LORD KILLEEN'S REVENGE.

CHAPTER XXII.

Mrs. Dundas (in spite of certain small compensations) began to feel her life, in the little conventional Irish place in which her present lot was cast, decidedly stupid. She looked about her, therefore, to find an outlet for the overplus of vitality within her that was always ready to burst forth, and finally electrified the quiet country-side by sending out invitations for a masked ball.

There had been a little trouble at first with Mr. Dundas. He had rather hung back from seconding the idea, regarding it as an affair in a degree too startling to find favor in the eyes of a specially unsophisticated neighborhood. But she had cajoled, and coaxed, and wheedled, and finally tormented him into giving his consent.

Accordingly the gilt and perfumed cards of invitation were filled up and dispatched to every house that was not altogether impossible in the county.

If a bomb-shell had been discharged into each of these Puritanical homes, it could hardly have created a greater astonishment. The heads put on their spectacles and regarded the gilded messenger again, holding it out well from them as if a little afraid of it. Would it go off?

It was such a strange, such an unusual thing! One had heard of it, of course, and it suggested Venice at once, and another word beginning with V they did not like to mention before the youngsters, which was vice. A great many old Italian stories, as stupid as they were highly flavored, returned to them, as they pondered over the innocent bit of card. A masked ball! Here in Ireland! It was out of place and very absurd, but that was hardly the question. Was it correct? was it respectable? was there not an element of impropriety about it? They were full of fears for their ducklings.

There was, indeed, much debating on the subject, and many hesitations, but finally the young people, who were longing to see themselves in some way connected with another, and—as they believed a wickeder world than theirs, persuaded them that an acceptance should be sent.

Even after that, however, numerous difficulties arose. There were some who did not know how to set about getting the requisite masks and dominoes; there were a few who, believing blindly in their dictionaries, thought a domino was simply a dress of abnormal length; and there was still another few who had grown up to the belief that dominoes were bits of ivory, with black spots on them, with which immoral Frenchmen played a wild and reckless game over their cafe noir, which in itself was suggestive of much fast feeling. These last were greatly at sea.

Each and all went to Mrs. Dundas, presumably to pay her a visit, but in reality to cull from her some word of advice. That she saw through the simple artifice need no tbe said, and straightway she set them in the right path. She was graciousness itself, even to those undesirable ones who sat upon the confines of society, and were just in it, because they were not out of it. A tip would have sent them over at any moment.

She was charming to every one, high and low; told some where dominoes were to be had; others how they could be made by the local talent. For this purpose she lent an old one of her own, which she said had seen service at a ball given by the Princesse Dolgorouky during the carnival, the year before last. She made quite a point by lending this domino. It was received with much elation. A real domino, that seemed to their eager imagination steeped in the sunny warmth of vine-clad Italy, was precious in their sight; and worn, too, in the palace—was it palazzo?—of a princess! "Princesss," she had called it—that seemed to give an additional flavor to it.

Donna herself seemed delighted with her latest whim. She talked of it by the hour to these anxious visitors. "They would come? Oh, yes, they must. It would be such fun. Very harmless fun, of course, Harmless to dullness, but still, perhaps, a trifle less dull than the usual thing."

They were all to keep on the masks and dominoes until midnight struck; then, like Cinderella, their false garments were to slip from them, and they should stand revealed as they really were. All this jugglery business seemed enchanting to the girls, and filled them full of delight for many days beforehand.

In an interview with Constantia, Donna had declared her intention of providing her pretty cousin with a domino that should surpass all others, as a little gift from friend to friend. Such delicate articles became clumsy wraps beneath the fingers of country milliners. Even Constantia's little digits, clever as they undoubtedly were, would be unequal to the task.

Constantia demurred. She blushed warmly. She could not, she said, allow Donna to—to—

"Be at the expense of it? Tut!" said Donna airily. She curled up her lovely lips, and looked supreme contempt. Was that really it? Why, she was ordering half a dozen at least, for as many distressed damsels, and why should she not do as much for Constantia, who was her cousin, and had therefore some claim upon her? Piff! paff! stuff and nonsense! The thing was; it was settled, arranged at all events, it should be; and so let there be no more folly about it. A country idiot of a dress-maker might do very well for half that were coming; but for Constantia! No; she, Donna, would not hear of it. A really pretty girl was always of so much more consequence than an ordinary one.

