A Girl's Caprice

OR, THE RESULT OF A FANCY DRESS BALL

CHAPTER IX.

"What a time you have been!" cries Diana, meeting her upon the door-steps and drawing her into the breakfast-room. "You saw him?"

"Yes."

"You spoke to him?"

"Oh, yes, yes."

"You——?"

"Were scolded by him!"

Hilary drops into a chair.

"Scolded by him?"

"Actually scolded!"

"I don't believe a word of it," says Diana, who as a rule is really the most polite creature in the world.

"Well, you may. He scolded me terribly. So terribly, that I still tremble beneath the wrath of his denunciations. I don't think, Di, I could live out my life with a man whose eloquence lay that way."

"I wish you'd explain," says Diana anxiously.

"And yet," continues Hilary, following out her own late train of thoughts as if not hearing her sister, "I should like to marry him, if only —for revenge!"

"Nonsence, Hilary! I believe you are laughing. I—Why, what did he say to you?"

"Oh, you shall hear. I hope you'll like it. It's actionable, I think. You should be the one to prosecute."

"I?"

"Yes—he"—here Hilary's voice grows almost unintelligible with laughter—"he accused me of making love to——"

"Who?"

"Jim!"

"Good Heavens! The man is mad," says Diana.

"Well, I was too polite to tell him that, but the fact is, I went into the garden after luncheon to pick a few laurel-leaves, and Jim was there, and of course we both talked over the luncheon."

"Well?"

"Well. My dear fiance was in the window and saw the parlor-maid of a few minutes ago in confidential intercourse with the master of the house. Of course he was amazed. After all," with a judicial air, "I dare say under the circumstances that I should have been amazed too"

"How unfortunate that he should have seen you!"

"Yes, very. But that was not all. He accused me on the spot of being a disloyal servant to your royal highness."

"What on earth are you talking about, Hilary?"

"About my future husband. He evidently thought I was behaving very badly toward you. Oh! Jim!" as Clifford enters the room, "come here."

"Jim, do you knaw what has happened?" says Diana. "Mr. Ker saw you talking to Hilary in the shrubberies, and he thinks——"

"That Hilary is in love with me," says Clifford. "Well," thoughtfully, "I can't blame him."

"Jim!" says Hilary.

"Well, my dear!"

"You know he must have thought —idiot though he is—that it was you who were in love with me!"

"Ah! Don't make him out a greater idiot than he is," says Clifford sweetly.

Here Diana, who had been laughing a little, breaks into the discussion.

"It's all very well," says she, "but how are we going to meet him next week at Mrs. McIntyre's dance."

"What!" exclaims Hilary. For the first time in all this wild adventure of hers she looks really stricken. "You don't mean to say he is going there?"

"Certainly he is. He told me so. He is going to Dublin on business to-morrow, but will be back in time for it."

"Chut! He'll never be back in time! What do you think, Jim?" turning to her brother-in-law, with much apparent courage, but evidently with a sinking heart.

"I don't know," says Clifford with deep and depressing reserve, who feels this to be a likely moment in which to drop into deadliest gloom. "He was able to put in an appearance last time, though he arrived at midnight. I decline to give an opinion. One never knows what may happen. It is bad to be wildly previous."

"Oh! somethiog will happen to prevent him," says Hilary. "It would be too much. How on earth could I meet him?"

"How indeed!" says Clifford, "after this base deception."

"You might stay at home," suggests Diana anxiously. "But I shouldn't like you to do that."

"Stay at home! From a dance! Never!" cries Hilary with decision. "If the worst comes to the worst, why I'll meet him, and give him a dance or two!"

This audacity makes them laugh.

"I shall be the worst off," says poor Diana, sighing. "He will think me terribly to blame! And as for you, Jim, when he meets you ——"

"When he does."

Mr. Clifford is now sitting in an arm-chair, teaching a little terrier to beg for his bread.

"But, my dear Jim, you will meet him at the McIntyres'."

