LORD KILLEEN'S REVENGE.

CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

They were on the outskirts of a rabbit warren by this time, and it was easy to see that Norah's race was run. George made a plunge forward and caught her by the arm; in doing so, he got his foot into a burrow, and over he and she went. Constantia tripped, too, and so did Stronge, in his eagerness to seize the luckless quarry. The two small boys in the rear followed suit, catching their feet in a hole likewise; and indeed over they all went.

They were on their feet in an instant, the captured Norah in their midst.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Mr. Stronge, still full of the glad excitement that had held him all through this memorable pursuit.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Constantia in concert, George joining in. The two younger boys fairly chuckled in their joy; and even the poor hare, dead beat as she was, gave way to wild merriment in gasps and sighs.

"It was mean!" panted she at last, pointing the finger of scorn at Mr. Stronge. The child was so thin that her finger was like a claw, but there was a world of meaning in it; and when one is physically exhausted, action costs less than speech. "Horribly mean! To press a stranger into the hunt! Oh!"

Words failed her.

"A stranger, Miss Norah! Am I always to be that?" demanded Stronge reproachfully.

Norah grinned, and slipped her arm within his.

"Never mind; you are a real duck," said she.

There was an absence of mauvaise honte about Norah, very refreshing in an artificial age. Mr. Stronge laughed again, and gave the friendly little paw a tuck that brought it closer to his side.

Constantia, who had been laughing all the time now drew her breath sharply, and laid her hand upon her heart.

"This running is a terrible thing," said she, "when one is growing old. Such a pain as I have here! It is a lesson to me; I shall run no more." They all gave way to mirth again at this, being still unsatisfied with laughter; and Constantia, still with her hand upon her heart, looked at Stronge. "Do you ever have a pain here? said she.

His face changed a little as a touch of his every-day experience came back to him through the glamor of this one sweet hour of holiday-making. In his heart—a pain?

"An eternal one," he said quickly, giving himself no time for thought. Indeed, he spoke in a moment of impulse—an impulse that fired his eyes and made him younger, so long as it lasted, than even the chance race had made him.

Constantia must have seen something in his glance, though it was very gentle, if extremely earnest, to disconcert her, because she colored deeply and let her eyes fall upon the sward at her feet.

"I say," said Norah, presently ,in a healthy tone, "let us all come home. I'm starving."

"Yes, seconded Jimmy, "let's try to squeeze a cup of tea and some hot cake out of Mulcahy."

They were terrible children!

Norah grew a little red, and Mr. Stronge saw it and hesitated about accompanying them. Jimmy, who had long yellow hair and blue eyes, and who was, by a freak of Nature, a regular Norseman, though nothing but Irish blood ran in his veins, noticed the pause he made, and instantly grew clamorous for his society.

"Oh, yes, please do come," said Constantia then, with a little smile that covered the secret fear in her heart that Mulcahy might not have the kettle boiling, and that Minnie in all probability was off to the next bawn where her sweetheart lived. With a sinking heart she remembered the coquettish look of the morning's cap with its cherry-colored ribbons! Even if Mulcahy is in a good temper, and has the kettle boiling and consents to make tea, and—nervous reflection—has not partaken of her "thimbleful," who is to bring the tea into the faded drawing-room if Minnie is away with her young man?

She was lost in a labyrinth of miserable doubts, when a word or two falling from the lips of Norah brought her back with a jerk to the present.

"Aunt Bridget is gone to Dublin. Didn't you hear! Didn't Minnie tell you? Minnie was so awfully glad, because Aunt Bridget thinks sweethearts wicked things, and she won't let Minnie speak to hers. She wouldn't let one of us speak to you, if you were a sweetheart. So mind you don't be one."

"I shall remember," said Mr. Stronge, with an attempt at a smile; but his heart sunk.

"Well, Aunt Bridget is gone away for a week—a whole week."