Constantia finally gave in, feeling, indeed, that she had done something gauche and uncivilized in having at first refused the kindly offer of her cousin. She thanked Donna very prettily, who told her she was a dear, proud little goose; and on the evening of the ball, just ten minutes before dressing time, a box arrived for her from Ballymore containing the mask and domino promised. It contained rather more than these. Beneath the domino lay a pair of wonderful gloves that reached almost to her shoulder, and a fan pointed exquisitely, in the style of a bygone age. Constantia's color came and went as she looked at the pretty things—prettier trifles than she had ever before possessed in all her sweet if somewhat penniless life.

She donned the domino, and laughed gayly at herself in her glass. Then she put on the mask and laughed once more. When the new, lovely, long gloves had been drawn on and fastened by a little maiden called Norah, who was lost in speechless admiration, she took up the fan, and summoning George, went off to Ballymore.

She entered the large ball-room with a somewhat nervous tread; she could not divest herself of the feeling that all eyes were turned upon her. There was a subdued hum of voices all around, with little breaks of laughter now and lagain and the clicking of innumerable fans. Disguised tones met her ears on all sides, whilst she could see that some deeming a whisper (as it is) the best method of concealing one's accent, spoke only beneath their breath.

The many-colored dominoes, the black satin masks, through which the eyes seemed to sparkle like living coals, the subdued lights from the lamps, which were purposely lowered, all seemed to Constantia to lend a weird and interesting effect to the scene. The soft strains of the band, which was hidden behind a wall of cool palms and ferns, and the dripping of fountains, appeared blent together in one musical breeze that swayed to and fro, and was full of a curious sadness that was almost ecstasy.

She stood alone, amazed, bewildered, pleased. She had become separated from her brother almost immediately on entering the room; and now, as a strange voice said something low in her ear, she started violently. She had, indeed, been dead to all save the strangeness and glamour of her surroundings, and the sound of her own name brought her back with a disagreeable haste to a sense of every-day existence.

She did not recognize the speaker, in her confusion, and did not look at him. Just at this moment there was a little extra flowing of the human tide in her direction, and she felt herself floated onward gently but irresistibly, and presently found herself once again without a companion.

She was glad of it. It pleased her, and accorded so well with her silent appreciation of the brilliant spectacle before her, that a sense of being somehow alone, lost, came over her. She did not want to speak; she only wanted to watch, and enter into it really, and so impress it upon her heart that she should never forget. She had read many times of such an hour as this, and now she saw it. The windows were all thrown wide open, and the terrace outside lay white in the moonshine. It was but a simple thing to imagine the water below all that, and the gondolas—the mandolins—the rhythmical rise and fall of the oar.

As the many hues and dyes of the dominoes passed before her vision, it occurred to her that there was in the whole motley crowd no domino like her own. She rather marveled at this, until a slight movement of the throng nearest to her opened a side abbey, at the end of which a glimpse of something brilliant caught her eye. She gazed at it intently. Yes, it was her own domino, exact in every fold and line. But as she looked more intently still, a small difference, and one that would be imperceptible to a casual observer, became clear to her. On her own, at the very tip of the shoulder, near the neck, a tiny Maltese cross had been worked in black filoselle. It was so small as to be barely visible, but on the shoulder of the other domino, down there at the end of the room, her young, sharp sight told her there was nothing.

The yellow figure she was gazing at in some surprise, was as tall as herself; the loose folds of the cloak prevented her seeing whether it was slender, or of a matronly mold. The yellow flowered silk shone and glistened beneath the rays of the soft lamp-light, and the wearer, whose mask was very carefully arranged, was leaning against a bank of crimson roses artistically arranged in one of the anterooms.