"Not if I know it. I'm going to play hide-amd-seek that night in and out of the rooms—Sit up, Trot, cant you?—And I defy any one to catch me at that game once I put my mind to it. Oh, what a night I'm going to have! Such splendid exercise——"

"I think I'll play it, too," says Diana, with a rather faint laugh, "I don't believe I could meet him after this."

"I hope, Diana," says her husband severely, "that you will see your way to playing it with me."

"Oh, you can laugh," says Diana, growing rueful again, "but I know exactly how it will be. You and Hilary will be out of the way, and it will be left to me to explain to him this daring imposition."

She looks at Hilary, but that culprit' shead is downbent, and no comforting words come from her.

"Well, look here," says Diana, taking a step forward, and growing endued suddenly with a touch of spirit, "I won't do it. No. Nothing shall induce me. I've told him so many things already, that I can't tell him any more."

"You needn't!" says Hilary; she too is looking distinctly uneasy, but a smile breaks through the little cloud that dims the brightness of her face. "You can leave it all to me. I'll tell him. I'll explain. When he sees me as Bridget——"

"Oh, Hilary, you won't appear again in that dress?" pointing to the dress Hilary has worn during the luncheon.

"I shall, indeed. He——" she stops short, "admires me in it," she was going to say, but found it impossible; she colors vividly, and says instead, "will probably have forgotten all about me."

"Oh, modesty, thy name is Woman!" says Clifford, who has now almost induced the terrier to wait for the infinitesimal part of a second before devouring the biscuit.

"I'm not going to be ashamed of anything," says Hilary perversely. "Why should I? I think I have been such a good girl all through. I have helped you out of your difficulty with your parlor-maid. I helped him to everything I could think of—I even gave him back his stick. What more does he want?"

"Nothing, I hope," says Clifford. "Or he must be the most unreasonable fellow alive. And I wouldn't marry an unreasonable fellow if I were you, Hilary."

"As to marrying him, that is out of the question," says Hilary warmly. "There is only the question of putting myself straight with him. That I can easily do."

"Yes, I'm afraid the marriage question is at an end," says Diana sadly. "I told you, Hilary, that you should not have trifled with him in this way. And," sighing, "he would have been such a good match, too."

"Brilliant!" says Clifford. "Fiery!"

"Don't, Jim. I really wish to speak seriously to Hilary. He would be a good match."

"Well, my dear, am I not agreeing with you there? A match of the finest quality; I call him; warranted to——"

Here a sound, evidently coming from the lower regions, attracts their attention.

"Cook has come back," says Diana hurriedly. "For Heaven's sake, Hilary, go and get that dress off before she sees you."

CHAPTER X.

The first three dances are at an end; Hilary, as she enters the ball-room, can see this by the card hanging near the musicians. She can see, too, after a hurried glance over the room, that the Dyson- Moores Moores and their party have not yet arrived. The fourth is a waltz—she has arrived just in time for it—and she gets through it with a tall Crusader, enjoyably enough, but always with a sense that she is watching the doorways.

The Crusader, who is young and immensely in earnest over his waltzing, which like himself has not yet come to perfection, permits her, toward the close of the dance, to rest a moment, and in that moment she knows that her fate is upon her.

Her heart almost stops beating. Yes, there is Mrs. Dyson-Moore, and Ker with her. Mr. Dyson-Moore is here, too, straggling somewhat in the rear—he is always in the rear, poor man—and several other people, mostly men from the barracks in the next town. Hilary, however, sees only one man, and that is Ker; he is dressed as a Cavalier, and looks absolutely handsome, a thing one would not have expected from him. He is now standing talking to Mrs. Dyson- Moore, and it suddenly occurs to Hilary that that elastic person is wearing the triumphant expression of one who has just added another scalp to her belt. Is it Ker's?

He seems at all events thoroughly content with his present position, and in no wise eager to withdraw from it. All his attention seems to be indeed given to his hostess, who has discarded the Amazonian dress, and is now declaring herself to an admiring if slightly astonished crowd, as Folly. By this change she has added considerably to her charms.