"So Minnie may kiss her sweetheart," broke in Jimmy. "I saw them the other evening behind the haystack, and—"

"Jimmy!" said Constantia, in a tone that reduced him to silence, though he never knew why. Constantia might not have been so severe had her mind not been disturbed. Norah, however, who was only subdued by Aunt Bridget, went on triumphantly:

"Yes, sweethearts will be allowed now for a whole week. Seven days, mind you. Such a lot! You may be a sweetheart too, if you like. Aunt Bridget is gone away, and we are all happy. Oh! and there's something else," she paused, breathlessly, and squeezed his arm, and looked up at him out of wild, guileless blue eyes. "When the cat's away you know, the mice can play. We are going to play—we are going to give a party." She broke into gay laughter at the very extravagance of the thought.

George laughed too.

"Norah's mole-hills," he said. "Donna Dundas is coming to afternoon tea on Thursday, and that's her party."

"Yes it is Donna," said Norah, hooking herself on to Mr. Stronge's arm, and smiling up at him. She had the most endearing smile—Constantia's in miniature, and less charming because more profuse. "We're a little troubled of course, because we don't quite know what to give her, or what she would like, she has lived so long abroad."

What further confidence is this dreadful child going to make? Constantia looks daggers at her, but fails to catch her eye.

"Garlic," said George.

"Nonsense!" interrupted Constantia, who was now very red. She did not mean to invite Mr. Stronge to meet Donna, and it seemed so dreadfully inhospitable to be discussing the little insignificant affair with him when he was not to be one of the party. Altogether, this afternoon in perspective has proved a source of much annoyance. Donna for one thing had invited herself, partly with a mischievous longing to do what Miss MacGillicuddy would certainly never have permitted had she been at home, partly for other reasons. To entertain her properly was causing Constantia many troubled moments; the resources of The Cottage being limited, and Mulcahy decidedly on the spree now that her mistress was away.

Somebody of course should be asked to meet Donna, and Constantia had thought of Garrett Barry, because nobody could be made uncomfortable by Garrett, and he was never silent, or dull, or at a loss for anything to say. And there was the doctor's young wife, Mrs. Blake; she was a chatty little thing too, and well born, and nice in every way; and neither she nor Garrett would think or look as if they thought it odd, if anything went astray with domestic arrangements.

It seemed quite a tremendous undertaking for Constantia, this simple cup of tea, so unaccustomed was she to receive any guests within the walls of The Cottage. She would have liked to ask a good many people, of course: Mr. Stronge, for example, and—and Standish Featherston, but her courage failed her. And, besides, if her aunt should hear of it?

Here George broke into the conversation with a genial air.

"You'll come, won't you?" he said. "Thursday, mind. Mulcahy will, in all human probability, be non compos; but that won't signify once you are up to her in her little ways, and you can help to entertain Donna, whilst we are struggling with her and the tea-pot in the lower regions. Can't he, Con?"

Constantia grew pale. But she smiled bravely.

"Yes, I hope you will come, Mr. Stronge," she said. "Four o'clock; and —" She stopped because she didn't quite know what else it was she could say.

Stronge looked at her, and read her correctly. He saw all the nervous shyness that was consuming her; he saw, too, the little thorough-bred air with which she had bidden him to her house —surely against her will! He was on the point of declining her invitation, when a revulsion of feeling set in. What! was he always to be regarded by her as a stranger—as one apart? No, he would break down the barrier!

"Thank you; I shall be very glad indeed," he said.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was not until quite an hour after O'Grady had parted with her, that he entirely understood the greatness of the shock Lady Varley's announcement had given him. The girl, so frank, so naive, with whom she had been so inexpressibly charmed, had been taken from him in that moment, and a woman married, his hostess, given him in her place. It was almost absurb the strength of the desolation that fell on him as he realized this. Of course, however, it explained everything. He had wondered at, whilst admiring, the calm self-possession with which she—a young girl as he had deemed her, a neophyte in the battle of life—had accepted his assistance at first, and afterwards seated herself, and invited him to share her lounge with an open forgetfulness or disregard of that law of society that dwells on formal introductions between those hitherto unknown to each other.

But Lady Varley!—he was her guest. That she thought of only, and that it was her duty to be gracious to him, and delicately friendly. She had dismissed him in a little bow before he had quite recovered from his surprise, and he had presently found himself in the card-room looking for Featherston, who, with Mrs. Dundas and a few others, was deep in the delights of a loo that had very little limit to speak of. After awhile, that seemed to him, however, short, so engrossed was he with his own thoughts and recollections, he induced his serious cousin (Featherston seldom looked so serious, or good, or irreproachable, as when engaged in some light transaction that fraternized but poorly with his righteous protestations) to quit the card-room—or Mrs. Dundas. He was unsure as to where the loadstone lay, being new in the country, and unaware of the existence of Constantia MacGillicuddy, who indeed, had an attraction for Featherston that did not, however, interfere with his amusing himself in other quarters as occasion arose.

