LORD KILLEEN'S REVENGE

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"I came at once," he said.

"Rather too soon, I fear. Did any ne notice you?"

"No; I took care of that." A quick sigh broke from him. "I am tired of this eternal deception," he said; "I wish it was at an end forever."

"Not more than I do."

"End it, then," he said, boldly.

"That would be a lighter matter for rou than for me. In cases of that sort, women go to the wall, whilst men are pardoned and taken back to the social bosom. Well," slowly. "I shall think of it." The dreamy look passed from her face, and she straightened herself. "It was not to talk to you of this I sent for you," she said, "but of something more pressing! I have been annoyed. I am worried beyond my strength. I have lost money to Featherston, and I don't know how to represent the matter to--to my lord and master," she laughed, slightly, "so as to get it out of him."

"To Featherston?"

"Yes; in that lies the sting. If it had been any one else, I should not have cared so much, because any one else could have waited."

"But Featherston—surely he did not——"

"No, no; that is not it," impatiently. "It is that I so detest him, I will not owe him a shilling for a day even. The difficulty is how to manage it. Unfortunately, it was only this morning I received my half-yearly check from Mr. Dundas; but that was mortgaged long ago, and I dispatched it by post to stop the mouth of my dress-maker. If Dundas were anybody else there would be no necessity for so much thought, but he sets such great store by his coffers, that I dislike appealing to him."

"Yet he is liberal to you?" questioned Varley.

"To me—yes; but at heart he is close as close can be. He has hitherto denied me nothing, simply because I have not gone beyond bounds in the asking; but if I ask for this sum now, I shall be subjected to a cross-examination that I confess"—with an angry little laugh—"is sure to disagree with my temper. However, what must be, must be. Advise me how to put the request."

"I should advise not to put it at all. Why should you? Let me be your banker now, as in those good old days when I backed you at baccarat and lansquenet in Venice, Rome, Vienna."

"You!" she said, "oh, no!" She colored a little, and frowned.

"Why not? Pshaw! From you to me such unfriendliness is absurd. Be sensible, and let me help you in this matter."

"To take money from you—" she said, and then broke off impetuously, and flung herself into a chair. She clasped her hands behind her head, and turned her eyes upon the wall opposite—a dark-brown wall with an oaken dado and a frieze of palest yellow. The room looked curiously pretty in the soft glare of the lamps, with its Persian prayer-rugs cast here and there upon the floor, the tall palms in the corners, the open, hospitable, glassless book-cases. The low brass fender shone brilliantly, catching the light as it fell; and there was a great deal of early English pottery in the quaintly carved cabinets that were now black with age. Upon the walls, Queen Anne cupboards held cups and bowls of Chelsea ware, and were rich in priceless Wedgwood.

"Tut! what signifies it?" said Varley. "Why should you know annoyance that a mere insignificant slip of paper can assuage? I have no check with me, but see"—gayly—"you shall have an I O U from me that will do as well. To-morrow I will bring you gold to the amount needed."

He dipped a pen in ink, and wrote upon a sheet of paper lying on the table near, and held it out to her. But she pushed it back to him with a petulant movement. An exclamation broke from him. He put the paper on the table, and going to her, dropped on his knees beside her chair, and as one sure of being unrebuked, encircled her with his arms.

"My beloved! my soul!" he whispered, "why are you so strange to me? You refuse this paltry gift of mine; yet what is there I would not give you? Myself, my life, my wealth, my honor, are in your hands if you will but accept them. Donna, think of it. Why should our lives be wasted; we have given a trial long enough to the absurd laws that hedge in respectability, and I think you, as well as I, have found them wanting. Put a finish to it: come with me to India, Canada, wherever on earth you will."

"Mr Fronde's idealized Australia, for example," said she, laughing. She leaned back and regarded him curiously. "And what of Lady Varley?" she said.

"That question might as well apply to Dundas. Why answer it? We go—they rest. In the new life I would create for us, memory of the past would have no part; we should not forget all that has been in the joy of our present."

