THE LOVE STORY OF ALISON BARNARD

KATHARINE TYNAN . (Author of " The Handsome Brandons," &c.)

CHAPTER XXIII. The Dance.

It was the evening of the dance at For two or three days Rodney had been discontented, watching her nephew with the eyes of the mother who sees her child passed over for another. Worst of all, Downe seemed to have fallen under Sir Gerard Molyneux's spell like all the rest of the world, and talked of the country of his fathers draw-ing him, and the shame of forgetting given to that other.

the maddest of mad Englishmen com- of them could she trust him with was. mend me to him who has fallen un- berself? There was not one who der the Irish spell. To be sure Downe has a drop of Irish blood in him, but his forbears have been nearly all English, possessors by accident of an Irish estate. I only hope that the passion for restitution won't seize Downe, or he'll be remembering that Downe Castle was filched from Irishmen long ago, and will be for giving it back again. You can't imagine what an uncomplicated person he is. He can only see straight. Honesty has put blinkers on him so that he can't look to either sides, but only ahead. You've no idea of the things he is capable of."

"Indeed I think I have," said Alison, to whom the speech was made; and the manner in which she said it gave Miss Rodney the wildest impulse to fall upon her neck and ask her not to break Downe's generous young ing quadrille with me. See, they

"I am as mad as Downe," she said places." to herself, repressing the impulse. a woman who has knocked about the world for fifty years to do!"

""What bee has Downe got in his dancing-men. There were a good bonnet?" she asked herself later. "It many redcoats from garrison towns is impossible that he doesn't see. even ten miles away, and it was sur-All the world must see that Alison prising where all the pretty girls has only eyes for Sir Gerard. Yet came from. Even Ballycushla had Downe does not look as if his heart were broken. He follows Sir Ger- dressed maidens, many of them Barlike a dog. Can it be that friendship is pushing out the other thing? We'll have Downe in politics before we know where we are-on a side his fathers never took."

Alison looked on well-pleased. "I have not broken his heart after all," she said, "and I am proud of a dearer kinsman than Downe."

linoe stirred her curiously. Oddly and the world, Alison was conscious of her labours." enough she had never met Gerard of an unfilled programme, and of a "Downe?" he Molyneux at a dance, never danced good many would-be partners who plane; the bonds between them had gallery was continued round one side knows?-there was something wanting ing and dim in the shadow of the as between man and woman, in the painted roof; beside where Alison woman of all the world. Supposing

lovely, who would reach him through | wall. his lighter, gayer feelings. Might not such a girl dispossess her for ever? She tried to say to herself that she would love the girl her friend should choose; but she broke off with a little laugh at herself.

"I should not be hateful, I hope," she said. "But for the rest, it is

for the dance. With a little secret room below. thrill of shyness she had resolved to had always looked at her with placid satisfaction in his eyes. Sup- I came to the ball," she said, "lest posing she were to look more like the I should offend someone." girl she had imagined.

'Mademoiselle changes herself,' tle while before. \"It is not so much as it is." grande dame; but it is ravishing."

had felt an inclination for chiffon and thing else, something that might had repressed it, have been there for that girl whose does not want her young admirer." telling herself with an air of rebuke coming she had feared. Why, she Alison was dancing with Sir Gerthat such things were for Tessa, not had been missing it all those years ard; as it happened, he was a defor a woman of twenty-seven. She when it had been on its way to lightful dancer, but this was more had, however, permitted the roses her. She was glad to hold the great than dancing. Neither saw the ballwhich Justine had suggested-roses feather fan between her face and the room nor its ring of encircling faces. for shoulder straps, for her shoes, light. She could hear her heart The music and the movement had car- in him at first in the matter of the roses in her bair. She had relaxed beat in her ears It was sending ried them away to some island of transfer of his affections from Alithe bonds which kept her hair fires to her cheeks; she looked at the delight, the island of happy lovers. the bonds which kept her hair fires to her cheeks; she looked at the straight. When it was permitted to dark head bent above the programescape it waved and curled and lay upon her neck in rings. Round her heart-beats. throat she wore a famous necklac

of diamonds and pink pearls. She started when she looked at herwould she see in his eyes when he

"It is excellent, Justine," she said, stretching out her hand for her cloak. She felt oddly shy of look- and nervously. ing at herself again, and wished the moment were over in which old friends like Mrs. Tyrrell and Mrs. Lang might say-the one with twinkling eyes and uplifted hands-"Why, Alison!" the other fall in ecstacies over the change. Mrs/ Lang had protested till she was tired against denly sobered. He looked at Alison's severity with herself; most with a new expression in it. of all against the bondage in which bright eyes asked for trust and

she kept her hair.