O'Grady found the long drive home full of mystical beauty. His thoughts had, perhaps, a good deal to do with the forming of it. It was a lovely night, bordering on dawn, and their way ran through roads wooded on either side, and with a starry heaven above. It was just paling then! The stars were in their death-throes, and all their wondrous green and gold and crimson tints flashed out now and again in brighter flashes, as though with a last effort to defy the hastening dissolution. It was coming fast. Already there was a touch of defeat in the pale, opal line of light that stole majestically upward from behind the distant hills, and shed a faint, vague radiance down their sides.

O'Grady was, for once in his life, half blind to Nature's grand effects. He looked on the coming dawn with eyes as blind, or nearly so, as the respectable Featherston who sat beside him, and who seldom troubled himself with anything emotional. O'Grady was angry with himself because he could not treat his accidental meeting with Lady Varley as a jest, a thing to laugh over with his cousin. But he could not! And—was it a jest? There was no element of amusement in it after all, when one analyzed it. It was a mere nothing. He had met a woman whom he felt he could have loved, and had only discovered when too late that—

Pshaw! what he meant was that he had discovered that she was "wood, an' married, an' a'." That was all. It was the merest trifle out of the tale of one's life, a matter of ten minutes or so.

It was rather a bore, however, the way in which the whole scene clung to him; he could not shake it off, though he would gladly have done so. It was only a question of time, of course; and in a day or two he promised himself he would have so far forgotten the episode that he would have to jog his memory before he could bring to mind whether Lady Varley's hair was black, or brown, or red; or if her eyes were—

They rose before him then. Great, strange, sad, yearning eyes, that seemed to reproach him for his determination to obliterate them from his memory. Nay, they seemed to defy him to do it. He saw her again, as she bent above the cactus, and raised those earnest eyes up to his, and thanked him softly for his welcome help.

There was a dignity about her, that just then had seemed to him not only pretty, but amusing, in one so young. He had misunderstood all through! Even now, as he fought with himself for persistent recurrence to that vision of her he had conjured up, he did not understand. He did not realize that his first admission was the true one; that it was indeed "too late" for retraction or forgetfulness, because he loved her.

All the next day he scarcely thought of her, but on the second he grew restless. He told himself that the tranquility of the life in this almost deserted village, with its four or five desirable families, was unsuited to him after the rush and the turmoil that had attended on his wanderings hither and thither, and the excitements to be found in camp life, and the ceaseless changes to be found in the gorgeous transformations of an Eastern existence. It was all too tame here, too prosaic; yet it did not suggest itself to him as a thing to be desired that he should quit the dull stage on which he found himself.

On the fourth day he permitted an idea, that up to that he had kept scrupulously in check, to start into life and grow. It was to the effect that courtesy compelled him to go to Araglin and once again apologize to Lady Varley for the mistake he had made. He had muttered something at the moment, of course, but something decidedly insufficient. If—his brow grew dark red as this fear suggested itself—if, by any possibility, she had grown to believe he knew who she was all the time! Yes, he must go, he must see her at all risks. He did not wait to calculate about the risks, or to remember who was to bear them.

Featherston had started off somewhere after breakfast, "to interview one of the tenants," he said; in reality to sun himself in Constantia's smiles for an hour or so, loitering with her through the growing verdure, and letting his vanity be flattered by her shy glance and the soft blush that every now and then mantled in her cheeks. Featherston, therefore, was disposed of, and the day was his own to deal with as he would.

He determined on walking to Araglin, though it was six miles away; but a tramp through the awakening woods could not be otherwise than pleasant and would probably be a rich treat. He was accustomed to walking; indeed, an idle day's dallying for him would have been a severe day's march for those around him, and six miles was a mere flea-bite in the way of fatigue. He felt he should enjoy even so small a walk after being cooped up for so many days.