Never was there so radiant a Folly—or so picturesque a one. She seems to gather a fund from the sensation she is so evidently creating, and especially from the withering glances of old Miss Kinsella, who is staring at her through her gold-rimmed glasses from the distant doorway, with stern and open disapproval. Miss Kinsella always stands near the doorway wherever she goes; it gives one so much a better chance of seeing each new arrival, and the manner of their reception, and the gowns they wear, and who comes with them, etc. Nothing escapes Miss Kinsella.

Mrs. Dyson-Moore, who has been nodding and smiling at her from a low couch, with overflowing affection apparently, has now nearly goae into hysterics behind her fan over the return she has had. Her nods have been received with a stony glare, her smiles with a glassy eye. Hilary can see that Ker has gone behind the fan too, and that now, the fan is shaking.

This is a big fan any way, and a delicious one too, all blue and gold! Indeed, Mrs. Dyson-Moore is a dream of blue and gold all through.

A touch of burning envy saddens for a moment Hilary's heart. If sho could have got a lovely costume such as that—not thaat of course—but something equally lovely—she might have shown up well to-night. There are one or two costumes in which she has often told herself—only herself—that she would be well—very well worth looking at. But any of them would cost at least ten guineas, and she—well, she hasn't got ten guineas. That's all. It is a finished argument.

The fifth dance on the programme is the Lancers.

"A beastly shame," mutters the Crusader sotto voce, who thinks all dances should be waltzes, if only to oblige him.

The musicians have struck up the opening bars and there is a little stir through the room. Some are running away from the slow dance. others are running toward it. Hilary sees Mrs. Dyson-Moore rise from her seat and Ker with her. They take a step in the direction of the middle of the room. Plainly they are going to dance it—together.

"Will you give me these Lancers, Miss Hilary?" asks Lord Emherst. "It is given to youth to be happy enough to bear you off in the fast dances, but perhaps you will spare an old man like me a little walk through."

The pleasant-faced old gentleman holds out his arm to her. It is impossible to refuse.

"I shall be delighted," says she, smiling.

She puts her arm through his. All at once, her courage returns to her. Yes, she will dance these Lancers, and if Mr. Ker sees her, well—Well, then, this embarrassing situation will be at an end. And she could hardly bring it to a finish in better company.

Lord Emherst is the one big man in the country, and certainly the best beloved by all classes.

When she and he have taken their places, Hilary for the first time lifts her eyes. A sigh of relief welcomes the fact that her vis-a-vis is not Ker. A second later the relief is dead. Killed by another fact.

The man on her left hand is Ker!

He and Mrs. Dyson-Moore are dancing at the sides. In another moment or two she will have to place her fingers in his. He will turn her round. What will he say say? Do? Nervousness seizes upong her. She is afraid to lift her eyes, but with the nervousness comes a strange uncontrollable sense of amusement. She feels that she would like to laugh, but dare not. Oh, that luncheon!

The time has come. She turns and holds out her hands to him. For the first time tonight Ker's eyes rest upon her.

The music restores him to his senses. Once again the steps are gone through—once again the parlor-maid is holding out her hands to him. One hand is a little closed. It holds something. She opens it, and slip sthe something into his palm.

"Forgive me," breathes she.

It is the florin!

"It will be difficult," returns he. "I know you now. Your name is not Bridget."

"No."

"Nor Maria, nor Sarah, nor Henrietta.

"No."

She is ashamed of herself, but she does laugh.

"It is Hilary?"

"Yes."

She has returned to her place, but a little while later they are face to face again.

"Will you give me the next dance?"

She shakes her head.

"Engaged."

"You will give me one. however? You owe me something."

"Do I? Very well, I'll pay it."

Another little chance comes.

"Let me see you after this?"

She smiles.

"Who is Miss Burroughs dancing with?" asks he, dropping back to his place with Mrs. Dyson-Moore.