"So sorry to have been out of everything all the week," it read, "but I've been making frocks for Billy. rything all the week," it read, "but I've been making frocks for Billy. She arrived in rags. Poor Mamma! think of raving nine daughters who take ten yards double or twenty single width to make a frock! I be-

lieve Billy's the leggiest of us all; but, oh, a sweet thing! Wait till you see Billy!"

Perhaps that letter had influenced of her attire. Twenty-seven! The was for ever pushing forward. Already time began to fly for Alison, allson looked over the ledge of the clock of time did not stand still. It time which is so slow in childhood thing that must have been lacking to "I always knew that Downe had it in him to be as mad as any other Englishman," she said. "And for to grow fearful of them; and which staring at her and asking who she complete his feeling for herself? Aliwould not be more exacting than she, son.

> Her doubt as to whether Sir Ger-ard Molyneux was a dancer was soon ing!" dispelled. The Duchess received the guests at Kylinoe. Hard by her in the background the elder Bosanquets a single-width and double-width are stood, with the real owner of the house between them.

"They are our guests, but they are only for hy yours too," the old men had said to is Billy?" him with exquisite courtesy. She saw the wonder, the delight

in his eyes as she entered, and her lashes fell. note is here. You dance the open-

are going to form. Let us take our to herself, repressing the impulse. The dance as originally intended That would be a pretty thing for had expanded itself almost to the dimensions of a ball. The hosts had been indefatigable in beating up

sent some very charming and wellnards, of course, all rather jealous of Tessa in her frock of palest green chiffon and the rapture of a bride in her little dreamy face, and rather in awe of Miss Barnard of Castle Barnard.

The quadrille in which the principal im. I could not have wished for dearer kinsman than Downe."

The thought of the dance at Kyard Molyneux standing between her ard Molyneux standing between her and the world, Alison was conscious of her labours."

After ner hist visit to be and asking her if she had brought back a whift of the dear Dublin air with the world, Alison was conscious of her labours."

THE EXCELSIOR LIFE serious ones. Perhaps-who of the room. It was near the ceilseriousness of their inter- sat, a little baize-covered door in the No man could be always wall led to the gallery. Not one So far she was his one guest in fifty knew whither it led. As the room cleared for the waltz-

he were to meet a girl gay, laughing, ers they were pressed closer to the "Let us escape," Sir Gerard said,

laying his hand over Alison's. "I believe I-" she began. "Refer him to me," Sir Gerard answered with a reckless gaiety which was something new in him.

They passed up the little stairs together, and sat down in the ga,the heroism of story-books. In real lery. Taking her great feather fan life one is nearly always disappointed from her hands he spread it so that in the wife of one's friend." She had made unusual preparations would, from the eyes in the ball-

so well on the young princess of Cas- Let me see your programme. Whytle Barnard. Sir Gerard Molyneux empty, Alison! not a single name!"

"Me," he answered. "No one would dare to be offended but me. said the French maid, whom Alison I should have been in a pretty rage had added to her establishment a lit- if I had not found this page virgin,

The gown was of white silk, made which had never been there before; with a certain severity, and trim-med with beautiful old lace. Alison had always been there for her, someme, and thought he must hear those

He handed her back the programme with a smile that had something joylooked at her? Would he miss the old Alison? Would he be pleased with the new? It was most likely, she told herself, that he would see no very beautiful to-night, Alison.

"Justine, my new maid, is a person of taste," Alison began rapidly

"You were a queen, a goddess, fore. Now you look as though vou might step down to some poor

low's side, Alison-The music fell suddenly, and passionate impulse seemed to die away out of the air. His face sud-

tience. "It is a creation," said Justine with quiet pride in her own handiwork, as she wrapped Alison in her long white cloak.

