

wanted an excuse on such occasions, calmly ensconced himself in a chair beside her, taking his welcome for granted, and finding no reason to doubt it in the smile—Kaburn's own sweet smile—that greeted him. Noticing this, the Captain became very ruffled, and told himself that "Grey," (that was the Sub) "fancied himself altogether too much." Then he blamed himself for being so slow and awkward, and called himself by severe names, and at last subsided into moody taciturnity. He planted himself very rigidly against the mantelpiece, looking so unlike his usual genial self that Mrs. Merchison, a very observing little person, rallied him on his "cross face," which did not improve his temper at all. This, too, Mrs. Murchison observed, and she quietly laughed.

But the "Sub" was not to have it all his own way. His own talents were to be his undoing. He could sing—or he had a reputation that way, and presently there was a talk of Mr. Grey's vocal powers. Then Katherine came up, and willy nilly he had to go to the piano. The Captain did not let the grass grow under his feet a second time—he appropriated the "Sub's" seat before he was fairly out of it.

"I hope you are not feeling tired after your journey this morning," was the commonplace remark he began with.

"Tired?" Kaburn laughed. "I could hardly be tired by so short a journey, you know,—just from London."

"Just from London?"

"Yes, I arrived there from Penton, two days ago."

"Penton, Penton,"—where had the Captain heard that name before? He looked so perplexed that Kaburn said, "I beg pardon," involuntarily.

"It's that name, Miss Lupton; it sounds familiar, and yet I do not think I know the place."

"I am very sure you do not—at least from choice. It is the dullest place in the world. Nothing ever happens there."

"Nothing?"

"Not unless you call the weddings and funerals of the villagers something. It is to them, I suppose."

"I should not be surprised," said the Captain, absently. He was still pondering over that name. Kaburn was doubtful;—did he mean his last remark for a joke, and was his gravity affected, or—

"Forgive me, Miss Lupton, I have been looking forward all evening to an opportunity for a talk with you, and now that it has come, I am very stupid. You must find me doubly so after Grey?"

"Mr. Grey is amusing. He tells me he is in your regiment, Captain Hill. He seems to be very fond of you. He says you both have the same tastes."

"Oh, does he?" the Captain said grimly.

"Yes, and he says you are so kind to the men," and the Captain wondered at the glad light which beamed in the girl's eyes.

Perhaps if he had lived for two years with a purse-proud family, who regarded their governess as a sort of white slave—and treated her as such—he would have better understood this woman's appreciation of his kindness "to the men." In short, the casual remarks of Mr. Grey about "my Captain" had more effectually aroused Kaburn's interest in "my Captain" than that gallant officer himself could have awakened in a day's intercourse. But the Captain did not know this, though he did know that this pretty, "good"-looking girl was regarding him very kindly, and was content and duly grateful to accept that fact without speculating *why* he had found favour in her eyes. Perhaps—as all men are inherently conceited—he did not think it necessary to speculate. He prepared to enjoy himself if he could, and what could a man not do an' he would? At all events, when, a little after, the ladies vanished for the night, the Captain's ill-humour had vanished too, and with it something he never found again.

CHAPTER III.

There was rain without and within. Outside it was falling quietly and steadily—melting the snow and penetrating the ice-bound earth. Inside human tears were falling, but fitfully and not so softly. Little angry sobs and half-muttered ejaculations accompanied the tears. It was Kaburn who was crying—crying with all her loving little heart, which just then was starving for its proper food—sympathy. Moreover, her pride was hurt, and that was hard to bear.

"What have I done to Katherine?" (thus was she thinking) "that she should be so unkind, so unjust to me? How dare she say that I was trying to attract attention? I didn't. It's cruel and false, and she knows it." Here the tears and sobs were as incoherently mingled as the thoughts. Poor angry, proud, grieved little girl—it was hard. She had ac-

cepted her Christmas invitation, oh so gladly, thinking that at this time of happy gatherings and of love and good-will, she too was wanted and sought for to share the Christmas cheer. Joyfully she anticipated the friendship and love she hoped to win from her cousins, or at least from Katherine, and lo! instead of love she met coolness, instead of sympathy,—contempt.

