LORD KILLEEN'S REVENGE

Lord Killeen's Revenge

CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

"She has become a Blue Ribbonite ever since her doctor forbid her stimulants of any sort, and she found herself in want of a fresh sensation. Evans followed suit, as in duty bound, and is now a first-class apostle of the temperance creed."

"But what has all this to do with his voice?" asked Mrs. Blake, who wanted to hear the very last bit of scandal. The rest of it was a tale that was told.

"I'll tell you," said Barry; "only Mrs. Dundas and Stronge haven't read Volume I. With regard to his voice, you know he makes his a's o's, and generally plays 'Old Harry' with his vowels. Well, the other day he went up to Cairns, and, when his visit was at an end, found himself in the hall with Mrs. Harrington. He knew she prided herself upon the hall, which is, indeed, a special feature at Cairns."

"It is every feature rolled into one. It is the whole house," said Mrs. Blake.

"It's a nice bit of architecture, and beyond dispute old," put in Varley.

"If it had been young it would have been the same to Evans, whose antecedents, I should say, would preclude the possibility of knowledge of ancestral halls; but he knew it was her pet hobby, so he stopped short in the middle of it, clasped his hands reverently, and said, in a low, rapturous tone: 'What a hole!' He meant hall, poor man, but his extraordinary accent was the undoing of him.

Constantia burst out laughing.

"How did Mrs. Harrington take it?" asked she.

"Badly. She will not now be persuaded that he did not mean it. She thinks herself clever, but in reality her brains are of a very mediocre quality. She abuses him right and left, and has opened negotiations with the master of a German school, with a view to sending her eldest son abroad, to avoid the pernicious influences of home teachings."

"Poor Bobby Harrington!" said George. "I wonder how he will like the black bread and the sauerkraut, the unkempt wigs, and the dirt generally? I guess he'll have to whistle for his bath there."

"Nonsense!" said Constantia, "I dare say he will find himself much happier there than at home."

"Which won't be saying much for him," laughed Mrs. Blake.

"So that is the end of the faithful friendship between the Evanses and the Harringtons."

"The extreme end. Mrs. Harrington goes about now, everywhere, telling all of her acquaintances how insolent Mr. Evans has been to her, his best friend (she dwells strongly upon favors past), and how he called the best bit of her house 'a hole.'"

"Mr. Evans is to be pitied," said Constantia. "And after all he has sacrificed, too, for her! Sometimes even his self-respect."

"A man like that is not to be pitied!" exclaimed Mrs. Dundas, with a curl of her short upper lip. "Pouf! What a poor creature! You agree with me?" She spoke to Varley, who, however, made her no reply. Self-respect! Where was his?

"Oh, yes, pity is due to him in a measure," said Mrs. Blake. "He has gone so far with the Blue Ribbon measure that he cannot draw back, and to face the world forever with a blue rag pinned upon one's breast requires courage."

"It won't disconcert him," said Barry, "he is as fond of water as a duck."

"Or Sir Wilfrid Lawson," suggested Stronge, laughing.

"From what you have said, yes, after all, I withdraw my first words; he is worthy of pity!" cried Donna, gayly.

She was looking lovely, radiant. She was picking out the biggest strawberries from the dish before her, and was evidently enjoying them. She had said no to the tea, and yes to the champagne, and was enjoying that, too, quite thoroughly, though drinking it out of a tumbler.

When the Blue Ribbon craze overtook old Miss MacGillicuddy, she had fallen foul of wine-glasses, and had consigned them to the lowest depths, in other words, the underground cellar. Wine-glasses! vile, immoral word! Out of her sight with them; miserable reminders as they were of demoralizing pagan orgies! She would have broken the unoffending glasses but for the frugal spirit within her, and failing courage to annihilate what had cost good money, she squared matters with her conscience by consigning them to limbo. A limbo inaccessible, considering the key of it was always in her own pocket; there they would never see the light of day, or tempt the transgressor to a persistence in his folly.

"Well, you see it was business brought me," said Lord Varley, generally; "or shall we say it kept me?" Here he looked at Donna. "I should have presented myself earlier, no doubt, but for Mrs. O'Flanagan's reiterated injunctions; but I assure you I ran all the way here once I got rid of her, so as to be in time!"