There was a crumpled up letter from Mrs. Lang, which Alison had just pushed into a drawer of ger loss the manner of the loss that a loss the loss that a loss the loss that lought not to take the loss of holidays. Alison, Alison, till the Bill passes I must be my own man, my own man and the country's. I went near forgetting now how I was tied up to did know, that George had had losses of which his wife was told nothing.

thought for myself.

though he could not trust himself to look further.

ook further.
"Let me be my own man for three months, four months longer," he said; and then added under his breath: "and after that yours for

She heard him in a placid joy. She was not the one to stand between him and his life-work. Three months' time, four months' time would not be long to wait. Why could wait an eternity if need be, knowing what she knew now. "I promised Downe to keep him

some dances," she said. "Ah! Let us go back, Alison. The next dance will be a waltz. Downe cannot have that. Why there is Perhaps that letter had influenced Alison ever so little in the altering his partner? She would make anyone but Downe look absurd.

and youth, and so accelerates its tall young creature sheathed in green, pace that in middle age the whirl like a flower not yet unfolded from gallery. Then she saw the slender, and clatter of its wheels deafens the one who tries to listen to it. Supshoulders above the other girls, tallher for his mother's country, which awoke the pride of her children rashould supply to Gerard Molyneux the where out of sight, taller than Mrs. Lang. She was standing with

"Why, it must be Billy," said Alison. "It can be nobody but Billy. who would be as generous in god-speeding him on a way in which she could never be the ultimate obyoung creature? and Billy is one of

> "I can perfectly well imagine it," he said, "although the mysteries of beyond me. Billy is superb. And Alison, Downe seems to have eyes only for her. And by the way who

"It is quite true. Downe is looking at her as though she were something very pleasant. She is Miss Wilhelmina Maynard, Mrs. Maynard, Mrs. "You are late," he said with a certain impatience. "Everybody of any growing to be like Wilhelmina!" "No one, no man, could possibly object. If I had not a standard of height, of everything else feminine in my own mind, I should say that she was none too high, being—I beg her pardon-Billy."

Alison laughed happily. "I always said of Mrs. Lang, I say now of Billy, that their height is the right one, and they make others look too small. They are so work he had to do. graceful." "Are they, Alison?" he asked sim-

ing, of course, and her sisters are relations between them; and he sent good to look at, but I have very in-definite views about the things that of warmth in them which was perconstitute a woman's beauty-except- haps only visible or palpable to the ing only—one woman. None of her recipient. She, laying her cheek beauties escape me."

"No, the frocks. Of course one with him. She hardly knew if he would come her way as soon as they frock may have played its part in It was possible that he discovered her. The ball-room at enhancing Billy's loveliness; but despised such things. Hitherto she Kylinoe had a musicians' gallery run-had always met him on a serious ning across one end of it. The Indeed, if she had known, Downe's Indeed, if she had known. Downe's subjugation had been begun by Billy's in the most hideous of waterproofs; but she did not know.

Meanwhile Mrs. Lang was wailing do, my dear," the Archdeacon rein the Archdeacon's ear in what her sponded blandly, "and I don't really sister called her wirrasthrue voice. Billy conspicuous? Poor child, as if her leave him to his work; by all acinches were not enough! and of course all the world knows that he is Alison's. What does he mean by it, Mrs. Lang sighed.

should like to know?" "You said yourself my dear, that Why then should he go on being in lin, how I used to walk along those a sensible young man to transfer his such a town for winds-hoping to affections somewhere else."

"He will only turn Billy's headthe child! What does she want with a Lord Downe. Imagine her taking walk where I was likely to meet you Lord Downe home, perhaps in a lean —didn't, I know all your hours?—I time when there were only potatoes. "Now no partners will discover There isn't a carpet on a floor of the discard the magnificence that had sat you," he said, "unless you choose. rectory, and poor mamma is out-atelbows and down-at-heel, for all she can do, the dear; and Papa's coats "I would not let it be filled before are disgraceful; and those children!" "Pooh, my dear," said the Archdeacon. "Downe would never see it. never saw anything but you when used to come to the rectory."

Mrs. Lang squeezed his arm fondly. "Everyone isn't such an old goose she said, "and I don't Ah-there was the tone in his voice like Billy's taking Alison's admirer even if Alison doesn't want him. Look at her."

