

## LORD KILGOBBIN.

BY CHARLES LEVER.

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

## CHAPTER VII—(Continued.)

"I was right in saying luncheon, Kate, and not dinner—was I not? It is less formal."

"I suppose so; that is, if it was right to invite them at all, of which I have very great misgivings."

"I wonder what brought Cecil Walpole down here?" said Nina, glad to turn the discussion into another channel. "Could he have heard that I was there? Probably not. It was a mere chance, I suppose. Strange things these same chances are, that do so much more in our lives than all our plottings!"

"Tell me something of your friend, perhaps I ought to say your admirer, Nina."

"Yes, very much my admirer; not seriously, you know, but in that charming sort of adoration we cultivate abroad, that means anything or nothing. He was not titled, and I am afraid he was not rich; and this last misfortune used to make his attentions to me somewhat painful—to him I mean, not to me; for, of course, as to anything serious, I looked much higher than a poor secretary of legation."

"Did you?" asked Kate, with an air of quiet simplicity.

"I should hope I did," she said, haughtily; and she threw a glance at herself in a large mirror, and smiled proudly at the bright image that confronted her. "Yes, darling, say it out," cried she, turning to Kate. "Your eyes have uttered the words already."

"What words?"

"Something about insufferable vanity and conceit, and I own to both. Oh, why is it that my high spirits have so run away with me this morning that I have forgotten all reserve and all shame? But the truth is, I feel half wild with joy, and joy in my nature is another name for recklessness."

"I sincerely hope not," said Kate, gravely. "At any rate, you give me another reason for wishing to have Miss O'Shea here."

"I will not have her—no, not for worlds, Kate—that odious old woman, with her stiff and antiquated propriety. Cecil would quiz her."

"I am very certain he would not; at least if he be such a perfect gentleman as you tell me."

"Ah, but you'd never know he did it. The fine tact of these consummate men of the world derives a humorous enjoyment in eccentricity of character, which never shows itself in any outward sign beyond the heightened pleasure they feel in what other folks might call dullness or mere oddity."

"I would not suffer an old friend to be made the subject of even such latent amusement."

"Nor her nephew either, perhaps?"

"The nephew could take care of himself, Nina; but I am not aware that he will be on to do so. He is not in Ireland, I believe."

"He was to arrive this week. You told me so."

"Perhaps I did; I had forgotten it," and Kate flushed as she spoke, though whether from shame or anger it was not easy to say. As though impatient with herself at any display of temper, she added hurriedly: "Was it not a piece of good fortune, Nina? Papa has left us the key of the cellar, a thing he never did before, and only now because you were here."

"What an honored guest I am!" said the other, smiling.

"That you are. I don't believe papa has gone once to the club since you came here."

"Now, if I were to own that I was vain of this, you'd rebuke me, would you not?"

"Our love could scarcely prompt to vanity."

"How shall I ever learn to be humble enough in a family of such humility?" said Nina, pettishly. Then quickly correcting herself, she said: "I'll go and dispatch my note, and then I'll come back and ask your pardon for all my willfulness, and tell you how much I thank you for all your goodness to me."

And, as she spoke, she bent down and kissed Kate's hand twice or thrice, fervently.

"Oh, dearest Nina, not this—not this!" said Kate, trying to clasp her in her arms; but the other had slipped from her grasp, and was gone.

"Strange girl!" muttered Kate, looking after her. "I wonder shall I ever understand you, or shall we ever understand each other?"

## CHAPTER VIII.

SHOWING HOW FRIENDS MAY DIFFER.

THE morning broke drearily for our friends, the two pedestrians at the Blue Goat. A day of dull aspect and soft rain in midsummer has the added depression that it seems an anachronism. One is in a measure prepared for being weather-bound in winter. You accept imprisonment as the natural fortune of the season, or you brave the elements, prepared to let them do their worst, while, if confined to the house, you have that solace of snugness, that comfortable chimney-corner which somehow realizes an immense amount of the joys we concentrate in the word "Home." It is in the want of this rallying point, this little domestic altar, where all gather together in a common worship, that lies the dreary discomfort of being weather-bound in summer; and when the prison is some small village inn, noisy, disorderly, and dirty, the misery is complete.

"Grand old pig that!" said Lockwood, as he gazed out upon the filthy yard, where a fat old sow contemplated the weather from the threshold of her dwelling.

"I wish she'd come out. I want to make a sketch of her," said the other.

"Even one's tobacco grows too damp to smoke in this blessed climate," said Lockwood, as he pitched his cigar away.

"Heigh-ho! We're too late for the train to town, I see."

"You'd not go back, would you?"

"I should think I would! That old den in the upper castle-yard is not very cheery or very nice, but there is a chair to sit on, and a review and a newspaper to read. A tour in a country and with a climate like this is a mistake."

"I suspect it is," said Walpole, drearily.

"There is nothing to see, no one to talk to, nowhere to stop at!"

"All true," muttered the other. "By the way, haven't we some plan or project for to-day—something about an old castle or an abbey to see?"

"Yes, and the waiter brought me a letter. I think it was addressed to you, and I left it on my dressing-table. I had forgotten all about it. I'll go and fetch it."

Short as his absence was, it gave Walpole time enough to recur to his judgment on his tour, and once more call it a "mistake, a complete mistake." The Ireland of wits, dramatists, and romance-writers was a conventional thing, and bore no resemblance whatsoever to the rain-soaked, dreary-looking, depressed reality. "These Irish, they are odd without being droll, just as they are poor without being picturesque; but of all the delusions we nourish about them, there is not one so thoroughly absurd as to call them dangerous!"