"In time for what?" asked Norah sharply.

"To see you," replied Varley, laughing. "Haven't I just told you how I ran all the way?"

"You don't seem overfatigued!" remarked Mrs. Dundas, dryly. "Your anxiety to be with your beloved has not taken much out of you. You look pretty cool, considering!"

"Do you doubt me?" asks he. His tone was in a measure jesting, yet there was an under-current of serious meaning in it, that betrayed itself to Stronge.

Mrs. Dundas smiled and dropped her eyes. She helped herself to another large strawberry, and leisurely picked off its stem with a view to crushing it into the thick, sweet cream upon her plate.

"I never doubt," she said, slowly, "I always know!"

At this instant the door was thrown open, and Minnie, who was a person of impulse, almost precipitated two men into the room.

"Mr. Featherston, Mr. O'Grady," she cried, at the top of a fresh, jubilant voice. She was evidently delighted with this addition to Miss Connie's party. "The more the merrier," was a motto of hers, when "the more" meant men.

Constantia started visibly and blushed crimson. She had not had the courage to invite Featherston, and now he had come! Did all the world know of this simple affair of hers? If so, there would be a reckoning when Aunt Bridget came home. She was so prettily, so softly confused, that Featherston could not fail to mark it, and it was apparent also to those other two who loved her. Stronge, noticing that quick, bright flush, paled perceptibly, and Barry grew stormy as a thundercloud. There was little love lost between him and Featherston at any time, but now Barry's thoughts grew murderous. He recovered himself, however, almost at once, and matters went on smoothly.

Featherston, after a swift, surprised glance at those already in the room, had looked at Constantia with a certain sense of injury in his glance. If every one else was here, why had he been ignored? Lord Varley even! She understood the mute reproach, and was sorely stricken by it; but how could she explain to him all things then, and that Donna had asked herself, and that Varley had not been asked at all?

Featherston, after that one swift glance, had found a chair and seated himself at the corner of the table next to her, and therefore next to Donna, who drew her skirts aside with that indescribable little gesture of hers, that was so full of fascination because so full of welcome, and had given him a smile that was dazzling.

O'Grady, who was comparatively a stranger, and who was standing near Constantia, saw the smile, and wondered about several things.

"Mr. O'Grady, can you find a chair?" said Connie, timidly, but graciously. She liked the tall, lean traveler. "George, get a chair for Mr. O'Grady. I am sorry," she went on, gravely, because of a little saddening that she felt on account of that reproachful glance of Featherston's, "I am sorry there is not more room for everybody, but— May I ask you to try and squeeze in here, just near me; and will you have some strawberries? or some of this cake? I made it myself. And shall I introduce you to— Donna, do you know Mr. O'Grady?"

"Yes. We have met," said Donna, leaning far back on her chair, so as to turn up a lovely, smiling face to O'Grady. It was a face full of fascination, but O'Grady, after the coldest recognition of its merits, turned aside, and devoted himself to his hostess. He thought her a sweet little girl, and did full justice to the honesty of the clear eyes and the firm lips. Donna followed his movements meditatively. She acknowledged her defeat, and quite understood that he wished to show her discourtesy in a courteous manner, or at least to refuse to be charmed by her, charm she ever so wisely. When she had altogether satisfied herself about this, she drew her breath softly but sharply, and instinctively glanced at Stronge, to find him regarding her with an attention deep enough to have excited pleasure in her breast. It created, however, only suspicion.

"Already two foes," she said to herself; "and they, too, of the wrong sex!"

She shook off her momentary chagrin and prepared to make herself charming to Featherston. To do this she was compelled to turn her shoulder upon Varley, which also suited her.

"Donna," said Constantia, presently, leaning toward her, "do you know that Mr. Stronge is going to invite us all some evening to that wonderful stronghold of his, Inchirone?"

"Ah, so!" cried Mrs. Dundas. "Now, what a happy thought! But do not let the 'some evening' be too soon, I entreat you, Mr. Stronge; because I have some people coming to me at the end of next week, and it will be a common charity to help me to entertain them."

"Let us say the week after next, then," returned Stronge, agreeably, if rather indifferently.