As Constantia watched her with an ever-growing curiosity, she put out her hand with a little saucy gesture, and at once the girl knew that it was Donna. Some astonishment filled her breast on her discovery, which was succeeded by a touch of grateful feeling. The two dominoes were also precisely similar. It was specially good of Donna (who had a rooted objection ever to gown herself like other women) to have ordered for her a disguise in no whit inferior to that she had ordered for herself. No suspicion of any latent treachery in the act disturbed her mind. She felt only gratitude, and a little remorse in that she had so often known herself to harbor unkind thoughts of this kindly cousin.

A little wonder crept in, of course. Why were the dominoes the same? If hers had been a pale blue, she would, she imagined, have thought it even lovelier. Yellow was a color she would scarcely have chosen; but this, her way, would have been her folly, as she noticed how extremely common on all sides were the pinks and blues and carmines, and that there was literally no yellow save hers and Donna's.

The room was growing insufferably warm, and there was a movement made toward the open windows behind her. This blocked her view of her double at the other end of the room, or, rather, standing just inside an anteroom; and Constantia, roused from her reverie, followed the multitude out-of-doors into the still, warm night.

She stepped on to the balcony, and, moving down the steps that led to the broad stone terrace below, went over to the parapet, and, leaning her arms upon it, gazed dreamily into the swiftly flowing river down beneath—a small river, an angry, babbling, scolding, noisy little river, the music of which caught and held her, and entered into the strangeness of the scene. She had almost forgotten all but it, when she was roused by a footstep drawing near her. She looked up quickly, and saw that, whoever the new-comer was, he was approaching her with all the air of one who had no doubt about whom he was going to address.

It was a tall figure, looking taller than it really was in the jet-black domino that enshrouded it. But this Constantia did not pause to consider. Her heart throbbed quickly. It seemed to her that this must be Featherston.

Had he seen—followed—recognized her? Ah, if that should be! So would a true lover see through all disguises! The stranger bent over her hand, as she turned suddenly and gazed searchingly upon him. The moon just then had gone behind a cloud, so that only the fact that he was of goodly stature—tall as that one whom she most favored—was known to her.

"Will you, of your grace, deign to grant me one word?" entreated the unknown in a whisper. She had been waiting impatiently for the voice, but now she felt herself foiled. Still she could feel that there was in the tone, spite of the mockery, a substratum of deepest feeling. If he could feel like that! Happiness is a cordial. Her courage rose.

"One?" she answered, playfully, if a little nervously. "That would be but an ungenerous gift. Surely an—an old friend might demand more than that?"

"I give all. I demand nothing," returned he, still in the low whisper. It occurred to Constantia now that there was an extreme sadness in it. As she wondered at this, he spoke again. "Hope is denied me," he said.

"Faint heart," suggested she, gayly still. And then, as the meaning he might place upon her words came home to her, she blushed a warm crimson.

"True," said he. "Yet stout heart, be it never so valiant, may not always win!"

He spoke doubtfully; there was even a suspicion of despair in his tone. It was a tone so new to him, that a soft, low laugh broke involuntarily from Constantia. It seemed so strange to her that he should need encouragement, that he should fear his fate with her!

"Is that beyond question?" she asked, looking away from him, and trifling in an absent fashion with her fan. "If the heart be really strong, it would be able to watch and wait forever. And time, we are told, will melt the most obdurate."

It pleased her thus to allude to herself as "the most obdurate;" it delighted her, and made her glad in her soul that he should thus sue to her, that he should be thus ignorant of how she was already won; it gave great comfort to her girlish sense of the dignity of woman.

Her companion made no answer to her last speech that was but half breathed. He was, however, gazing at her very keenly. This she felt rather than saw, her eyes being on the ground, and the moon still obscured, and the knowledge, though strangely sweet, unnerved her. She stood slim and fair before him, with fingers closely locked, and pretty head downbent.

"Time! you recommended me time!" he said at last. "You!" And now the whisper was discarded and his voice rang out clearly on the air. "Do you know what that means to me? Hope!"