"A modern Arcadia." She smiled, and laid her fingers, with a dainty, caressing gesture, upon his lips. "Well, I confess the picture is tempting," she said; "the very audacity of it fetches me. To compel the waters of Lethe to flow over one sounds charmingly dictatorial. And then—I have grown so weary of all this!" throwing out her hands to the room with a comprehensive wave that meant all she had not said. "The people are so tame, so good, one's very mechancetes fall flat. Everything is tasteless, dull; it is always November here, both in mind and manner. I have made the discovery that a perfectly unimpeachable husband is an unmitigated bore, and that his friends are not as mine should be. But yet—to break through all—"

"To gain freedom," cried he, vehemently. He rose to his feet and drew her up with him. "Oh, for another world!" he exclaimed, passionately; "where we two might be alone—we two together."

He had her in his arms now; her lovely head lay upon his breast, and her eyes, brilliant as stars, were gazing upward into his. She was trembling slightly, though her lips were parted in a happy smile, as she rested, passion-pale, in his embrace. This warm pallor rested on her lightly, as might a veil, and added another charm to her beauty. Never had she seemed so lovely as now, when she looked at him in a tremulous silence, her large eyes alight with love—unholy.

"We two!" she whispered back to him, so faintly that the words seemed but the offspring of a sigh; in this sigh, however, lay consent.

"And now for the dry details," cried he presently, in a radiant tone. "Oh, to be rid of this stagnant existence soon! —soon!" He seemed on the instant younger, full of a fiery gladness, with all the vigor of freshest youth upon him. "What land will suit you best —what clime—what people?"

"Any people, so long as there are plenty of them," returned she, gayly, falling into his humor. "A humdrum existence, with two or three prosy county families to drop in once a week to discuss their servants and their children, disagrees with me—as you see. Let there be change, Frederic, whatever else there be. I have a trick of growing weary; if Mr. Dundas had conquered that fact he would probably have escaped this hour."

"And I should have lost you—twice. I have much to thank him for his native dullness. Yes, you shall have change."

"You strengthen your cause. To roam the earth, to be forever moving, that is my dream of bliss. And to roam it with—you!"

She threw into her tone as access of tenderness that thrilled him. It was certainly unfeigned. She leaned a little backward, and looked at him with a soft, slow smile, the witchery of which intoxicated him. And she was his! Of her own free will she had at last given herself. The memory of that cruel past, in which she had betrayed and abandoned him, faded now beneath the rapture of the present possession.

"Wherever we go, however," she said, be sure our sin, in the shape of Mr. Dundas, will find us out. Will he sue for a divorce, I wonder?"

"I hope so."

"Why? What good would that do us? Do you know your saintly wife so little as not to understand that she would endure anything rather than forego her role of martyr. That will be beer and skittles to her, if one dare make such a remark about a creature so decidely too 'good for human nature's daily food.' No, my friend, you will not get your divorce."

"There must be some way to compel her," said Varley, frowning.

"I think not. There is nothing so mulishly obstinate as your good woman. But it is of little consequence," cried she, gayly. "I am sick of marriage. To be bound is to long to rend one's chains. If we tire," with a little shrug, "why, we can separate."

"Never!" said Varley, warmly. "Tire! Oh, no, I will not believe it. You love me too well for that."

"I did not apply the suggestion wholly to myself," said she, smiling. "Men, too, have been known to change. The matter is hardly worth an argument, however, as I think I have studied my drag-chain sufficiently well to know that he will shoot you first, and seek a divorce afterward. That would be awkward for us; for me more than you, as you would be out of it. Those silent men always make themselves unpleasant—they should be marked dangerous. There is but one chance in the matter—that you should shoot him. That would square the difficulty at once."

At this instant the sound of a heavy footfall on the far end of the corridor without, fell on their ears. Donna started.

"Bluebeard, in propria persona," she whispered hurriedly. "Pull back the curtains. No; do not go yet, he may have heard our voices." The steps had ceased. "He is now looking at the moon, and thinking of me, and studying the stars. I wonder what they tell him of his future destiny?" she said with a sneer. "Truly, there is no fool like an old one!"

