

# A Girl's Caprice

OR, THE RESULT OF A  
FANCY DRESS BALL

## CHAPTER IX.

"What a time you have been!" cries Diana, meeting her upon the door-steps and drawing her into the breakfast-room. "You saw him?"

"Yes."

"You spoke to him?"

"Oh, yes, yes."

"You—?"

"Were scolded by him?"

Hilary drops into a chair.

"Scolded by him?"

"Actually scolded!"

"I don't believe a word of it," says Diana, who as a rule is really the most polite creature in the world.

"Well, you may. He scolded me terribly. So terribly, that I still tremble beneath the wrath of his denunciations. I don't think, Di, I could live out my life with a man whose eloquence lay that way."

"I wish you'd explain," says Diana anxiously.

"And yet," continues Hilary, following out her own late train of thoughts as if not hearing her sister, "I should like to marry him, if only—for revenge!"

"Nonsense, Hilary! I believe you are laughing. I—Why, what did he say to you?"

"Oh, you shall hear. I hope you'll like it. It's actionable, I think. You should be the one to prosecute."

"I?"

"Yes—he—here Hilary's voice grows almost unintelligible with laughter—he accused me of making love to—"

"Who?"

"Jim!"

"Good Heavens! The man is mad," says Diana.

"Well, I was too polite to tell him that, but the fact is, I went into the garden after luncheon to pick a few laurel-leaves, and Jim was there, and of course we both talked over the luncheon."

"Well?"

"Well, my dear fiance was in the window and saw the parlor-maid of a few minutes ago in confidential intercourse with the master of the house. Of course he was amazed. After all," with a judicial air, "I dare say under the circumstances that I should have been amazed too."

"How unfortunate that he should have seen you!"

"Yes, very. But that was not all. He accused me on the spot of being a disloyal servant to your royal highness."

"What on earth are you talking about, Hilary?"

"About my future husband. He evidently thought I was behaving very badly toward you. Oh! Jim!" as Clifford enters the room, "come here."

"Jim, do you know what has happened?" says Diana. "Mr. Ker saw you talking to Hilary in the shrubberies, and he thinks—"

"That Hilary is in love with me," says Clifford. "Well," thoughtfully, "I can't blame him."

"Jim!" says Hilary.

"Well, my dear!"

"You know he must have thought—idiot though he is—that it was you who were in love with me!"

"Ah! Don't make him out a greater idiot than he is," says Clifford sweetly.

Here Diana, who had been laughing a little, breaks into the discussion.

"It's all very well," says she, "but how are we going to meet him next week at Mrs. McIntyre's dance?"

"What!" exclaims Hilary. For the first time in all this wild adventure of hers she looks really stricken.

"You don't mean to say he is going there?"

"Certainly he is. He told me so. He is going to Dublin on business to-morrow, but will be back in time for it."

"Chut! He'll never be back in time. What do you think, Jim?" turning to her brother-in-law, with much apparent courage, but evidently with a sinking heart.

"I don't know," says Clifford with deep and depressing reserve, who feels this to be a likely moment in which to drop into deadliest gloom.

"He was able to put in an appearance last time, though he arrived at midnight. I decline to give an opinion. One never knows what may happen. It is bad to be wildly previous."

"Oh! something will happen to prevent him," says Hilary. "It would be too much. How on earth could I meet him?"

"How indeed!" says Clifford, "after this base deception."

"You might stay at home," suggests Diana anxiously. "But I shouldn't like you to do that."

"Stay at home! From a dance! Never!" cries Hilary with decision. "If the worst comes to the worst, why I'll meet him, and give him a dance or two!"

This audacity makes them laugh.

"I shall be the worst off," says poor Diana, sighing. "He will think me terribly to blame! And as for you, Jim, when he meets you

"When he does."

Mr. Clifford is now sitting in arm-chair, teaching a little terrier dog for his bread.

"But, my dear Jim, you will meet him at the McIntyres."

"Not if I know it. I'm going to play hide-and-seek that night in a room out of the rooms—Sit up, Trot, c

you?—And I defy any one to catch me at that game once I put my mind to it. Oh, what a night I'm going to have! Such splendid exercise—"

"I think I'll play it, too," says Diana, with a rather faint laugh, "don't believe I could meet him after this."

"I hope, Diana," says her husband severely, "that you will see your way to playing it with me."

"Oh, you can laugh," says Diana growing rueful again, "but I know exactly how it will be. You and Hilary will be out of the way, and it will be left to me to explain to him this daring imposition."

She looks at Hilary, but that cheerful sheaf is downbent, and no comforting words come from her.

"Well, look here," says Diana, taking a step forward, and growing endowed suddenly with a touch of spirit. "I won't do it. No. Nothing shall induce me. I've told him so many things already, that I can tell him any more."

"You needn't!" says Hilary; still too is looking distinctly uneasy, but a smile breaks through the little cloud that dims the brightness of her face. "You can leave it all to me. I'll tell him. I'll explain. When he sees me as Bridget—"

"Oh, Hilary, you won't appear again in that dress?" pointing to the dress Hilary has worn during the luncheon.

"I shall, indeed. He—" she stops short, "admires me in it," she was going to say, but found it impossible; she colors vividly, and says instead, "will probably have forgotten all about me."

"Oh, modesty, thy name is Woman!" says Clifford, who has now almost induced the terrier to wait for the infinitesimal part of a second before devouring the biscuit.

"I'm not going to be ashamed of anything," says Hilary perversely. "Why should I? I think I have been such a good girl all through. I have helped you out of your difficulty with your parlor-maid. I helped him to everything I could think of—I even gave him back his stick. What more does he want?"

"Nothing, I hope," says Clifford. "Or he must be the most unreasonable fellow alive. And I wouldn't marry an unreasonable fellow if were you, Hilary."

"As to marrying him, that is out of the question," says Hilary warily. "There is only the question of putting myself straight with him. That I can easily do."

"Yes, I'm afraid the marriage question is at an end," says Diana sadly. "I told you, Hilary, that you should not have trifled with him in this way. And," sighing, "would have been such a good match too."

"Brilliant!" says Clifford. "Fiery!"

"Don't, Jim. I really wish to speak seriously to Hilary. It would be a good match."

"Well, my dear, am I not agreeing with you there? A match of the finest quality; I call him; warranted to—"

Here a sound, evidently coming from the lower regions, attracts their attention.

"Cook has come back," says Diana hurriedly. "For Heaven's sake Hilary, go and get that dress off before she sees you."

## CHAPTER X.

The first three dances are at an end; Hilary, as she enters the room, can see this by the card hanging near the musicians. She sees, too, after a hurried glance the room, that the Dyson-Moore's and their party have not arrived. The fourth is a waltz that has arrived just in time for it.

she gets through it with a talisade, enjoyably enough, but ways with a sense that she is visiting the doorways.

The Crusader, who is young and immensely in earnest over his dancing, which like himself has not come to perfection, permits her to ward the close of the dance, to a moment, and in that moment knows that her fate is upon her.

Her heart almost stops beating. Yes, there is Mrs. Dyson-Moore, Ker with her.

Mr. Dyson-Moore here, too, straggling somewhat the rear—he is always in the

poor man—and several other poor men from the barracks in next town. Hilary, however, only one man, and that is Ker

is dressed as a Cavalier, and absolutely handsome, a thing would not have expected from

He is now standing talking to Dyson-Moore, and it suddenly

to Hilary that that elastic per

wearing the triumphant expression of one who has just added a

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