

A Girl's Cap...

OR, THE RESULT OF A FANCY DRESS BALL

CHAPTER XI.

"At last," says Ker. He comes up to her and holds out his arm. "This is the ninth."

"Is it?" says she, innocently enough. Though, to tell the truth, she has been quaking over the fact during the past five minutes.

"You hate polkas, I think you said," continues Ker. "So do I. We shall therefore have a chance of a nice long tete-a-tete in here!"

He leads her, in relentless fashion, into the conservatory close at hand, and up to the farthest end, where, behind some flowering shrubs, two vacant seats can be seen. He does not sit down, however, or ask her to do so either. He stands looking at her somewhat remorselessly.

"So!" says he, after a minute. And then: "Now what have you got to say for yourself?"

Here they both laugh. Hilary, it must be confessed, rather shamefacedly.

"Oh! I know—I know," says she, with a divine blush, "what you are thinking. And it is true! I am a fraud—a swindle." She covers her face with her hands, still laughing, and presently looks at him through her fingers. "But you mustn't say it."

"Thinking is good enough for me," says Ker, with a shrug. He takes her hands from her face and brings them down. "What on earth made you do it?" asks he.

"I don't know. It was a whim—a prank. It came into my head, and so I had to do it."

"Do you always do everything that comes into your head?"

"Not always. But—" She breaks off. "After all I do know why I did it. You," with charming audacity, "made me."

"I made you?"

"Yes. You. You! If you had not given me that florin, I should never have known that I looked like a real housemaid."

"Oh! come! That's very unfair," says he, coloring. "I didn't even look at you."

"More shame for you," demurely. "However, that won't get you out of it! If you hadn't time to see me when I was giving you a glass of water, you had, at all events, plenty of opportunities of seeing me when I was giving you your luncheon."

"That was far too confusing a scene to admit of calm judgement. How could one fairly class a girl who was called six or seven different names in the space of thirty minutes?"

"Ah! that was too bad of Jim. But even if that opportunity failed you, another was given. I," with a glance at him, "gave it! You must have seen me when—"

She pauses.

"When you told me on the avenue that a glass of water given by you wasn't worth two shillings?"

"Yes. You remember, then?"

"Who could forget such a libel?"

"You think it was worth it?"

"Certainly I do."

"Well, then, I'll take back that florin," says she, holding out her hand.

He lays it in her pretty palm, holding the palm as he does so.

"I don't see any hole in it," says he, "and yet you promised to make one in it, and hang it round your neck. I am afraid," laughing, "you are faithless."

"Did I promise that?"

"Beyond all doubt. I can see you as you said it."

"Ah! then you did see me that time?" She casts a little, quick glance at him from under her long lashes, and tells herself that she has him at a disadvantage at last. "I'm glad of that. One doesn't like to be entirely overlooked, even when one is a housemaid."

"And such a housemaid!" returns he. If she had thought to overwhelm him with reproach, she finds herself mistaken. He is calmness itself. He is evidently bent on nothing but the payment of the florin and pretty compliments. This enrages her. "Still you promised, you know," continues he, "to put a hole in it, and hang it round your neck—forever! Don't you remember that?"

"My memory is a mere rag," says Hilary. "I find it impossible to keep it together. It isn't of the least use to me, yet people insist on saying that I ought to cultivate it."

"You don't remember, then?"

"I'm not sure—I have a mere glimmering. Was it that day when you told me to try and be a good girl?"

"When was that?" asks he, coloring, however.

"Ah!" triumphantly. "Whose memory is defective now?" She stands back, smiling at him in her pretty, irresistible way, yet with a touch of disdain, defying him, as it were, with her soft armory of eyes and lips. "On the avenue again. You recollect, surely! At the same time you told me my hands were too white, and you entreated me to bear in mind that Diana was a good mis-

tress, and you begged me to—to"—she looks down demurely—"to desist from my fell designs on—poor old Jim."

Ker regards her with mixed feelings. Perhaps anger is the strongest of them, yet there is a touch of fascination about her that makes itself felt, and keeps him beside her.

"And yet you call your memory a mere rag," says he with decided sarcasm.

"Sometimes, sometimes!" airily.

"When you don't want to remember, I presume?"

"Not always. There," pausing and looking down, "is one thing I would rather not remember, and yet I do."

"And that?"

"Was something you said."

"I can quite believe it. You have already reminded me of several things I have said, that certainly under the circumstances you might have managed to forget."

There is distinct reproach in his tone.

"It was none of those. It was worse, far worse. You said it at luncheon."

"To apologize would be worse than folly," says Ker. "I feel already that I have sinned beyond redemption, and yet I confess to a base anxiety to know my worst crime."

"Well," resentfully, "I think you needn't have told Diana that you knew you would find it impossible to like me."

"Look here," says Ker indignantly. "I don't care what I said. To be taken at a disadvantage like that, and then be brought to book afterward,—anything more unfair than that—"

"It is you who were unfair. You had never seen me, or thought you hadn't, and yet you had made up your mind to dislike me."

"I don't believe I made up my mind to anything. I thought of nothing but that confounded will that placed us both in so false a position. Why should I dislike you?"

"Why, indeed!" She pulls a little fragrant branch off the shrub nearest to her. "Well—don't you?" says she. She does not look at him.

At this instant a light high laugh resounds through the conservatory. It is coming toward them. It is a laugh once heard never to be forgotten. It is one of Mrs. Dyson-Moore's "properties."

She has turned the corner now, accompanied by a long-legged young man with evidently (and this is a sad reflection) more years than brains. Because the years are few.

"Oh! you here!" says she to Ker. "In this cozy corner! I might have known it!"

Something in her tone is offensive to Hilary. She draws a little aside, and plays carefully with a bit of foliage close to her.

"Your intuitive instincts are so strong, that of course you would," says Ker, smiling pleasantly.

"Such a secluded nook!" goes on Folly in her little click-clack way. "Miss Burroughs, have you got the monopoly of it?"

"For the moment," says Hilary calmly. "My cousin and I are resting for the moment."

"Your cousin! Ah, true!" She turns to Ker. "Fancy! your finding a cousin down here."

"Not in the least more remarkable than finding a cousin down there!" says he, always quite pleasantly.

"Don't you think the dance is going well—is quite a success?" says Mrs. Dyson-Moore, gayly. "Such a crush. One doesn't expect it in the wilds. As a rule country dances go all to smash. But this one is an exception. You enjoying yourself?"

"What a question!" says Ker.

It is a most ordinary answer, yet unfortunately it bears two interpretations—one for each of the women listening. To Hilary it seems a compromise; she had disdained to look at him, but she feels as if he had parried the question with a view to pleasing this detestable little Folly—this silly little Mrs. Dyson-Moore.

To the "silly little woman," it seems in her vanity a direct declaration that he is not enjoying himself at all!—That he could not possibly do so, being separated for the moment from her!

She turns away, looking back at Ker as she goes and smiling coquettishly.

"The next is ours. Don't forget," says she, as she moves away.

(To be Continued.)

CLEAN SHOOTING.

Russian surgeons say that the Japanese rifle bullets, while possessing a great deal of stopping power, make small, clean holes, which can be treated easily, and give excellent opportunities for the early recovery of the wounded unless some vital organ is pierced. There have been many cases of recovery after the intestines have been penetrated. Interesting contributions to surgical science will follow the ending of hostilities.

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