The heavy tread commenced again, and came nearer. The moon, now the curtains had been softly pushed back, shone with a cold brilliance into the room; and outside, against the white stone-work of the balcony, they could see a stalwart figure that looked almost gigantic in the uncertain gloom without, drawing leisurely toward them. The massive head, the calm, powerful face became at last visible. Donna caught his eye, and made a pretty gesture of invitation to him.

"Now go," she said in an under-tone to Varley, who was not slow to accept the hint. In spite of the folly of such a weakness, it is always a trifle embarrassing to be obliged to make civil speeches to a man upon whose wife you have set your affections—with success.

Varley went toward the door, but passing the table his eye fell upon the bit of paper with the compromising I O U scribbled on it, and taking it hastily he held it out to her. He had barely time after that to leave the room, without any show of undue hurry, when Mr. Dundas entered it by the window.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Donna swept gracefully up to him and slipped her hand through his arm. He lifted it and pressed it reverentially to his lips. His beautiful Donna—his own—his wife! What a word that was! How sacred! How holy!

"That was Varley, was it not?" he said, as he stood stroking her hand.

"Yes, he has gone to get me an ice; he will be back presently."

"But, my darling, is it wise to remain so long away from your guests? I missed you some time since. You see," with a grave, tender smile, "I miss you always—I can feel when you are far from me."

"Ah! that is so sweet of you," she said, fondly, gratefully. No one could tell by her gleaming, smiling eyes, that she was inwardly execrating him for his troublesome surveillance, prompted as it was by a still more troublesome affection. "And have I been long? I was feeling so wearied, so tired, trying to keep up the spirits of these heavy country folk, that at last I gave in and crept in here to gain a little rest. Rest denied me," she went on, with a pathetic little sigh, "as Lord Varley unfortunately came into the room, and finding me, thought it his duty, I suppose, to entertain me," She shrugged her shoulders. "Such entertainment!" she said, disdainfully. "I wished him many miles away. But that is ungrateful, is it not?" with pretty self-condemnation. "He is always so kind, so good."

"He is a good fellow au fond, I do believe," said John Dundas, warmly, "though now and then one hears a whisper about him and his treatment of his wife."

"A white mouse of a thing like that!" cried she, gayly. "Pouf! who could spend an unbroken life-time with her? She is so still, so cold, so entirely incapable of a ripple anywhere. Poor Lord Varley, one is compelled to pity him." She spoke very lightly, airily, as though the topic were of a breath's importance. Now she turned her soft, Madonna-like face up to his, and leaned her head back against his shoulder. "If I were like that," she whispered, "you would not have missed me awhile since, believe me; you would not love me as you love me now. You do love me, you naughty boy?" Her glance changed suddenly from a lovely tenderness to a coquetry more lovely still. He pressed her head down fondly against his heart.

"Too well—too well!"- he said, little dreaming how deadly true the assurance. "And whatever you were I should miss you always. I am not myself without you."

"What! not even when you are trudging through your priceless turnips, and counting up your immaculate shorthorns?" He could not see the slight sneer that curved her lip as she said this in her low trainante voice. Then some mischievous fiend taking possession of her, she went on deliberately: "And so I am indispensable to your lordship's happiness? And how then would it be, were you to miss me altogether, some day?"

"That will not be, sweetheart. My span of life must needs be shorter than yours. You will be the one to have to mourn!"

Her face was still hidden against his heart, which was well, as such a delicious sense of amusement took hold of her at the folly of the word, mourn, as applied, to her, that she broke into one of her fits of silent mirth, and had much ado to conceal it. She was, however, equal to the occasion. She buried her face in his bosom closer still, as if in an access of grief; and indeed he did believe, poor fool, that the gentle agitation of her frame meant sorrow, deep and profound, at even this bare suggestion of losing him!

"Donna! how absurd! My dear one, to think you should suffer at a word! Come, now, lift up your head! See! Lord Varley will be returning presently with your ice, and it will never do for him to find you so distressed. Why, they will tell tales everywhere on me; call me a cruel ogre, and you a beauty in distress; I shall have Varley in the character of a gallant knight, arriving here to rescue you, and carry you away from me!"