He had just arrived at this mature opinion, when his friend re-entered and handed him the note.

"Here is a piece of luck! Per Bacco!" cried Walpole, as he ran over the lines.

"This beats all I could have hoped for. Listen to this:—'DEAR MR. WALPOLE—I cannot tell you the delight I feel in the prospect of seeing a dear friend, or a friend from dear Italy, which is it?'"

"Who writes this?"

"A certain Mademoiselle Kostalergi, whom I knew at Rome; one of the prettiest, cleverest, and nicest girls I ever met in my life."

"Not the daughter of that precious Count Kostalergi you have told me such stories of?"

"The same, but most unlike him in every way. She is here, apparently with an uncle, who is now from home, and she and her cousin invite us to luncheon to-day."

"What a lark!" said the other, dryly.

"We'll go, of course."

"In weather like this?"

"Why not? Shall we be better off staying here? I now begin to remember how the name of this place was so familiar to me. She was always asking me if I knew or heard of her mother's brother, the Lord Kilgobbin, and, to tell the truth, I fancied some one had been hoaxing her with the name, and never believed that there was even a place with such a designation."

"Kilgobbin does not sound like a lordly title. How about mademoiselle—what is the name?"

"Kostalergi; they call themselves princes."

"With all my heart. I was only going to say, as you've got a sort of knack of entanglement, is there or has there been anything of that sort here?"

"Flirtation?—a little of what is called 'spooning'—but no more. But why do you ask?"

"First of all, you are an engaged man."

"All true, and I mean to keep my engagement. I can't marry, however, till I get a mission, or something at home as good as a mission. Lady Maude knows that—her friends know it; but none of us imagine that we are to be miserable in the meantime."

"I'm not talking of misery. I'd only say, don't get yourself into any mess. These foreign girls are very wide awake."

"Don't believe that, Harry; one of our homebred damsels would give them a distance and beat them in the race for a husband. It's only in England girls are trained to angle for marriage, take my word for it."

"Be it so—I only warn you that if you get into any scrape I'll accept none of the consequences. Lord Danesbury is ready enough to say that because I'm some ten years older than you, I should have kept you out of mischief. I never contracted for such a bear-leadership; though I certainly told Lady Maude I'd turn queen's evidence against you if you became a traitor."

"I wonder you never told me that before," said Walpole, with some irritation of manner.

"I only wonder that I told it now!" replied the other gruffly.

"Then I'm to take it, that in your office of gurnian you'd rather we'd decline this invitation, eh?"

"I don't care a rush for it either way; but looking to the sort of day it is out there, I incline to keep the house."

"I don't mind bad weather, and I'll go," said Walpole, in a way that showed temper was involved in the resolution.

Lockwood made no other reply than heaping a quantity of turf on the fire, and seating himself beside it.

When a man tells his fellow-traveller that he means to go his own road—that companionship has no tie upon him—he virtually declares the partnership dissolved; and while Lockwood sat reflecting over this, he was also canvassing with himself how far he might have been to blame in provoking this hasty resolution.

"Perhaps he was irritated at my counsels, perhaps the notion of anything like guidance offended him; perhaps it was the phrase, bear-leadership, and the half threat of betraying him has done the mischief." Now the gallant soldier was a slow thinker; it took him a deal of time to arrange the details of any matter in his mind, and when he tried to muster his ideas there were many which would not answer the call, and of those which came, there were not a few which seemed to present themselves in a refractory and unwilling spirit, so that he had almost to suppress a mutiny before he proceeded to his inspection.

Nor did the strong cheroots which he smoked to clear his faculties and develop his mental resources always contribute to this end, though their soothing influence certainly helped to make him more satisfied with his judgments.

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"Now look here, Walpole," said he, determining that he would save himself all unnecessary labor of thought by throwing the burden of the case on the respondent—"look here: take a calm view of this thing, and see if it's quite wise in you to go back into trammels it cost you some trouble to escape from. You call it spooning, but you won't deny you went very far with that young woman—farther, I suspect, than you've told me yet. Eh! is that true or not?"

He waited a reasonable time for a reply, but none coming, he went on: "I don't want a forced confidence. You may say it's no business of mine, and there I agree with you, and probably if you put me to the question in the same fashion, I'd give you a very short answer. Remember one thing, however, old fellow: I've seen a precious deal more of life and the world than you have! From sixteen years of age, when you were hammering away at Greek verbs and some such balderdash at Oxford, I was up at Rangoon with the very fastest set of men—ay, of women too—I ever lived with in all my life. Half of our fellows were killed off by it. Of course people will say climate, climate! but if I was to give you the history of one day—just twenty-four hours of our life up there—you'd say that the wonder is there's any one alive to tell it."

He turned around at this, to enjoy the expression of horror and surprise he hoped to have called up, and perceived for the first time that he was alone. He rang the bell, and asked the waiter where the other gentleman had gone, and learned that he had ordered a car, and set out for Kilgobbin Castle more than half an hour before.

"All right!" said he fiercely. "I wash my hands of it altogether! I'm heartily glad I told him so before he went." He smoked on very vigorously for half-an-hour, the burden of his thoughts being, perhaps, revealed by the summing-up, as he said: "And when you are 'in for it,' Master Cecil, and some precious scrape it will be, if I move hand or foot to pull you through it, call me a major of marines!" The ineffable horror of such an imputation served as matter for reverie for hours.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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"You never sit and talk to me as you did before we were married," sighed the young wife. "No," replied the husband, who was a draper's assistant: "the gov'nor told me to stop praising the goods as soon as the bargain was struck."

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