Why? forsooth, because a man, a guest like herself, in her cousins' house, had treated her civilly, and spoken to her kindly, she is accused of straining for attention she had no right to expect.

"Oh it is wicked of her—wicked," Kaburn burst out, "when she knows I cannot resent it by going away at once—she knows I must stay here for another week—I have nowhere else to go. I am not expected at Penton till after the holidays, and just now the house is shut up."

"The tears were falling more slowly now. Outside the heavens were drying their eyes, too; and watery sunbeams were glancing about everywhere—one peered into Kaburn's face seeming to say, "the best thing you can do is to come out." "I may as well," she thought; "it will do me good, I suppose; it is dreary up here, and I cannot go down stairs with my eyes in this state. Yes, I will get ready and go."

She picked up her boots to put them on. "How dirty they look. I wonder if the maid—that good-natured Irish girl—would get them brushed for me. I'll ring and see."

"Brush your boots, is it, Miss?" said Nora, "it's right glad I'll be to get that same done for you. I'll have them back in two minits lookin' loike mirrors."

She hurried away with them, and, turning a corner sharply in the hall, came plump against Captain Hill. Nora was nearly knocked over and one of the boots flew out of her hand.

"I beg your pardon," said the Captain when he recovered himself, "I hope I did not hurt you. I did not hear you coming."

"Nor I you, sor."

"Well, we are neither of us hurt, and that is satisfactory. Here is the boot I knocked out of your hand. I hope I did not—" and then the Captain stopped. Surely, surely he had seen this boot before—noted how small it was—admired its neatness—examined its—ah—what was this printed on the purple band inside, "Rivol & Co., Penton."

"Whose boot is this?" he demanded so abruptly that Nora jumped.

"It's one I'm after taking to be claned."

"Yes, but whose is it?—whose is it?"

Nora stared. "It's Miss Kaburn Lupton's," she said with dignity.

"I knew it; I felt it—I am glad," and the Captain looked at her with such solemn joy that Nora grew sympathetic.

"Glad," she repeated, "well it's glad I am to be waitin' on her, bless her purty face, but why your honour's glad that this same is her boot I don't know, for shure it's not much of a boot annyhow."

"Not much of a boot? Not much of a boot? Look at it, girl!"

"I am lookin' and thinkin' too, sor, that it's waitin' she is for thim now; so, by your lave, I'll just take this one, and be off to brush them both."

"Must you take it, Nora? I—"

"Sor?"

"Oh certainly," hastily, "here it is, and Nora, brush them well," and the Captain hurried away in one direction and Nora went off in another, meditating on the "quare ways of thim men."

"So it *was* her boot," he thought, "I might have guessed—she spoke that first night of Penton—it suits her, too—so pretty and ner't, and so—so lovable," and when a man goes the length of calling a boot "lovable," he goes a long way indeed. "I love her—I must tell her so, and then—" And then the Captain went off on that journey we all take once in our lives—"into love's dreamland," nor is there, even in dreams, any other land so fair.

When Kaburn was going to her room that night the Captain stopped her at the foot of the stairs. She had avoided him all the evening, and that had been a vague trouble to him. It was too late for his purpose to-night, but to-morrow speak he would, speak he must. Still even now he could not keep back all—he could not be content with a mere "good night." No, he must let her know something of what was in his heart.

"Kaburn"—he uttered the name softly—"there is something I have to tell you."

"Oh, have you, Captain Hill? Well, I am listening." Kaburn was on her mettle, and her assumption of indifference was purely dramatic.

"But not here—not now—how can I? To-morrow I will find an opportunity to speak to you alone; if—if—you will listen to me then."

Dramatic efforts are generally short-lived, and it was with blushing face and in a tremulous voice that Kaburn said, "Yes."



"Whose boot is this?"