The farce was growing louder every moment. Donna, however, subdued herself. She released herself in part from his arms.

"You can jest!" she said, reproachfully.

"At such silly babies as you," replied he, with infinite tenderness. "Would I have you still in tears when Varley came? By the bye," with the hope of making a diversion in her sad thoughts, "what was that he gave you just as I came in?"

Donna started slightly. But her self-possession did not desert her.

"If you will take me out to the balcony," she said, in a low, choked little tone, "I will tell you. He may come at any moment, and to see one's eyes red—" She pressed her handkerchief to them. Yes. The balcony in the darkness will be best. He will not be able to see her face there as she tells her lies.

With his arm round her, he drew her out to the calm, cool night without. He had forgotten her absence from her guests, all, save the sweet face that she was weeping and distressed at the bare thought of some day losing him.

"Now tell me about it," he said, cheerfully, with a view to lifting her out of her tender depression. "What was this thing he gave you, eh?"

"A check!" said she, with a soft sigh, supposed to be born of her great grief. It was a very careful thing, her leaving the well-lit room before making this avowal. She could, however, have drawn upon her imagination, which was inexhaustible, for half a dozen answers to his question, but a sense of reckless delight in telling the truth so far, and taking a rise out of "Bluebeard," enchanted her.

"A check, my love? For what?"

"For my old ladies," said Donna, who was extravagantly kind to the old almswomen in the parish. She went to see them very often, and delighted their dull old hearts by her gay laughter; and for herself she found a fund of entertainment in them. She gave them tea publicly, and tobacco on the sly, and smuggled in every now and then considerably more wine than was good for them. She was such a fresh joy to those tottering, sickly old souls, that they counted the hours that lay between her last visit and her next.

"Your demoralized old ladies, you should say," said Dundas, with a twinkle in his kindly eyes. He was bent on bringing her back to her usual brightness; this time he succeeded. Mrs. Dundas having come to the conclusion that she had mourned long enough, and that she might now return to her former state, took this opportunity to break into merry laughter.

"How that good soul the rector lets himself be cheated!" she said. "I firmly believe he knows all about the tobacco and the wine, but he winks at it. Oh, yes it was for my old dames I was begging to Lord Varley. You see I lose no opportunity; I levy my taxes wherever I be."

"And he responded to your petition?" glancing at the paper in her hand.

"Generously." She tightened her grasp on the check as she spoke. It was in her left hand. Her right being free she lifted it, and pressed it—a dainty, cool, sweet little thing—beneath his chin. "He was not so stingy as you were this morning," she said. "Parsimonious old boy that you are!"

She could see that his eyes were on the slip of paper, and lowering her lids she played gently with it, letting the delicate night wind catch it here, and flicking it with her fingers in an idle fashion when the wind died. Men say women are devoid of humor. Donna at least was an exception. A sense of keenest appreciation of the danger of the moment, and the absurd side of it, too, so caught Donna, and grew upon her, undisciplined soul to such an extent that her eyes lit with laughter, and she stood there almost hoping that he would demand a view of it. In all probability he would; and then—the way out of it? It would require wit, readiness. It was a situation such as her soul delighted in. She was unfeignedly disappointed when she saw he did not mean to press the matter; that he was entirely devoid of any jealous suspicion.

"There is, as I have said, good in him," said Dundas, speaking approvingly of Varley. "Generously, you said?"

"Yes. He has given me all that I asked, and more," returned she, ambiguously. It was absurd being careful about one's speeches with such a dullard as this. "By the bye, our guests! They must be trebly anxious about our reappearance by this time. If we do not make some sign, they will be having the ponds and lakes and rivers dragged for our drowned bodies. Come, let us frustrate their hopes."

She moved toward the window.

"Stay, Donna," said he, suddenly. He was made a little uncomfortable by this tale of Varley's generosity toward the old almswomen. How good she was in her ministrations to them, and what a niggardly hand was his that held back anything from her in so just a cause! "Stay," he said, and she turned at once and came back to him with the sweet friendly smile that made the whole world so beautiful to him. "Varley has put me to shame," he said, with a pleasant laugh. "I will not be outdone by him in your good graces and those of your ancient pensioners. To-morrow come to me, and I will give you what will keep them en fete for many a day."