"Lord Emherst. You know her?"

"Slightly. As a fact she is a sort of cousin of mine."

"Is she? Of course, I remember. You went to see the Cliffords one day when you were here a week ago. Some people say she's handsome."

"Not handsome!"

"No?" delighted! "Well, I agree with you. And dowdy! My word, I'd rather stay at home forever than go about in a rig-out like that. I'm so glad you"—with emphasis, and a glowing glance from under her blackened lids—"don't think her a beauty."

"As for that, I only said I didn't think her handsome.

"Well?"

"Strictly handsome people, you know, are seldom beauties."

"Oh, I see," with distinct offence. "You think her then——?"

"A very pretty girl," says Ker.

"One could say that of every other girl one meets," says Mrs. Dyson-Moore, with a little offended hitch of the shoulder nearest to him.

The Lancers are over now. Ker, slipping through the crowd here and there, looks everywhere for Hilary. But in vain. Has she been avoiding him? When the next dance is in full swing, he looks for her in the ball-room, and sees her waltzing gayly in the arms of a Mephistopheles.

He stations himself doggedly in one of the doorways, and watches her. When the dance is over, she moves through it. He stops her.

"Miss Burroughs, you promised me a dance, I think."

"Yes?" She looks at her card. "I have nothing until the ninth. That," without looking at him, "is free. It is a polka, and I hate polkas. Will you have it?"

"Grateful for small mercies," murmurs he, bending over her card to scribble his name on it.

He looks at her as he gives it back.

"You will remember?"

It is plain he has little faith in her. Hilary gives him in return a strange little glance.

"I always remember," says she.

(To be Continued.

WHY WE USE LEFT HAND

REASON IS BECAUSE WE ARE LEFT-HEADED.

Woman Now-a-days Has More Power in her Left Hand Than Man.

Why are we right-handed?

The seemingly simple question has puzzled scientists and others almost from time immemorial. And yet, when we come to reflect upon the matter, the answer soon becomes apparent.

We are right-handed because we are left-headed.

That is to say, the left of the two hemispheres into which the brain is divided, the one which is responsible for muscular action on the right side of the body, is larger and heavier than its counterpart. And this comparative excess of bulk and weight again is due to the heart being situated on the left side of the body. The left hemisphere gets, in consequence, more than its proper share of the blood which is continually being pumped upwards by that organ.

If the heart were on the right side of the body, mankind would be left-handed; as it is, he is, and always will be, right-handed. This follows naturally; but, of course, training and custom will work wonders in this direction as in any other.

For instance, most men who shave themselves are able to use a razor, an exceedingly delicate instrument, equally well with both hands.

A distinguished member of the Royal Academy, now living, has taught himself to write simultaneously with two pencils, one being held in the right hand.

THE OTHER IN THE LEFT.

The caligraphy of the one is forward, the other backward, but both are equally plain and legible. Also, there is an eminent London surgeon, recently made a knight, who spent three years teaching himself to use both hands independently in order to aid him in operating.

Every lover of first-class cricket, too, must have noticed that many of our best fielders have acquired the art of using either arm equally well. Other leading exponents of the game have taught themselves to bowl left-handed while continuing to bat right-handed.

The trained pugilist, again, makes far more use of his left hand than of his right, both for offence and for defence. And the violinist or the pianist brings both hands into play equally, although after a different fashion.

All of which goes to prove that, although man is naturally a right-handed animal, it is a comparatively easy matter for him to acquire equal dexterity with either, or with both.

Also, there is every reason to believe that paleolithic man was ambidextrous, at all events to a far greater extent than his modern descendant.

"But how on earth," you perhaps not unnaturally inquire, "can we speak thus confidently about a gentleman who roamed this earth for the last time some five hundred centuries ago?"

The answer is that the paleolithic man was, in his way, both a sculptor and an artist, and we know, from the specimens of his work which have come down to us, that he carved and painted just as often with his left hand as with his right, and

JUST AS SUCCESSFULLY.

