of her thoughts; a romance sweet to her for her father's and her brother's sake; a dream that after all it might turn out there was an inheritance to be given away, and that as she had been the first to welcome their noble relative she might be the chosen heiress. Then, like a fairy story, all would be right in the end, and her beloved father and brother would be reconciled and happy.

As soon as Kathleen was safe in her own room, indignant feelings arose in her mind at having been deserted at such a critical moment, and flying to her cousin's bedroom she began reproaching Honora and Mary for their cruelty.

"You were so near the door, you must have seen what was going to

happen, and you might have called me. It was downright barbarous to leave me, the youngest of all, all alone, with three great men walking in one after another."

Mary's only answer was to go into a fit of inextinguishable laughter, while Honora tried to excuse herself and her companions by declaring that they couldn't help it, that Kathleen was the only presentable one of the party, and that they hadn't a minute to spare.

"Did he see the rush, Kathleen?" she asked, excitedly. "Do tell us what happened." "Of course they all saw it," replied Kathleen, "and they all laughed, too, for nearly five minutes without being able to stop themselves; and I could not help joining them," added Kathleen, laughing again at the remembrance, though there was still a ring of indignation in her tone.

"Did Lord Melton make any remark?" asked Honora, anxiously. "Did he seem annoyed?"

"He behaved admirably," replied Kathleen. "He talked afterwards just as if nothing had happened. But uncle looked very vexed when he came in and saw the state the drawing-room was in. I suspect we had no business there at all. I thought, Mary, that you and Eleanor were to keep me out of scrapes," she continued, in rather an aggrieved tone, as she remembered her parents' warnings, "but tonight you have got me into one."

A few minutes afterwards Eleanor came up, and brought the same favorable report of Lord Melton. "He is evidently in high good humor," said Eleanor, "and by no means put out at his reception. And, Kathleen, you have behaved like a heroine."

So Kathleen thought it wisest to forget her grievances, and she went to bed with a pleasant little flutter of expectation in her heart.

Next day Lord Melton won golden opinions from all parties. He was so easy and affable, so inclined to be pleased with everything, and he had such a flow of conversation, that all agreed they had never had such a pleasant guest to entertain. The only point on which he had a will of his own was that he would not be troubled with introductions to people outside.

"I want a real holiday," he pleaded; "I have had hard work enough in India. Tell anyone who asks an introduction, that I have ceased to be Commander-in-Chief; that I am nobody, that I have no interest to get appointments for any one. Tell them," he said with a laugh, "that I am an old churl. If you exclude every one without exception, it will not earn you any ill-will. I have all the society I want around me," he concluded, looking courteously on the pleasant family party.

"That, then, is what a public man feels," thought Kathleen. "Every one is trying to get something out of him; no one seeks him for himself, he thinks;" and she laid the thought up in her mind with the feeling, "How difficult it will be to say a word to him about my dear, noble father!"

The plan laid out for that first morning was a ride to the beautiful ruins of Fernleigh; and Kathleen tried to get hold of Eleanor, who was flying about full of business, to tell her that of course she would not expect to be provided with a horse, when there were so many to think of. Her cousin, however, did not give her time to make her generous offer; but putting her head into the morning room, where Kathleen was arranging her painting materials with the intention of having a long morning's work at her sketch, said hurriedly:

"You won't care to go in such a set riding-party, will you, dear? And will you think about an even-

ing toilet? We must all dress out of respect to Lord Melton, though we have no visitors from outside. And then, without waiting for an answer, she vanished like the wind.

Kathleen colored. It had never occurred to Eleanor that her young cousin would have any difficulty about her dress, and Kathleen was too sensitive to ask her for help. She perceived that her cousin was reluctant to let her join the riding party, because of her shabby riding-skirt and simple straw hat. And for this evening dress that was required? Something must be done with the silver brocade to fit it for the purpose; for, now that Kathleen had seen the fashions, the crimson blood tinged in her cheeks at the idea of how peculiar she would look in it as it was.

Rose had been devoting all her energies, ever since they arrived, to bringing all her mistress's little appointments into order. So Kathleen determined to go to her room at once and take Rose into consultation. They might, between them, think of some plan by which the rich old-fashioned material might be made to accord a little more with modern ideas. Rose had already shown considerable taste in the art of dressmaking, and it was not without hope that Kathleen produced the silver brocade and asked her advice.

"If you will only give me some money, Miss Kathleen, to buy some tulle and flowers, I'll make this into the prettiest dress a lady could wish to wear. You see, Miss Kathleen, it is exactly what all the ladies are wearing as petticoats nowadays; by itself it will look ridiculous, but with any over-skirt above it, it will be beautiful. They have cracked their jokes too often already about Irish fashions in the servants' hall," she added, giving her head a little disdainful jerk. "The likes of them, who are not fit to tie the shoe-string of a daughter of the old kings of Ireland!"

Kathleen laughed slightly, and a little bitterly. The snub she had received that morning made her feel rather unlike the daughter of an ancient king. She had the remains of her uncle's check. She had intended to keep it to carry her and her maid home again; but a forlorn feeling that she must take care of herself, for that every one was too busy with their own concerns to care for her, had crept over her. She should like her dress to look pretty; she felt sensitively shy about attracting attention by any singularity in her attire. If Rose could make her look like other people for a few shillings, she thought, so far from disapproving, her parents would wish it. She had not the smallest experience in the cost of dress, so she replied cautiously:

"Well, Rose, calculate exactly how much money you want to make this brocade into a pretty evening dress for me, and then come and let me know. I am going to paint in the morning room, you will find me there."

To be continued.

SHERLOCK HOLMES ON THE TRAIN.

Translated for St. Peters Bote by FATHER CHRYSOSTOM, O. S. B.

It happened not so many years ago on the Frankfurt Express. In the first class compartment all seats were occupied; on one side by three gentlemen, on the other by two gentlemen and a lady. One of the gentlemen had got on at the last station—a long, lean man with a fine but slightly pale face, sharp gray eyes, golden *pince-nez*, blond hair; clothing as well as general appearance betraying the Englishman. Silently he had taken the only vacant seat between the lady and one of the gentlemen. He at once took to reading his paper and did not pay the least attention to

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