"You are worse than Varley," she said. "Thank you, a thousand times."

"Talking of him, I wonder he has never returned with that ice," said Dundas.

"Probably he did return, and not seeing me went away again. And we" she flung a tender glance at him (it cost her nothing, and was good practice)—"when two people (two old married people, too!) are so foolishly wrapped up in each other as we have been for the past half hour, they would not, I am afraid, notice the coming or going of any one. Ah!"—she laughed, saucily—"you have much to answer for."

(To Be Continued.)

DOGS OF MADAGASCAR.

Their Extraordinary Sagacity Astonished the Frenchmen.

When the French troops invaded Madagascar, they found, among the least disagreeable of the inhabitants, a race of half-wild dogs which roamed the country in small bands. If not tame they were readily tamable, and made friends with the French soldiers at once. And then, on many occasions, the Frenchmen had an opportunity to witness a performance of these dogs which showed extraordinary intelligence.

The rivers of Madagascar—or that part of it, at any rate, through which the French marched to Antananarivo—swarm with extremely destructive crocodiles or caymans, which make entrance of the water on the part of men or ordinary animals almost certainly fatal.

But it is often highly convenient to the Madagascar dogs to swim the rivers. They do swim them, and this is the way they manage the matter.

Five or more dogs gather on the bank of a river some three hundred yards below a convenient crossing-place. Then they all set to barking at the tops of their voices. They are heard by the crocodiles, which at once begin to gather in the river in anticipation of a dog-feast. When all the caymans of the city have thus assembled the dogs suddenly take to the bush, run up the stream to the spot chosen, and swim swiftly over to the other shore before the crocodiles have had a chance to find out where they are.

TO PROTECT THE ELEPHANTS.

So many elephants have been killed in Africa within recent years that it is feared they may become extinct. To prevent this it is proposed to establish a preserve for them somewhere within Somaliland where they will be unmolested and will be protected from hunters. Such a course has already been taken in Cape Colony. The Asiatic elephant has long been protected by the Government in Ceylon, India and Siam. It has been demonstrated that the African elephant can be domesticated. They make valuable beasts of burden, as they climb mountains with remarkable ease, are sure-footed and can swim swollen streams. They possess the further merit of being impervious to the dreaded tsetse fly, and they never suffer from rinderpest or horse sickness. A huge African elephant now in the London Zoo carries women and children on his back and is as trusty as any of the Asiatic breed.

THE BANK OF FRANCE.

It now seems probable that the charter of the Bank of France, which will expire Dec. 31, 1897, will be renewed for another twenty years. The question will soon come up for debate in the Chamber of Deputies, after being in abeyance since 1892. Under the proposed new charter the bank will establish many more branches, and will undertake the service of the national debt and will perform other Government service without charge. It will also pay the Government 2,500,000 francs annually, and will have the right to increase the amount of notes issued from three and one-half billion francs to four billion. Another important concession the bank will make will be the foregoing of all future interest on the national debt, amounting to 140,000,000 francs. and the amount of the principal will not be demanded so long as the charter is in force.

FLOWERS AT A FUNERAL.

The floral offerings at the funeral of Col. North, "the Nitrate King," were estimated to be worth $25,000. The King of the Belgians sent a wreath eight feet in diameter. He also sent a duplicate made in artificial flowers to take the place of the real when the flowers had withered.

SUICIDES IN VARIOUS LANDS.

June Now Said to be the Month When Self-destruction Is Most Frequent.

It is a serious thing when statisticians disagree, for when they do, their only ammunition of controversy being figures and tabular statements, these are dealt in so extensively as to confuse and perplex the ordinary reader. Just now there is a war of figures going on in England over what might seem to some persons to be a very simple matter—the favorite month for suicides.