"Donna," said Featherston. A dead pause followed his utterance of Mrs. Dundas's Christian name, and everybody looked at him inquiringly—Constantia with open astonishment and a quick flush, Varley with a frown. Featherston, however, was unmoved; and, after all, it appeared he was not addressing her—was merely giving sound to her name, which had puzzled him. "I hear it is Madonna in reality; but— You will pardon me, Mrs. Dundas," he said, in his low, musical voice; "but your name has been such a cause of speculation to me. It is one so strange, so full of meaning. Is it your real name, or one assumed as being peculiarly adapted to—"

"To me?" asked Mrs. Dundas. She seemed amused. "It was assumed," she said; "in so far your guess was a correct one. It was bestowed upon me a long time ago as being specially suited to my features; a name suggestive of goodness only should belong to a face of the same type." She glanced at him from under her long lashes; it was a glance provocative and full of quick mischief. "I was never christened," she went on, calmly; "but when a baby they called me Mary."

"Madonna Mary!" exclaimed Mrs. Blake, lifting her brows. "Never to be christened! There certainly was something odd about the woman beyond her excessive beauty—something, was it heathenish?

"When Mrs. Dundas was quite a little girl," explained Constantia, gravely, "an old artist in Rome was so struck by her likeness to a picture there of the Virgin that he named her 'The Modern Madonna.' The picture was beautiful, I often heard—so good, so godly, so full of holy light!"

"That was old Gardi," said Donna. "Yes; he used to say I had a face like an angel." She burst out laughing.

"You must have been a very dear little girl," said Featherston, in quite a kind, brotherly sort of way.

"I expect I was," returned she. "Dear at any price."

Varley bent toward her, and said something that nobody could hear. Nobody wanted to hear it, except, as it appeared, Featherston, who caught a last word and made it public.

"Riding," he said, aloud; "were you talking of riding, Mrs. Dundas? That bay mare of yours is hardly up to the mark, I should say. This morning before breakfast, when I saw you and Lord Varley down by Ringrone, it occurred to me it was somewhat imprudent of you to venture abroad so early, on so sorry an animal. Dundas should see to it."

Donna's eyes took a darker hue.

"Would that sorry animal have been safer in the afternoon?" she asked, smiling.

"No, of course not; what nonsense!" cried young George MacGillicuddy, taking her side with a generous ardor, though altogether unaware of the under-meaning of the words spoken.

"Well, disregard my hint if you will," said Featherston, shrugging his shoulders. "Hints as a rule fall through. But I can assure you there is no safety in the path you are now pursuing. That bay mare is thoroughly unsound, and liable to come to grief at any moment. Why, she hasn't a leg to stand on. O'Grady, who saw her and you, this morning, agrees with me in warning you to—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted O'Grady, gently but coldly, "I should not presume to offer advice to Mrs. Dundas, on so very short an acquaintance."

Varley, who was rather pale, now turned to Featherston.

"If advice is necessary," he said, "it surely comes better from an old friend. An entire stranger should in my opinion be the last to offer it. You see I agree with Mr. O'Grady in this." He smiled superciliously. "I know the bay mare well, of which you speak. It was, I believe, bought off your estate, through your steward."

"Tut! what a worry about such a soulless affair as a horse!" said Mrs. Dundas, with a charming moue. "Silly boy!" said she, addressing Varley with a half-lenient, half-coquettish air that gave her at once another charm.

"But—" began Varley, somewhat hotly.

"Ah!" cried she, merrily, "will nothing stop you? Must I then have recourse to force?" As she spoke she took up a huge strawberry, and pressed it with her dainty, slender fingers against his lips. Of course he took it, and of course he laughed, and then the dangerous argument was at an end. But Featherston had sown his seed, and was not discontented. The seed sown was fear, and Mrs. Dundas in due time would reap it, and turn to him for advice in her perplexity, and know herself in his power. Yet, after all, he hardly knew Mrs. Dundas.

They waxed merrier as the minutes flew; Mrs. Blake, who loved tea better than anything in the world, except, perhaps, her husband, had just had another cup, and Donna a little more champagne.

Never had The Cottage been guilty of so much laughter. It was a regular frolic, and at odd moments Constantia's heart beat rather loudly in her bosom as she thought of what Aunt Bridget would say when she found it out, and thanked her stars so many miles lay between them at the present hour. Barry was in the middle of a rather exciting tale, and he stood up to illustrate it.