Archdeacon under his breath, "Alison

"Do you think Alison looks lonely now?" he asked again. "Lonely! Of course she doesn't. He' must have spoken! and Alison's frock! I always told her she dress- be nobly beautiful. fully audacious about it. He had set ed too old for her years. Oh, I she started when she booked at her walderous against all the waltzes. am so glad; and why shouldn't poor cousin. Alison," Downe said to her waltzes are the sheet of the sheet her old sober magnificence was dow-her old sober magnificence was dow-dy. Would Sir Gerard notice? What you suppose I should let anyone else won't be a bit embarrassed at the for my masters; then I fell out of dance the waltzes with you? You rectory—that's one comfort. We ne-

> mildly. pose

"That Lord Downe is in love with Billy. Just look at him! Upon my word I could shake him for making it so obvious," his wife rejoined with thoroughgoing contempt for his masculine slowness.

> CHAPTER XXIV. The Way Out.

During the months between Christmas and Easter Alison was busy looking after Tessa's trousseau. She one will say that I ought not to take thought for myself."

"No one would say it," she answered softly, with such complete satisfied softly, with such complete satisfied softly.



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ed at the Shelbourne, and Alison went about the streets oddly glad be-cause she breathed the air of the same town with her beloved. Sir Gerard was coming and going a good deal between London and Dublin in these said of Freddy when I saw her, I days; but Alison came and went

She wrote to him as she had al-"I know Mrs. Lang is charm- ately, as though there were no new ways written, fully, frankly, affection-"I want to go and talk to Billy- had a sense as of the South wind against the cream-laid official note.

about Alison.

"She has not seen Gerard Molyneux," she said to the Archdeacon "Was ever anything so aggravating? We must have taken too much for granted that night of the dance. Were ever such impracticable people?'

"I don't jump to conclusions as you believe I was mistaken that night. "Isn't that young man making Doubtless Alison is the woman to counts it is superhuman now.

"It is too great virtue for me," "I remember in the days when I was in love with you, before you had declared your-Alison would never look at him. self, when I used to be in dear Dublove with her? I think he would be wind-swept streets-there never was meet you. I'm afraid I was rather a bold, young person, for although I used to make resolutions not to used to do it all the same. Heavens how I used to feel I must sink into the earth when I saw you coming, as though L had not been willing you

to come all the time." The Archdeacon answered her sigh, but his was one of happiness. "You had to make it very apparent to me, my dear, or I had never dared to do such a thing. Your radiant youth and my more than fifty years! How could I think that they would meet? and yet there are those who disbelieve in miracles!"

The love affair between Downe and Miss Wilhelmina Maynard had pro-"If I'm not mistaken," said the gressed by leaps and bounds. Downe was not one to go slowly about anything in which his heart was greatly concerned, although his manner was rather slow than otherwise. In the wooing of Wilhelmina he had let no grass grow under his feet. Miss Rodney had been rather disappointed called Billy in her first disappointment, knowing all the time in her just heart that Billy was as graceful as a daffodil, and in time would

simply, "until I found she was meant

"I wonder how far that discovery coincided with your meeting Miss ear, how you do run away ngs," said the Archdeacon, "We have no reason to supLord Downe is in love with

sharpness. "I'm glad I was a free man when I met Billy; not that Alison would have looked at me; but supposing I had engaged myself to, or married anvone of vour special pets, Sophy' -Downe always called his aunt by her Christian name-"and then had met Billy. Heavens!" What would you have done? Elop-

ed with Billy?" He sent her a look of wounded reproach, such as had often made her hite her lips when she had said something smartly cynical.

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misunderstood and down-trodden- I have trembled at the thought of my friends' governesses. After all Billy is well-born.

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"Don't answer an unwarrantable question," she said hastily. "I am wery glad you were free when you "The baronetcy is an old one, I be met Billy " George had become great friends she did know, that George had had losses of which his wife was told nothing. Mrs. George Barnard was such a woman as her husband keeps in the dark so long as may be when it is a question of business worries and troubles.

The trousseau was on a lavish scale There had to be journeys to Dublin about Tessa's frocks, when they stay—

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The baronetcy is an old one, I be lieve. And the child will be beau—

The trousseau was on a lavish scale as a frock with sufficient material in it. Billy in her wedding-dress will have steepped straight out of a picture by Sir Joshua Revnolds."

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