And he did enjoy it, though his thoughts were in a measure too preoccupied to permit of his inhaling to the full the charm of the opening buds, the thick richness of the springing mosses, and the beauty of the dense warm masses of wild flowers that thronged his path and died beneath his tread. The starry primroses smiled at him from their green beds, the blue-bells nodded their scented heads, the rich and trailing honeysuckle flung its flowery ropes across the branches that swayed above his head.

He reached Araglin at last, and entered it, not by the wide entrance-gate open to all, but a side-gate that led on to the lawn in a more direct way. This he knew, by certain questions and answers that had passed between him and his cousin Featherston.

He went through a little bit of dense underwood, and so into a side-walk. Before him lay the lawn, and on his right a graveled path, where, as he looked, he could see a figure moving slowly and with care.

It was Lady Varley.

He turned at once in her direction, and as the laurels gave way he saw her more directly. She was clad in a straight, black gown, that reached to the ground, without flounce or frill of any sort, and with something delicate in white about the long, back-turned cuffs and deep collar that caught the eye at once. He could not, of course, know that these delicacies were of the choicest Mechlin.

Something was in her arms. A little bundle, all white cambric and lace, that showed clear against her black gown. A baby!

It was a very tiny bundle (though it had seen six months of our sad and troubled life), and she held it close-pressed against her heart, as though it was so much with her that she could never let it go. She was bending over it, looking, no doubt, into the wee face that was all the world to her, and was, therefore, so unaware of O'Grady's coming that he could study her without impertinence.

At first, seeing her with the child in her arms, he felt a sudden shock. He had forgotten his ideal was married, but now circumstances compelled him to remember that misfortune. He watched her as she came toward him, bit by bit the beauty he had at first acknowledged grew stronger to him,and drew him with a fatal force to her.

She was looking at the little thing she held so tightly in her arms, and her face was fair with the sweet flush of motherhood. There was something of the divine in her expression. Her whole soul seemed wrapt in the fragile creature that she held; an almost passionate love lit her dove-like eyes as she gazed on it; she appeared to have no thought beyond the little mite that lay so quiescent, so terribly quiescent, upon her breast.

O'Grady came forward into the fuller light. A staid nurse, who was walking beside Lady Varley, dropped now obsequiously into the background, and O'Grady advanced quickly.

Lady Varley seeing him, greeted him with a smile. It was the gentlest smile in the world, and full of graciousness. O'Grady, encouraged by it, came up to her and pressed the hand she gave him. The baby was lying upon her left arm as calm as it, unfortunately, always was.

"I thought," said O'Grady, "that I would come up to-day and tell you (I had no time then, had I?) how I regretted the many absurd things I said to you, not knowing—"

"As for that," said she; she burst out laughing, carefully, as should a married woman, yet merrily as a girl—"it was very strange, was it not?" she said. "But of course you could not know! When I told Lord Varley of it, he said it was a pity I had ever enlightened you. And perhaps, yes; but when I heard you were to stay in our neighborhood I knew you would have found out, no matter whether I spoke or were silent."

"Yes; it didn't matter at all," said O'Grady. He was looking into her pure, beautiful eyes, and as he looked, he felt that nothing mattered, only that she was lost to him. He struggled with himself, and regained presently his composure. "Yet I am glad you spoke," he said.

"So am I," she returned graciously; "otherwise you would not have known who I was, and," with a gentle smile, "I should not be indebted to you for this visit."

She spoke without looking at him, so that she was ignorant of the expression that had grown within his eyes. She herself had her gaze concentrated upon the baby lying against her breast. It was a beautiful little creature of about six months, but very white, and with wonderfully large eyes; they seemed to O'Grady to look through him. It occurred to him that it was an extremely old child for its apparent age, but, at the same time, an extremely small one. He would, of course, have thought nothing at all about it had he not heard from some one that Lady Varley's baby was six months old.

"This is my little daughter," said she now, in a tone quite different from anything he had ever heard before; there was a subdued but terrible passion of tenderness in it. She threw back the silken covering round it to let him more closely view her treasure. "You think?" she questioned, vaguely, yet with her eyes upon him as though waiting for something.

"She's charmingly pretty," said O'Grady, with much presence of mind, stooping as he spoke over the little frail blossom. It was, perhaps, the happiest thing he could have said—save one.

