

LORD KILGOBBIN.

By CHARLES LEVER.

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

CHAPTER XV.

"Well, and why not? Ain't we always going through a sort of mild revolution? What's parliamentary government but revolution, weakened, like watered grog, but the spirit is there all the same. Don't fancy that, because you can give it a hard name, you can destroy it. But hear what Tom is coming to. 'Be early,' says he: 'take time by the forelock; get rid of your entail, and get rid of your land. Don't wait till the government does both for you, and have to accept whatever condition the law will cumber you with, but be before them! Get your son to join you in docking the entail; petition before the court for sale, yourself or somebody for you; and wash your hands clean of it all. It's bad property, in a very ticklish country,' says Tom—and he dashes the words—'bad property, in a very ticklish country; and, if you take my advice, you'll get clear of both. You shall read it all yourself by and by; I am only giving you the substance of it, and none of the reasons.'

"This is a question for very grave consideration, to say the least of it. It is a bold proposal."

"So it is, and says Tom himself; but he adds: 'There's no time to be lost; for once it gets about how Gladstone's going to deal with land, and what Bright has in his head for eldest sons, you might as well whistle as try to dispose of that property.' To be sure, he says," added he, after a pause—"he says: 'if you insist on holding on, if you cling to the dirty acres because they were your father's and your great-grandfather's, and if you think that being Kearney of Kilgobbin is a sort of title, in the name of God stay where you are, but keep down your expenses. Give up some of your useless servants, reduce your saddle-horses—my saddle-horses, Dick! 'Try if you can live without fox-hunting.' Fox-hunting! 'Make your daughter know that she needn't dress like a duchess—poor Kitty's very like a duchess; and, above all, persuade your lazy, idle, and very self-sufficient son to take to some respectable line of life to gain his living. I wouldn't say that he mightn't be an apothecary; but if he liked law better than physic, I might be able to do something for him in my own office.'"

"Have you done sir?" said Dick, hastily, as his father wiped his spectacles, and seemed to prepare for another heat.

"He goes on to say that he always requires one hundred and fifty guineas fee with a young man," but with we are old friends, Maurice Kearney, says he, "and we'll make it pounds."

"To fit me to be an attorney?" said Dick, articulating each word with a slow and almost savage determination.

"Faith! it would have been well for us if one of the family had been an attorney before now. We'd never have gone into that station about the mill-race, nor had to pay those heavy damages for levelling Moore's barn. A little law would have saved us from evicting those blackguards at Mullmalick, or kicking Mr. Hall's bailiff before witnesses."

To arrest his father's recollection of the various occasions on which his illegality had betrayed him into loss and damage. Dick blurted out: "I'd rather break stones on the road than I'd be an attorney."

"Well, you will have to go far employment, for they're just laying down new metal this moment, and you needn't lose time over it," said Kearney, with a wave of his hand, to show that the audience was over and the conference ended.

"There's just one favor I would ask, sir," said Dick, with his hand on the lock.

"You want a hammer, I suppose," said his father, with a grin—"isn't that it?"

With something that, had it been uttered aloud, sounded very like a bitter malediction, Dick rushed from the room, slamming the door violently after him as he went.

"That's the temper [that helps a man to get on in life," said the old man, as he

turned once more to his accounts, and set to work to see where he had blundered in his figures.

CHAPTER XVII.

DICK'S REVERIE.

When Dick Kearney left his father he walked from the house, and not knowing, or much caring, in what direction he went, turned into the garden. It was a wild, neglected sort of spot, more orchard than garden, with fruit trees of great size, long past bearing, and close underwood in places that barred the passage. Here and there little patches of cultivation appeared, sometimes flowering plants, but oftener vegetables. One long alley, with tall hedges of box, had been preserved, which led to a little mound planted with laurels and arbutus, and known as "Laurel Hill;" here, a little rustic summer-house had once stood, and still, though now in ruins, showed where, in former days, people came to taste the fresh breeze above the tree tops, and enjoy the wide range of a view that stretched to the Slieve-Bloom Mountains, nearly thirty miles away.