With the first sound of his voice, Constantia had started back aghast.

"You, you!" she murmured affrightedly, and nothing more. Words would not come to her. The cloud had rolled heavily away, and now the moon shone out again, lighting up the cold whiteness of the terrace, and specially, as it seemed to the stricken Constantia, that corner of it at which they stood. Stronge could see how her lips quivered, how her shamed and sorrowful eyes avoided his. He understood as perfectly as though she had given speech to the cruel certainty, that that gentle word of hope had not been meant for him. All through she had mistaken him for— His heart contracted within him. Constantia by a violent effort collected herself, and compelled herself to speak calmly, and without emotion.

"It is indeed a surprise to see you here masquerading," she said, "when I believed you still in Shropshire. To make an affair of this kind altogether successful, half the people asked should think the other half at the other side of the world. When did you return?"

"Too soon!" he said, in a low tone, full of despair. He turned and left her.

Constantia's eyes filled with tears. She made no effort to recall him, feeling it was better he should go. The mistake made had been a thoroughly unfortunate one—bitter to her as to him—but she had not been in fault. It was some faint consolation to know that he would have to acknowledge that to himself. She was full of fear least he had understood for whom her words were meant. Her brow grew crimson as she tried to recall everything she had said, and wondered with a sickening sense of shame if she had betrayed herself. He knew nothing; it was impossible he could have understood. Surely he thought only that she was answering him idly, without meaning, not knowing who he was, and not dreaming of another.

She had withdrawn into a secluded nook, where a stone seat had been scooped out of the wall. She knelt on this, and once again gazed down into the rushing stream below her. The rain had fallen heavily last night, and now the tiny thing had swollen beyond its own knowledge, and sung with foolish triumph as it hasted ever onward to its end. In all her later years Constantia never forgot it, or its wild music, or the mad sparkling of the chilly moonbeams on its breast. She could see it at any moment if she closed her eyes, as well as the great river, its goal, lying far, far away—against the horizon, as it were—placid, motionless.

"So calm, the waters scarcely seem to stay;
And yet they glide, like happiness, away."

Was her happiness going? A sad sense of disappointment filled her heart. She had so surely believed that it was he, that the awakening had crushed her spirit. Would a time ever come when, face to face with her, he would declare his love and—

She started convulsively. Again a footstep hurrying toward her, caught her ear; again a disguised figure met her view. But now, now there was no room for doubt. She would know that step amongst a thousand. Fool! to have been before unmindful of it. Her face paled, and she rose tremulously to her feet. His voice reached her.

"At last!" he cried, softly—carefully, as it seemed to her—but with undeniable and very passionate eagerness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

All suddenly, in the midst of her gladness, a very innocent but overpowering coquetry took possession of Constantia. Stronge had spoken to her in a whisper, and the ruse had been successful. She, too, would disguise her voice; it seemed to her, indeed, apart from the espieglerie of it, a much easier thing, in her present confusion, to speak to Featherston in a fashion thus subdued, than to give her voice to his criticism. She felt, too, an almost childish desire to baffle him for a moment or two, to dally with the happiness that had now surely come to her.

"Sir!" she whispered, drawing back a little, and pretending ignorance.

"It is too late for folly of that sort," said he, with ill-suppressed vehemence. "You know me, as well as I know you. And though for an hour you have skillfully avoided me, yet now I have found you, I will be heard."

There was something in his manner that killed the girlish gayety in her. She placed one hand upon the stone parapet of the terrace, and turned timidly toward him. Perhaps, however, unconsciously to herself, she was a little offended by his vehemence, because instinctively her tall young figure took a rather majestic pose.

"You sought to hide yourself from me—to deceive me," he went on, in a sort of angry agitation; "but I watched, and waited, and now—is my reward!"

Her hand was still lying upon the wall, and as he finished speaking, he caught it, and pressed it to his lips with a fervor born of passion. Constantia, though a little troubled by this new manner of his was yet glad that the hand was so well cased—and the gloves, for once in her life, were long, and suggestive of the world of fashion—were perfect as Donna's own—nay, as she remembered quickly, they were the exact counterpart of Donna's.