"And—and healthy too, eh?" said she, still with her eyes on his. They widened as she gazed, and a suspicion of nervous terror grew within them.

"And healthy too, of course," responded he, laughing, though in truth laughter was far from him. Then something, perhaps the innate truthfulness within him, compelled him to add with a depreciatory shake of the head: "Not that I am a judge."

"An excellent one," declared she, quickly. "You agree with our doctor here. He says baby is strong, very strong; and—and that she will be stronger every day."

It occurred to O'Grady at this moment that "our doctor here" must be either a most skillful practitioner or else a skilled hypocrite Perhaps he was a coward! Well, such cowardice could be understood! He was looking at Lady Varley as all this ran through his mind, and he noticed the quick flush that had grown upon her face.

"Surely she is too heavy for you," he said, impulsively.

His suggestion delighted her, poor soul! She looked with fond, devouring eyes upon the child, and hugged it closer. For a full minute she did not speak, her eyes being riveted upon the marvelously quiet baby in her arms.

"It is true," she said then, turning upon him a glance full of eager gratitude. "She is heavy, though it did not occur to me before. Yes, she tires me, really dreadfully at times."

She smiled at O'Grady; she seemed suddenly to grow full of an unspeakable gladness. Poor mother! With a wild longing she clung to each frail thread of hope held out to her. Her child, her all, must be strong and rich in life; must thrive, and flourish, and bloom by and by into gracious girlhood. All this she set her heart upon, whilst the tiny object of her soul's desire lay pale and languishing upon her heart.

May God have pity upon all such mothers!

"Just now," went on Lady Varley, taking courage to express a fear, because of the encouragement he had unwittingly given her, "she is not looking her best. We think," smiling up at O'Grady, who was a tall man, with an expression full of the heavenliest confidence, "she is teething; that is what makes her so pale. You think her pale?" anxiously.

The child was ghastly.

"That would explain it, of course," said O'Grady, who began to believe himself a very fiend of dissimulation. But with that wistful face upturned to his!

"You hear, nurse?" cried Lady Varley, whose breath was coming a little quicker; "Mr. O'Grady sees nothing strange in baby's pallor. It is only what we think."

"Yes, my lady," said the nurse, in a low tone. She was a comely, kindly, homely woman; and O'Grady thought that as she spoke there was a certain reserve in her manner.

It may be that the child heard her voice; at all events she made a feeble movement in her mother's arms, struggled violently for a second or two, and then fell back as if exhausted. Lady Varley grew very white.

"It is nothing, my lady—nothing," exclaimed the nurse, who seemed to O'Grady to be extremely attached to her mistress and very anxious. She took the now motionless baby from her arms, and held it against her own breast, rocking it softly to and fro. Two tears welled from her eyes, and fell slowly down her cheeks. Lady Varley saw them.

"Why do you cry?" she demanded, almost savagely.

"How can I say, my lady? For my own child, perhaps—who is dead."

"Dead! How dare you talk of death?" cried Lady Varley, growing livid. Then her passion died from her. "Poor soul, poor soul!" she murmured, faintly, "what an awful grief is yours! How terrible is the vainness of your tears! To lose—to lose all!"

She lifted one hand to her head and sighed heavily. She looked as if she was going to faint; but anxiety for the child, from whom her gaze never wandered, kept her alive.

"I dare say, as you have told me, it is only her teeth," said O'Grady, hurriedly. "This village doctor of whom you speak, he may not be very efficient. Is there no other?"

"Yes; there is Doctor Griffin." She mentioned a Dublin physician whose skill with children's diseases was not to be questioned. "He has been here before to see baby. Last week he was here. But it is only teething, I assure you; only that," cried she, with a sharpness full of despair.

"Nevertheless, send for him again," said O'Grady, remorselessly.

(To Be Continued.)

BURNING POWDERED COAL.

It Is Done with a Blast of Air and Without a Grate.