Young Kearney reached this spot, and sat down, to gaze upon a scene, every detail of which was well known to him, but of which he was utterly unconscious as he looked. "I am turned out to starve," cried he aloud, as though there was a sense of relief in thus proclaiming his sorrow to the winds. "I am told to go and work on the roads—to live by my daily labor. Treated like a gentleman until I am bound to that condition by every tie of feeling and kindred, and then bid to know myself as an outcast. I have not even Joe Atlee's resource—I have not imbibed the instincts of the lower orders, so as to be able to give them back to them in fiction or in song. I cannot either idealize rebellion, or make treason tuneful."

"It is not yet a week since that same Atlee envied me my station as the son and heir to this place, and owned to me that there was that in the sense of name and lineage that more than balanced personal success, and here I am now, a beggar! I can enlist, however, blessings on the noble career that ignores character and defies capacity! I don't know that I'll bring much loyalty to her majesty's cause, but I'll lend her the aid of as broad shoulders and tough sinews as my neighbors." And here his voice grew louder and harsher, and with a ring of defiance in it. "And no cutting of the entail, my Lord Kilgobbin! no escape from that cruel necessity of an heir! I may carry my musket in the ranks, but I'll not surrender my birthright!"

The thought that he had at length determined on the path he should follow, aroused his courage and made his heart lighter; and then there was that in manner he was vindicating his station and his claim that seemed to savor of heroism. He began to fancy his comrades regarding him with a certain deference, and treating him with a respect that recognized his condition. "I know the shame my father will feel when he sees to what he has driven me. What an offense to his love of rank and station to behold his son and heir too! I can picture to myself his shock as he reads the letter in which I shall say good-bye, and then turn to tell my sister that her brother is a common soldier, and in this way lost to her forever!"

And what is it all about? What terrible things have I done? What entanglements have contracted? Where have I forged? Whose name have I stolen? What is laid to my charge, beyond that I have lived like a gentleman, and striven to eat and drink and dress like one? And I'll wager my life that for one who will blame him there will be ten—no, not ten, fifty,—to condemn me. I had a kind, trustful, affectionate father, restricting himself in scores of ways to give me my education among the highest class of my contemporaries. I was largely supplied with means, indulged in every way, and, if I turned my steps towards home, welcomed with love and affection."

"And fearfully spoiled by all the petting he met with," said a soft voice, leaning over his shoulder, while a pair of very liquid gray eyes gazed into his own.

"What, Nina!—Mademoiselle Nina, I mean," said he; "have you been long there?"

"Long enough to hear you make a very pitiful lamentation over a condition that I, in my ignorance, used to believe was only a little short of Paradise."

"You fancied that, did you?"

"Yes, I did so fancy it."

"Might I be bold enough to ask from what circumstance, though? I entreat you to tell me, what belongings of mine, what resources of luxury or pleasure what incident of my daily life, suggested this impression of yours?"

"Perhaps, as a matter of strict reasoning, I have little to show for my conviction, but if you ask me why I thought as I did, it was simply from contrasting your condition with my own, and seeing that in everything where my lot has gloom and darkness, if not worse, yours, my ungrateful cousin, was all sunshine."

"Let us see a little of this sunshine, Cousin Nina. Sit down here beside me, and show me, I pray, some of those bright tints that I am longing to gaze on."

"There's not room for both of us on that bench."

"Ample room; we shall sit the closer."

"No, Cousin Dick; give me your arm and we'll take a stroll together."

"Which way shall it be?"

"You shall choose, cousin."

"If I have the choice, then, I'll carry you off, Nina! for I'm thinking of bidding good-bye to the old house and all within it."

"I don't think I'll consent that far," said she, smiling. "I have had my experience of what it is to be without a home, or something very nearly that. I'll not willingly recall the sensation. But what has put such gloomy thoughts in your head? What, or rather who, is driving you to this?"

"My father, Nina, my father!"

"This is past my comprehending."