She did not withdraw her hand from his embrace, and a little tremor ran through her. Never before had he been like this—never before had he been so pronounced in his wooing. It was a thrill of hope and joy mingled, that rushed through her, but with it, and almost overpowered by it, was a curious sense of resentment. She could not explain it to herself, and it deadened her joy, but she knew that she shrunk, not so much from him, as from this unknown vehemence; and presently she took her hand out of his grasp, slowly, and very gently.

"I did not deceive. I did not know," she whispered; emotion, rather than settled purpose, now making her voice sink to this low level.

"Is that the truth?" demanded he, fiercely. "For all this time that I have searched vainly for you—can you tell me honestly that the avoidance was not of your making? I mistrust you as keenly as I love you. That other woman in yellow! did you put her purposely in my path to mislead and distract me? Time wasted, if so, for I am not one to be thwarted when once my feet are set upon a path." His voice sunk a little, and grew soft and tender; the fire, the anger, died from it. "Though you have flouted, scorned me," he said, "yet now that I am with you I forgive you all.

Constantia could not speak. Was it all real? What tender humility! Who would have believed he could have so abashed himself, even at the shrine of all-governing love? She was bewildered; she trembled. Was this quite what she hoped for, even in her wildest dreams? She felt she ought to speak, yet some instinct held her dumb.

(To Be Continued.)

AN EFFECTIVE LESSON.

How a Baby Cured the Drinking Habit in His Father.

It has remained for a woman in St. Louis to devise a simple and effective scheme for getting her husband out of a barroom in which he had been spending too much of his time and all his money. She not only induced him to go home, but to wish that he had never been in a saloon. The woman who did it was Mrs. Fritz Leught, who is not only young, but very pretty. She and Leught have been married a little over a year, and have one child, a pretty, curly-haired babe.

For some reason, which Leught says now he can't explain, he got into the habit of frequenting one of the barrooms in St. Louis. He got so enamored of it he failed to go home when through with his work in the evening, preferring to pass all his leisure time in the barroom. His wife pleaded with him to keep out of it, but without avail. He went from bad to worse and soon lost his position. Matters got so bad that when she wanted to see her husband Mrs. Leught was obliged to go to the saloon to do so. That made her desperate, and she resolved to adopt heroic measures in an effort to bring her husband to his senses.

So one day recently, when Leught was in a back room of the bar, a young and pretty woman, neatly dressed, and carrying in her arms, a bundle, walked boldly into the saloon. She looked about her calmly, as if in search of some one. Then she walked up to the bar, deposited the bundle thereon and started to leave the place. The barroom was full of men at the time. When the woman entered they became quiet and then astonished, as she laid the bundle on the bar very gently. As she started to leave the place one of the waiters stepped forward and stopped her. At the same time there was a movement in the bundle, and a baby's head peeped out of the folds of cloth. The baby looked about at the garish furniture, with wide, staring eyes and began to cry. The effect was electrical. All the men crowded up and tried to quiet the child, which refused to be quieted. Even the bartenders joined in the effort to amuse the youngster.

"The baby wanted to see his father," Mrs. Leught explained to the crowd, "so I brought him to the only place where his father can be found. He can take care of the boy now, because I've got to work to make a living for myself and the child."

That settled it with the crowd. Leught was hauled out of the back room, and almost before he knew what had happened was walking down the street beside his wife, with the child in his arms.

He got his former position back a few days later, and hasn't been in the saloon since.

NEATLY TURNED.

"Sister Alice is engaged," said the terror of the family as he opened the door to De Blanque's ring.

"So am I," retorted De Blanque easily; I just called to exchange congratulations."

A FENCE 400 MILES LONG.

BUILT TO KEEP THE RABBIT OUT OF QUEENSLAND.

How the Australians Are Trying to Deal With the Pest—All Efforts to Exterminate Them Appear to be Useless—Increasing Faster Than They Are Destroyed.

