A Girl's Caprice

OR, THE RESULT OF A FANCY DRESS BALL

CHAPTER XII.

"Thank Heaven!" says Ker.

"For what?" questions Hilary, who is not feeling as sympathetic as usual.

"For—" He checks himself abruptly. "Because we are once more alone."

"You must be tired," says she sweetly. "Do you really want to talk? Am I boring you? You have had a long journey, I know——"

"What nonsense!" says he. "As if I should mind a few miles by train." He has not altogether understood her. "Will you sit down here until the next dance begins?"

"It must be almost due now, and you have promised it to Mrs. Dyson-Moore."

"So I have." He would have added "worse luck," but civilization prevents him. "Still there is a minute or two left."

She makes no answer to this, and the silence growing a little oppressive, he breaks fresh ground.

"How fond you all seem to be of fancy balls down here!"

"Not always! But once a thing is started, you know what a run there always is on it. It becomes an epidemic. It is worse than the measles. It catches all the county!"

"We are certainly of the monkey tribe. Such imitative animals! But fancy-dress balls—they must be such a worry!"

"Not greater than others. Look at red hair. Let one woman preach a crusade on the becomingness of it, and all other women will dye their hair like mad. That must be a far greater worry than giving a fancy ball. Because, at all events, the latter permits us—at least some of the fortunate ones of us—to show ourselves at our best for once in our lives."

"Ah! you can speak!" says he, "being one of the fortunate ones."

It is very ready and very delightful, of course. But to Hilary, in her present mood, it savors too much of the man of the world, of the word in season—of, in effect, hypocrisy.

"I wasn't thinking of myself," says she, quite calmly. "I am, of course, quite out of it. I should have liked to array myself in gorgeous apparel,"—here she smiles—"but I nadn't a penny to do it with. I was thinking of Mrs. Dyson-Moore."

"It was very good of you," says Ker.

His manner conveys to her the belief that he thinks it very good of her to waste a thought upon her at all, but this does not satisfy Hilary. Why didn't he say it?

"Good of me?" says she; a sudden desire to make him speak has driven her to this direct question.

"Yes. Why should you? Others will no doubt take that task out of your hands. Many others."

He laughs, and a vision of Mrs. Dyson-Moore's very short skirts comes once again before Hilary's eyes. Is he laughing at her? She turns her eyes suddenly on his.

"Are you a friend of hers?" asks she.

"A friend? An acquaintance rather, and," meaningly, a guest."

"Ah, I see! Your lips are sealed."

"They would be certainly if there was any cause for sealing." He smiles and gives himself a slight shake. "Have we not had enough of 'Folly' for one evening?" asks he, with a rather comic smile.

"I don't see how I have been foolish," returns she, wilfully misunderstanding him. She gives him a little return smile, however, as she says it, which betrays her knowledge of his meaning, and at once he feels that "peace with honor" has, for the moment at all events, been restored.

"You foolish! Never!" says he.

"Not even—when—I——"

"Not even then. One can forgive you for keeping up the masquerade under our—peculiar circumstances."

He regards her steadily, as if wishing her to understand that there is meaning in his words—a desire to approach the delicate subject of the will. Hilary colors faintly, and trifles with the corner of her apron.

"I suppose you wanted to study me?" says he, a little daringly.

"Ah! That was what was so unfair. I know it now. Why should I study you when you had no opportunity of studying me?"

"Yet I had. I had," says Ker galyly. He laughs as if remembering.

"But not as if you saw me as my proper self."

"Your—other self was not to be despised. And how do you look when you are your proper self?"

"As I look now, of course."

"What! Do you always go about in a cap and apron?"

"Oh, nonsense!" Here they both laugh a little. "You see I have the advantage. I have seen you twice in ordinary clothes, whereas you have never seen me except in this." She pulls out a fold of her gown.

"'This' is very becoming," says he.

"I don't know what else you could say, I'm sure," disconsolately. "And I can't help thinking that I shouldn't have done it. Diana was very angry with me."

"I am very glad you did it," says Ker, with sudden earnestness. "It has made us friends much more quickly. It has taken the chill out of our introduction. Don't you see?"