Buckle wrote that "November is suicides' month." He based this conclusion on a series of computations which seemed to him to show that other things being equal the number of suicides in chill November was greatest. Why this should be so Mr. Buckle did not state, though some persons have pretended to find a reason for it in the claim that in London, at least, November is the foggiest month of the year, and if any outward cause could drive a man to suicide it would probably be the continuance of a deep London fog. Some recent statistics prepared for the London insurance companies show that in England (and in France, too) July, not November, is

SUICIDES' MONTH,

and that Buckle didn't know what he was writing about when he bestowed that sinister distinction upon November. Unfortunately, this is not all. July is a longer month than November, and the total number of suicides would naturally be larger in July than November; but Mulhall, still another statistician, whose figures are usually accurate, declares that neither July nor November is suicides' month.

That distinction belongs to June—the leafy month of June, the month of roses and marriages, the last month in the year one might suppose would be utilized for suicidal purposes by sentimental persons of either sex. In London, according to Mulhall's figures, the number of suicides in June is 22 per cent. higher than the average in other months, while in July it is only 8 per cent., and in November—Buckle's month—it is 13 per cent. below the average. In France, according to Mulhall, June is at the head of the list, with 35 per cent. more than the average. July follows with 19. In Italy—sunny Italy—June is the leading month for suicides, the average number in June being 44 per cent. greater than the average of all the year. May is 36 per cent. above the average. November is 27 per cent., below.

While these variances exist concerning the month preferred by suicides for their work, some other facts on the subjects of suicides are not subject to so much dispute. In the first place, 75 per cent. or thereabouts of the suicides in all countries are men and 25 per cent. women. That proportion does not vary much. Then 45 per cent. of the suicides in all countries are married; 55 per cent. are unmarried. In New York city the number of suicides in a year is about 250, of whom 80 per cent., on the average, are men and 20 per cent. women.

THE STATISTICS

compiled by Ritti, an Italian statistican, who has not been included in the Buckle controversy, show that men, as a rule, have strong partiality for suicide by hanging or by the use of firearms. Women, on the other hand, are partial to drowning and to the use of poison. Oddly enough, the knife as a means of self-destruction is most general in use among men in England, which has an honorable position in the list of nations with a low average of murderous crimes. In Italy, where during mediaeval times the knowledge of subtle poisons and of their properties is known to have reached the highest point, suicides by poison are, relatively, rare. By the latest figures 50 per cent. of the number of Italian women who committed suicide (and suicide among women of Italy is very rare) drowned themselves; very few took poison. It has been ascertained by one statistician that the favorite hours for suicide are from 6 a. m., until noon, whereas the least popular are those immediately succeeding midnight until 6 a. m. Ireland stands at the head of all countries in respect to the low average of suicides. In Denmark the average is highest. In proportion to the total population, Paris, with a very large transient population, has the largest number of suicides in a year. Rome among the larger cities has the least. New York city's average is about midway between the two.

ABOUT PICTURE BOOKS.

If ever the busy mother can find time she should make picture books for her little ones. Children have been known to amuse themselves for hours with one of them. Brightly-colored pictures are the best if they can be procured, but others, providing they are not stiff or conventional, do just as well.

The pictures found to interest the little ones most are of animals, preferably domestic. Pictures of horses running or racing, or of kittens playing are always more interesting to the little one than pictures of these same animals standing still or lying down. Terrible pictures of robbers, Indians, etc., are always great charms. Pictures which the children do not understand are very often the kind they like the best.

Big scrapbooks of pasteboard can be procured cheaply, but the better kind are made of cloth. These can be made at home and never wear out or tear. Paper cambric is generally used, and the book can be made as large and thick as desired. The edges of the leaves should be hemmed or pinked, otherwise they will present a ragged appearance in a short time. The pictures should be carefully pasted in with cooked flour paste or glue, and there will be a book which will be a source of great pleasure to the little one.

AN INDICATION.

I think the new girl must have lived with a milkman before she came to us.

Why so?

The first question she asked was where she could find the pump.

A MISTAKE.

They tell me that Austin made his first start in life as a messenger boy?

Impossible! No messenger boy ever made a start!