"Look," said he, "he held his hand up like this"—arm extended on high with a tumbler at the end of it—"he just took one step forward; every one knew the last second had arrived; they were breathless with suspense; their blood ran cold; when suddenly the door was flung wide open, and—"

He was quite right. It was flung open, and—

Miss MacGillicuddy stood upon the threshold!

CHAPTER XI.

There was silence in that parlor for a very considerable minute. Mr. Barry's tale has been illustrated for him far more generously than he either dreamed or desired. When the deadly lull had grown positively insupportable, it was broken in a rather dreadful manner. Mrs. Blake, who was young and delicately alive to the ludicrous, gave way to a wild and perfectly irrepressible burst of laughter.

This destroyed the spell that held them. Mr. Stronge, fearful for Constantia, rose abruptly to his feet and made a movement toward the Gorgon in the door-way. The others stirred more or less. Mrs. Blake, still shaking with laughter, went to the window; Varley and Mr. O'Grady took a step further—they cleared the sill, and found themselves in the garden.

Constantia, however, though evidently frightened out of her wits, sat still; and Mrs. Dundas seemed entirely undisturbed. She looked at Miss MacGillicuddy, who was plainly fuming, with a pleased expectancy in her eye, and put another big strawberry between her sharp, white teeth, with a sense of thorough enjoyment.

Mr. Stronge, who ought to have received the Victoria Cross, went up to Miss MacGillicuddy.

"Dear Miss MacGillicuddy, this is indeed an unexpected pleasure," he said. "But I fear you must be very tired. Do sit down, and let your niece give you a cup of tea."

"It is beyond my deserts, sir, that you should make me so welcome in my own home," replied Miss MacGillicuddy, grimly.

She waved him back imperiously, and gazed with a stern glance around her. She looked from one to the other in turn, and marked where Mrs. Blake was standing, with her shoulders still moving convulsively, in the window. She opened her lips as if to speak, and Barry, seeing this, rushed into the breach.

"My dear madame, if you will just consider the long journey, the—" Here he caught her eye, and wavered and quivered, and finally broke down. "Let me get you a glass of tea—that is—er—a cup of cha— Oh—er—a glass of—that is—I mean—" He faltered in a melancholy manner.

"Young man," said Miss MacGillicuddy, sternly, "when you know what you do mean it will be high time to speak." She regarded him fixedly. "You do the part to perfection," she said; "if you had rehearsed it, it could not be better."

"The part?" stammered he.

"Ay—of a fool," said she.

This was terrible. Barry, entirely crushed, fell out of the conversation and sunk into silence. He had, with much forethought, swallowed his champagne, and now trusted in Providence that, in spite of his fatal speech, she would pass over the tumblers; though, as a rule, people do not take their tea out of them.

The discussion had, however, been of some use. It had given George time for action. Being a medical student of Trinity College, Dublin, he was naturally full of resources, and while his aunt was having this light and playful skirmish with Barry, he had made his way, unobserved even by her eagle eye, to the sideboard, and secured the champagne bottles, full and empty, had deposited them beneath a side-table with a napkin flung over them, and now stood before that side-table with arms folded calmly on his breast, prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible.

But Miss MacGillicuddy, being ignorant of the existence of these bottles, made no advance upon his quarter. Her whole energies were now concentrated upon Mrs. Dundas.

"Donna Dundas," said she, "What have you got in that tumbler?"

Donna looked pensively at her champagne.

"Lemonade," replied she, with great presence of mind, and as a preventive against further investigation she drank what remained in her glass.

"Humph!" said Miss MacGillicuddy. She now looked toward the head of the table, where Constantia sat, cold and terrified.

"Constantia," said she," where did you get those strawberries?"

"Constantia grew crimson, and then pale. Mr. Stronge hesitated. To say he sent them would get Constantia into dire disgrace; to refrain from speech placed all the onus on her. Once again, as hope seemed dead, Donna came to the rescue.

"I sent them," she said, cheerfully. "Are they not fine? So early in the year, too. I quite pride myself upon them.

"If I were you I should try some. They would do you all the good in the world. They are very—cooling."

Miss MacGillicuddy glared at her, and Donna answered the glare with one of her most charming smiles.