For these specimens are mostly faces and figures in profile of men and animals, drawn on or cut in bone or mammoth tusk, and their faces or heads are indiscriminately left and right.

Modern man does not do this. Try for yourself. Draw with the forefinger of your right hand an imaginary human profile on the page on which these words are printed. You will find that you naturally and instinctively draw it with the face turned towards the left.

Now trace a similar profile, in imagination again, with the forefinger of your left hand. You will observe that you just as naturally and instinctively draw it looking to the right.

The inference is obvious. These primitive men, who draw right-inclined and left-inclined profiles with equal grace, and equally often, must have been able and accustomed to use both hands with equal artistic cunning and skill.

It is pretty certain, however, that they used their right hands in fighting more than they did their left. Fighting even in those early days was done with weapons of a sort, pointed weapons too, and your typical primitive man quickly discovered for himself that to spears and swords the heart was very vulnerable. So he used his left hand to guard it, thereby condemning that member to comparative inactivity, and

FOUGHT WITH HIS RIGHT.

Woman, however, did comparatively little fighting; and, as a consequence, she retains, even to this day, a far greater degree of ambidextrous skill than man. She buttons, for instance, her dresses with her left hand, and they are made, presumably, to suit her convenience in this direction, with the buttons on the left side and the button-holes on the right.

Man, on the other hand, has for unnumbered centuries found it more convenient to have his clothes made with the buttons on the right side and the button-holes on the left.

And here we come upon one of the many stumbling blocks which litter the path of those who would advocate universal ambidexterity.

They have not only to set themselves to counteract a natural tendency due to a physiological fact; the preponderance namely in weight, and therefore in activity, of one side of the brain over the other. But they must reconstitute the whole order of things from the commencement, not to speak of altering the inherited habits of unnumbered generations.

To go back for a moment to the instance cited above; a man who tries to put on and button up a woman's waterproof, or a young man attempts to don and fasten a man's overcoat, will each find that neither hand is readily capable of performing

THE PART OF THE OTHER.

And this is only one instance out of tens of thousands. We feed ourselves ambidexterously, but we always take the knife in the right hand, the fork in the left; and they are made specially to suit people using them that way.

You could not conveniently use a cork-screw, as at present made, with your left hand, no matter how dexterous you might be with that member in other directions. The trend of the screw would not permit of it.

To be really and truly ambidextrous in all our actions, we should have to have things made differently for two hands—to have rights and lefts in everything, the same as we do now in boots and gloves. If it were otherwise, even with all the training and practice in the world, the right hand would inevitably regain sooner or later the supremacy of which we are asked to imagine it temporarily deprived.

The truth of the matter really is that ambidexterity is not wanted. Man, it is true, came originally to be right-handed through a purely physiological peculiarity. But he remains right-handed because he finds it more convenient.

The left hand when used, is almost always subsidiary to the right. With the former the painter holds his palette, but he paints his picture with the brush held in the latter. The tailor stitches with the right, the cloth he supports with the left. And so on.—Pearson's Weekly.

An old bachelor who was very bald fell in love with a pretty widow, whose late husband's name was Robin. One evening the bachelor dropped in to have a cup of tea with the widow. After tea was over she commenced to sing 'Robin Adair.' The bachelor picked up his hat and said: "Madam, even if your husband did have hair, it's no fault of mine that I haven't." Then he fled.

"Harkins," said the head of the firm to the foreman, "the firm has decided to inaugurate a system of profit-sharing with its employes." "Good!" replied the foreman. "What were the firm's profits last year?" "Last year the firm lost $3,000. That necessitates a reduction of 10 per cent. in wages under the new system. Tell the men the new arrangement comes into effect immediately."

We may beat our swords to plough-shares
And our spears to pruning-hooks,
And betake ourselves to farming
In the peaceful country nooks;
But we want them back as weapons
When we find at early dawn
That our neighbor's scraggy chickens
Have been scratching up our lawn.