The New South Wales Government, it may be remembered offered a reward of £25,000 to any person or persons who could suggest an efficient method of getting rid of the rabbit; but, although the liberal reward led to the receipt of no fewer than 2,000 schemes from all parts of the world, none of them was regarded as satisfactory, and the offer was withdrawn. The domestic cat was introduced, and in certain limited areas did much service. Poisons were largely resorted to, and ferrets, stoats, and weasels have been imported in thousands into some of the colonies, and have increased fast. But hitherto the rabbits, owing to the rate at which they multiply, have managed not only to hold their own, but to constantly spread over new ground, carrying destruction with them wherever they go.

In South Australia, for instance, the direct loss from the rabbits has been put down at £250,000 per annum, and the indirect loss at a similar amount. In Victoria the active operations for the destruction of rabbits on Crown lands have been carried on by the Government since 1880, and from that date to the middle of 1894 a total of nearly £300,000 had been spent by the State on that object. As for the money spent by private individuals for the same purpose, that is almost incalculable, but it may be mentioned that on one estate alone upward of £15,000 has been expended by the owner with the view of clearing his land of the pest.

In the seventeen years ending with 1893 nearly

68,000,000 RABBIT SKINS

valued at £402,000 were exported from Victoria without counting the large quantities used by hat manufacturers in the colony, one establishment alone using 374,000 every year; yet, notwithstanding all this slaughter, the present infested area throughout the colony is estimated by the chief inspector at no less than 37,750,000 acres. Adding to the direct expenditure the depreciation of the grazing value of the land, the losses to the colonies concerned amount to millions of pounds sterling.

The final outcome of Royal commissions, of Intercolonial conferences, and of the testing of every practical method of extermination, is that the most effectual method of dealing with the evil is found to be the construction of rabbit-proof netting, by means of which the animals can be kept from acres not yet infested, can be shut off from food supplies, and can be more effectually dealt with locally.

The length of some of these fences is enormous. There is one starting at Barringun, on the Queensland border, and following the Main Trunk line from Bourke to Corowa—a distance of 407 miles; and there is another along the entire western boundary of New South Wales—a distance of 346 miles. The Queensland Government, too, has erected a similar fence along a considerable portion of the northern boundary of New South Wales, but the Surveyor-General of Queensland, in the report already referred to, says that "the rabbits must have come through the fence in

MOBS AND DROVES

of innumerable multitudes at some time," and thus have established themselves in Queensland as well.

This, of course, is the weak point in regard to fences, which are liable to break down in places, more especially in times of flood, and where they cross over creeks, while the keeping of constant supervision over the fences, so that immediate repairs can be done when openings appear, is quite impracticable where the distances are so great. In many instances countless thousands of rabbits have been seen on one side of a fence dead or dying of starvation, after eating all the available food supplies, and leaping up at the fence in their attempts to surmount it. One can imagine how they would rush through in the event of any opening appearing, and how a single break in the fence might be the doom of a country not previously infested.

There have been many projects for the commercial utilization of the animals by sending them over here in order to contribute both to our food supplies and to the cost of their own destruction, but hitherto the enterprise has not been very profitable, while some of the most competent authorities in the colonies think that if it should be followed up the result may be to conserve the rabbits instead of getting rid of them. On the other hand, too, the shipping of some hundreds of thousands, or even a million or two of rabbits to Great Britain every year would not be likely to make any appreciable differences in the numbers left behind to constitute what is feared must be regarded as a pest now altogether incradicable.

THE QUEEN'S STATURE.

Queen Victoria is very short, a good deal tinier than most of her loyal subjects think. But, woman-like, she makes the most of her inches. She drives out seated upon a very cunningly arranged seat of cushions, which causes her to look almost as tall as her companions; but see her at a concert in the first row of the royal box at the Albert Hall, where such a contrivance has not been made, and the difference is at once perceptible. Until she found standing too tiring, Her Majesty went through her state drawing rooms standing on a footstool; but no one knew she was thus raised, for her drawing-room dresses were invariably made several inches too long, which hid the footstool from view.