Interesting experiments in the use of powdered fuel by the Wegener system are now being conducted in London. Small sacks of powdered coal, weighing about half a hundred weight, are put into a conical hopper. The powdered coal gradually falls out of the sacks, as required, into the hopper, and then on to a sieve about 5 1-2 inches in diameter. with small openings in it. The powdered coal would not go through this sieve with certainty without continual tapping, and this is done in the following way: Immediately beneath the hopper, and level with the boiler-house floor, is an air pipe about 20 inches in diameter, through which nearly all the air for combustion enters. As it enters it is made to pass through the blades of an air wheel or turbine, and this passage of the air causes the latter to revolve like a smoke-jack. On the axis of this air wheel there is a little knocker which taps the sieve about 150 or 250 times per minute, causing the powdered coal to descend vertically through the sieve, meeting the air for combustion as it ascends vertically. The powdered coal and air for proper combustion in this way get mixed thoroughly together and pass on into the boiler flue, each particle of coal being surrounded by air.

There is no grate and there are no fire doors, and the stoking simply consists of putting a sack of powdered coal from time to time into the top of the hopper and seeing that the right amount of air is going in for combustion. If there is not sufficient air for proper combustion entering through the main opening, as seen by a little smoke, there are two other smaller pipes where additional air can be admitted, each kind of coal requiring a somewhat different amount of air. The only object of the air wheel revolving, from fifty to eighty revolutions per minute, is to shake the sieve and cause the powdered fuel to go into the furnace in the quantity desired. When more steam and coal are required a greater knock is given to the sieve and more powdered coal is burnt; when less is required a less shake is necessary. A screw adjustment for knocking is provided to regulate the amount of coal entering, which is done by turning with two fingers a half-inch thumb-screw.

The only duty of the attendant is to put the sacks of coal into the hopper, and he ascends a short ladder to do this. He also has to regulate the amount of air for combustion and then there is no smoke. He can therefore attend several boilers. An analysis of gases of combustion proves that the combustion is excellent, and the amount of carbon dioxide is much higher than with ordinary furnaces.

WITHOUT PROOF.

A Clever But Wicked Woman Boldly Plans a Crime.

A well-known detective tells a good story, the truth of which he vouches for.

"One day," he said, "a lady came into my office, evidently in deep trouble.

"'You are a detective?'

"Yes, madame.'

"'Well, I want your services in a very delicate matter," she said, her voice sinking to a whisper, as she glanced nervously about to see that no one was present that could hear the conversation.

"'My husband,' she continued when satisfied no other visitors were in the room, 'has a decided suicidal mania. He appears to be in perfect health, eats well, sleeps well, has no cares or troubles that I know of and yet I have to watch him carefully in order to keep him from committing suicide. His mania, for, of course, I know that it is that with him, is so subtle that no one would suspect it for an instant. But he has laudanum secreted about the house. I have found several vials of it, and fear that there is more that I have not been able to discover.'

"The case was a most interesting one, and I agreed to visit the house in the guise of an invited relative of the wife and study the affair. I was greeted most cordially by the husband and within twenty-four hours admired him greatly. A lighter-hearted, merrier, happier man I never saw. Three nights later I was awakened by the screams of the wife and hastily arising and dressing, ran down stairs, meeting her in the hallway, holding an empty bottle labeled 'laudanum.' I rushed to the man's bedside, but too late. He was not yet dead, but never recovered consciousness. The seeming grief of the widow was heart-rending, but I caught a gleam in her eyes that convinced me she had poisoned her husband, and her ruse in having me in the house had been as bold as it was successful, for not a word of evidence could I have produced that she had plotted the murder of her husband. Two months later she was married again and went to Europe."

Poisoning By Stale Eggs.

Dr. Cameron has reported the occurrence of vomiting and purging in seventy-four nuns and girl pupils in the boarding school attached to a convent in Limerick, following a dinner at which mutton and custard composed of eggs, milk, corn flour, and sugar were eaten. The corn flour was suspected to contain arsenic, but analysis showed it to be free from poison of any kind, and to be of good quality. The sugar also proved to be pure. No other constituents of the meal could be obtained. The vomit was intensely green from the presence of biliary matter, but careful analysis failed to disclose the presence of ordinary poison.

The viscera of two patients who had no poison was found. Ptomaines were succumbed were also examined, but found present, but in small quantity. The milk used had been boiled, and the meat was above suspicion. The eggs, however, were not fresh, and one presented a reddish-brown color and was thought to be bad.