"You look awfully queer," she said, sweetly. "Do take my advice, and sit down and have a strawberry or two; Constantia's cream is excellent."

"Where is your husband?" demanded Miss MacGillicuddy, with a gasp.

"When last I saw him," responded Donna, pleasantly, "he was still in the flesh—still a visitor upon this sordid earth; but that is many hours ago. Where he may be now, is unknown to me."

"Why is he not with you?"

"Ah!" said Donna, "now what a difficult question is that—a conundrum almost. So many answers might be given to it; but I suppose one will suffice. I didn't want him."

"You are a wretched woman!" said Miss MacGillicuddy, slowly, and with conviction.

Mrs. Dundas regarded her, first with curiosity, then with a careful reproach; after that she broke into one of her fits of silent laughter that, as a rule, were so aggravating to the one injured. It set the others off in spite of themselves. Even Constantia, with ruin, as it were, staring her in the face, gave way to prolonged and unseemly mirth. There is no knowing what Miss MacGillicuddy might not have said or done at this culminating point, had not an interruption arrived.

It came in the shape of Mulcahy—a Mulcahy considerably the worse for a very enormous thimbleful, and with her cap all awry. It had fallen in an easy and graceful fashion over her right eye, and thus placed, greatly enhanced the original beauty of her features—which, however, were hardly Greek; at all events, not pure Greek. She advanced on Miss MacGillicuddy, who was stricken dumb by her appearance.

"Arrah! what ails ye at all?" began Mrs. Mulcahy, with a valor born of alcohol. "What the divil ails ye that ye should come back along home like this widdout a word o' warnin'? Couldn't ye have dhropt us a line, instead o' comin' sthraight in fist foremust to spile our nate little tay-fight? Fegs, tis a crooked way ye have wid ye when all's tould! There they was all as merry as grigs, laughin' till you could hear 'em in the next county, an' there you must choose to come down upon 'em (bad luck's in the word), an' freeze the blood in their veins. Wisha! 'twon't thrive wid ye, an' so I tell ye; an' 'twas always a quare one you were, Miss MacGillicuddy, an' that's the sober truth."

"Sober!" Miss MacGillicuddy repeated this word after her with terrific emphasis. "It was indeed time I came home," she said, in a low but ringing tone, "with rioting upstairs and drunkenness in the kitchen."

"Who said that word?" cried Mulcahy in a menacing tone. "Who said it, I ax? Where is he? Show him up to me. Projuce him."

"I said it," returned her mistress, with undiminished severity. "And now, Mulcahy—now, when I have caught you in the very act, as it were, when I hold you up to the public condemnation, let me once more impress upon you the necessity for joining our victorious ranks, and adorning yourself with this."

She detached from her own gown a morsel of blue ribbon and held it out to the truculent Mulcahy. That unworthy woman spurned it from her with the utmost disdain.

"D'ye think I'd so demane meself?" said she, with withering scorn. "No, ma'am; keep your ribbon for yourself. An' 'tis sorry I am for ye." This last quite pathetically. Miss MacGillicuddy was plainly puzzled; she still held out the offending ribbon.

(To Be Continued.).

A VERY STALE LOAF.

The oldest loaf in existence has recently passed into the hands of the British museum authorities. It was discovered in Assyria by a French explorer, M. Monthon, together with the remnants of several other pieces of bread, carefully wrapped in cloth. It is supposed that it was leavened and baked about the year 360 B.C., when it was the custom to put food in the coffin with a dead person. It resembles a penny bun in shape and color, and is in perfect condition. The flavor did not seem to impress the explorers, but this is not surprising considering its 2,000 years' entombment.

"Mr. Insite, give the class your idea of optomist and pessimist." "Yes, sir. An optomist is a man who is happy when he is miserable, and a pessimist is a man who is miserable when he's happy."

"Who generally gets in the last word when one of your conventions gets into an argument?" And the lady orator looked pityingly at the masculine inquirer, and answered: "There isn't any last word."

OATS, WHEAT AND BARLEY

PROF. SANNDERS BFFORE THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE.

Some Very Useful Hints for Our Farmers—Better Farming and Care in Selection of Seeds Important Factors in Securing Good Crops.