"Yes, perhaps so." She has seated herself in one of the chairs, and now leans forward to speak to him more earnestly.

She had so arranged her housemaid's gown as to have the sleeves tucked up to the shoulder, as though about to go in at once for a severe scrubbing match. This lets her lovely naked arms be seen in all their beauty. She rests them on her knees now and looks up at Ker.

"Do you know I never know what to say to a partner when first introduced to him?"

"I remember what you first said to me."

"So do I. It was 'forgive me.'"

"No, it wasn't. It was 'A glass of water, sir?'"

Hilary blushes hotly. "That was not an introduction at all."

"And was the other?"

"No. After all," with a little embarrassed laugh, "I don't think you have ever been introduced to me."

"We must get your sister to do it to-morrow. I may call to-morrow?"

"I hope you will come to luncheon. Diana will be very glad to see you."

"And you?"

"I shall be very glad, too."

"Thank you. I suppose Diana wouldn't allow me to be butler to-morrow?"

"Certainly not," laughing and looking a little confused.

"I'll ask her, however. It would do me good to wait on you this time."

She is looking lovely with this new earnestness within her shining eyes, with this soft touch of shyness on her beautiful lips.

Hilary lifts her eyes to his.

"I wish," begins she. "Mr. Ker, I wish you would forget all about that stupid prank of mine."

Ker drops into the chair beside her.

"I'll do anything you wish," says he in a low tone, "if you will call me—Fred."

"Fred! is that your name? Oh! I couldn't call you—Fred. It would be impossible." She rises quickly to her feet. "Why, it is only a week ago since I saw you."

"What has that got to do with it?" He too has risen. "Why can't you, of all people, call me by my name? You might remember that I am your——"

He pauses—purposely perhaps. Hilary grows crimson. What is he going to say?

"My? My?" stammers she. Her glance has grown cold. She is intensely angry with him, partly because of her unlucky blush, partly because he has been the author of it.

"Your—cousin," answers Ker softly. If he had been going to say something else, her sudden touch of hauteur has prevented him.

"The next dance is beginning," says Hilary, still with her manner distinctly changed. "Mrs. Dyson-Moore will be waiting for you." She moves toward the door of the ballroom. Ker follows her.

"You will give me another later on?"

"I am afraid not. My card is quite full."

"Then, till to-morrow," says he, indifferently as it seems to her.

"I shall tell Diana you are coming."

"Our dance, Miss Burroughs," says a gay Hussar at this moment.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Good heavens, Hilary! Here's Miss Kinsella!" says Diana, in the hurried, subdued voice we all know, when destruction is descending upon us. She pounces upon her work—a frock for the youngest darling—and makes a rapid flight from the window where she has been sitting, into the middle of the room. It is more a movement of impulse than anything else.

"That means two hours!" says Hilary tragically, stopping short in her arrangement of the flowers in the vases.

"And he is coming at one. You told him the hour."

"He knows it. I say, Di," with a sudden gleam of hope, "let us say we are out."

"Too late. I saw her, and she saw me, as she came up the avenue."

Hilary falls back in her chair.

At this moment a loud rat-a-tat-tat is heard at the hall door.

"I suppose there is no safe and sure way of murdering any one?" says Hilary gloomily.

Here the door is thrown open, gnd Miss Kinsella enters, with all the signs of storm about her, followed, by Clifford, who had met her just outside.

"I came in thus early, me dear Mrs. Clifford," cries the old maid, "because I felt I must speak to ye!"

Hilary's heart stands still for a moment. Is it anything about her? About that luncheon—or Ker?

"About what, Miss Kinsella?" asks Diana anxiously.

"Why, about Pether!"

Hilary's heart gives a great rebound. She comes quickly forward. She takes old Miss Kinsella's hand, and positively beams upon her, to Diana's intense astonishment.

"Tell us!" cries Hilary.

"Well, Pether—ye know me nephew, Pether Kinsella—ye saw him last night? eh! ye did now, didn't ye?"

"Diana, I hope you will be able to say yes to that," says Clifford solemnly. "This, I must inform you, is a most important case."