"I'll make it very intelligible. My father, by way of curbing my extravagance, tells me I must give up all pretension to the life of a gentleman, and go into an office as a clerk. I refuse. He insists, and tells me, moreover, a number of little pleasant traits of my unfitness to do anything, so that I interrupt him by hinting that I might possibly break stones on the highway. He seizes the project with avidity, and offers to supply me with a hammer for my work. All fact, on my honor I am neither adding to nor concealing. I am relating what occurred little more than an hour ago, and I have forgotten nothing of the interview. He, as I said, offers to give me a stone hammer. And now I ask you, is it for me to accept this generous offer, or would it be better to waver over that bog yonder, and take my chance of a deep pool or the bleak world, where immersion and death are just as sure, though a little slower in coming?"

"Have you told Kate of this?"

"No, I have not seen her. I don't know, if I had seen her, that I should have told her. Kate has so grown to believe all my father's caprices to be absolute wisdom that even his sudden gusts of passion seem to her like flashes of a bright intelligence, too quick and too brilliant for mere reason. She could give me no comfort, nor counsel either."

"I am not of your mind," said she, slowly. "She has the great gift of what people so mistakingly call common-sense."

"And she'd recommend me, perhaps, not to quarrel with my father, and to go and break the stones."

"Were you ever in love, Cousin Dick?" asked she, in a tone every accent of which betokened earnestness, and even gravity.

"Perhaps I might say never. I have spooned or flirted, or whatever the name of it might be, but I was never seriously attached to one girl, and unable to think of anything but her. But what has your question to do with this?"

"Everything. If you really loved a girl—that is, if she filled every corner of your heart, if she was first in every plan and project of your life, not alone her wishes and her likings, but her very words and the sound of her voice—if you saw her in everything that was beautiful and heard in every time that delighted you—if to be moving in the air she breathed was ecstasy, and that Heaven itself without her was cheerless—if—"

"Oh, don't go on, Nina. None of these ecstasies could ever be mine. I have no nature to be moved or molded in this fashion. I might be very fond of a girl, but she'd never drive me mad if she left me for another."

"I hope she may, then, if it be with

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such false money you would buy her," said she, fiercely. "Do you know," added she, after a pause, "I was almost on the verge of saying, go and break the stones; the 'metier' is not much beneath you after all!"

"This is scarcely civil, mademoiselle; see what my candor has brought upon me!"

"Be as candid as you like upon the faults of your nature. Tell every wickedness that you have done or dreamed of, but don't own to cold-heartedness. For that there is no sympathy!"

"Let us go back a bit, then," said he, "and let us suppose that I did love in the same fervent and insane manner you spoke of, what and how would it help me here?"

"Of course it would. Of all the ingenuity that plotters talk of, of all the imagination that poets dream, there is nothing to compare with love. To gain a plodding substance a man will do much. To win the girl he loves, to make her his own, he will do everything; he will strive to win her. Poverty will have nothing mean if confronted for her, hardship have no suffering if endured for her sake. With her before him, all the world shows but one goal; without her, life is a mere dreary task, and himself a hired laborer."

"I confess, after all this, that I don't see how breaking stones would be more palatable to me because some pretty girl that I was fond of saw me hammering away at my limestone!"

"If you could have loved as I would wish you to love, your career had never fallen to this. The heart that loved would have stimulated the head that thought. Don't fancy that people are only better because they are in love, but they are greater, bolder, brighter, more daring in danger, and more ready in every emergency. So wonder working is the real passion that even in the base mockery of love men have risen to genius. Look what it made Petrarch, and I might say Byron too, though he never loved worthy of the name."

"And how came you to know all this, cousin mine? I'm really curious to know that."

"I was reared in Ita'y, Cousin Dick, and I have made a deep study of nature through French novels." Now there was a laughing devilry in her eye as she said this that terribly puzzled the young fellow, for just at the very moment her enthusiasm had begun to stir his breast, merry mockery wafted it away as with a storm wind.

(To be continued.)

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