Prof. Saunders, director of Experimental farms addressed the Committee on Agriculture at Ottawa the other day, and gave a great deal of valuable information concerning tests made in growing varieties of oats, wheat, barley, and peas. He said, according to the returns, there was a difference of nearly 14 bushels per acre between the average yield of oats in Canada, and of 20 bushels when compared with the yield in Holland. This was a very serious question in its bearing on the profits of farming, since every bushel per acre increase on the average crop of Canada made a gain to the farmers of this country, estimating the oats at an average value of one cent per pound, of $825,000. There were two lines of advance open to us in regard to the improvement of this, as well as of all other crops. The first is better farming, and the next, and perhaps equal in importance, the exercise of greater care in the selection of seed, so as to sow only the more prolific sorts. He then gave the results of 44 varieties of oats, all sown on the same day, at the Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, and the branch farms at Nappan, N.S., Brandon, Man., Indian Head, N.W.T., and Agassiz, B.C. Putting all the plots together, it was found that the average of the whole was 60 bushels, 3 pounds per acre, and the average difference between those varieties which gave the poorest crop in each farm and those who gave the best was 52 bushels 1 pound. The twelve varieties which had averaged the best at all the Experimental farms, and hence might be regarded as among the most productive oats in the Dominion, were the following in their average yield:

	Bush.	Lbs.
American Beauty	75	16
Golden Beauty	74	26
Banner	73	21
Abundance	72	12
Columbus	72	4
White Schonan	69	31
Early Golden Prolific	69	16
Bavarian	67	32
Oderbruch	67	26
Abyssinia	67	20
Improved Legowo	67	—
Early Archangel	65	4

With respect to wheat according to the census returns for 1891, the average yield was 14.6 bushels, as compared with 28.6 bushels for Great Britain and 34.4 for Denmark. As in the case of oats, thirty-two varieties of wheat had been grown in each of the Experimental farms in uniform plots, all sown on the same day. The average yield of the whole was 29 bushels 48 pounds per acre. The average difference between those varieties which gave the lowest yield on each farm and those which gave the highest was 20 bushels 18 pounds. The twelve varieties of spring wheat which had averaged the best over the whole series were as follows:

	Bush.	Lbs.
Preston	34	44
White Fife	33	2
Old Red River	32	48
Advance	32	18
Red Fife	31	49
Rio Grande	31	40
Herison Bearded	31	22
Red Fern	31	6
Stanley	30	47
Alpha	30	40
Admiral	30	32
Crown	30	8

The average of the barley crop of Canada was given as 24.7 bushels, against 35.1 in Great Britain, and 42.7 in Holland. The results were given of tests of the different sorts of six-rowed barley, sown last year on test plots on all the Experimental Farms. The average yield, taking into account the returns from all the farms, was 43 bushels 33 pounds per acre. The six varieties of six-rowed barley which had averaged best throughout, taking all the results into consideration were:

	Bush.	Lbs.
Odessa	50	30
Mensury	48	32
Trooper	47	2
Royal	46	38
Common	43	36
Vanguard	43	28

The six varieties which had given the best results throughout, taking into consideration all the tests, were:

	Bush.	Lbs.
French Chevalier	47	26
Canadian Thorpe	44	25
Danish Chevalier	41	6
Newton	40	50
Sidney	40	15
Prize Prolific	40	11

Professor Robertson also gave the results of tests of different sorts of peas.

THE PROPRIETIES.

But why, persisted the native, do you serve the missionary for dessert?

Oh, he was such a pudding, rejoined his wife, lightly.

The propriety of the thing was too manifest to permit further discussion.

HIS PRIVILEGE.

This is leap year, you know, said Miss Oldun, and—

The young man leaped.

BUSINESS is BUSINESS.

Helen—Have you made a leap year proposal to Jack yet?

Ethel—Yes, indeed.

Helen—What did he say?

Ethel—He sent me a beautiful printed circular saying that he reserved the right to reject any and all bids.

KNEW ALL ABOUT IT.

Mistress (first day)—Bridget, can you make a good mock turtle soup?

Bridget—Sure I can, mum.

Mistress—Well, I'm going to market now. What shall I bring you for it?

Bridget (a little flushed and perplexed—Jist a carrot, mum, an' a bit av a turnip an' onion an' a very small piece of mock turtle, mum.