"Yes, yes, of course we saw him," says Hilary enthusiastically. She is feeling so obliged to this old bore. "He was a sort of Scot, wasn't he?"

"A Highland chieftain," says Clifford, correcting her severely. "Of the very first water!"

"Ye're right! Ye're right!" cries old Miss Kinsella, her curls vibrating with excitement. "A Highland chief he was, an' lovely he looked! I couldn't take me eyes off him all night. A matther, me dear, that made him a thrifle mad. You know he will have his flirtatious ways sometimes!"

"We know! we know!" says Clifford sadly.

"Flirtations, but not indecent," says Miss Kinsella, blushing a bright orange. "Well, an' what will you think, me dear Mrs. Clifford, when I tell ye that they put him down in the list of characters for Mrs. McIntyre's fancy-dress ball, as——" Here she breaks down, and dissolves into tears.

"Oh! Miss Kinsella, what is it?" asks Diana tenderly. "There now, don't distress yourself."

"I must begin at the beginning, me dear, if I'm to make you understand it. When me nephew, Pether Kinsella, arrived at the hall door, that jackanapes of a footman they have was standing just inside it, with a pencil and paper in his hand, an' had the impudence to ask Pether about his characther!"

"His character?"

"Yes, me dear. His characther! An' you all know what me nephew Pether is! A reg'lar snowdhrop!"

Here she pauses to wipe her eyes, which gives Hilary a chance of retiring behind the Irish Times.

"Dear Miss Kinsella," says Diana, gently, "I think the man must have wished to know what costume your nephew was wearing, with a view to putting it in our daily paper and, perhaps, in the Gentlewoman, or same other society paper."

"Yes, me dear. So it seems now, but at first me nephew Pether could not understand what he was at, an' you know what a spirit he has, quite bloodthirsty when his honor is called in question!"

"But the man explained?"

"He did, me dear. But Pether was so flabbergasted by that time, that he couldn't remember what he was, so he told the man that he had 'no character,' and that the 'misthress knew him well!'"

Here Hilary gives way, and bursts into a peal of laughter, followed by Diana, who has been growing hysterical.

"Miss Kinsella, I hope you will pardon this reprehensible merriment on the part of my wife and my sister," says Clifford solemnly. "No doubt hysteria has a good deal to do with it. No one could hear your harrowing tale without being deeply moved. As for me——" Here, his voice beginning to shake treacherously, he subsides behind his handkerchief. "When I think of Mrs. McIntyre's face when she heard that," says he. "Such an aspersion on her characther!"

"Oh, but, me dear, there's worse to come," says Miss Kinsella, tearfully, rather pleased with the sensation she is so evidently creating. "It seems that that scamp of a footman gave me nephew Pether's message straight to Mrs. McIntyre this morning, when she was looking over her list. An' now I hear they're goin' to take revenge on me poor nephew, and are going to put him in all the papers as 'Thady, ye gandher.' As if," here Miss Kinsella begins to sob wildly, "Pether would go anywhere without his breeches!"

"It's frightful," says Clifford, who ought to be ashamed of himself.

"You know the old lines, don't ye, Mrs. Clifford, me dear?

"'Oh, Thady, ye gandher,
Ye're like a Highlandher,
For want o' yer breeches,
For want o' yer breeches!'"

The old lady chants them in a shaking voice.

"They sound sadly familiar," says Clifford. Both Hilary and Diana are beyand speech.

"Oh! to think o' me spotless Pether being so treated," goes on Miss Kinsella, distractedly. "Mrs. Clifford, me dear you're a great friend of Mrs. McIntyre's. I came to ask would you go up to her, an' beg me nephew Pether off? You could explain to her, me dear, that he never meant it."

Inspiration seizes on Diana.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," says she. "I'll give you a little note, and you must take it direct to Mrs. McIntyre yourself. You know you are a great favorite of hers, and she can refuse you nothing. I'll just explain the case, and you can do the rest."

"You couldn't come with me, me dear?"

"I could," says Diana thoughtfully, "but I know I should spoil matters. You, who are so eloquent, dear Miss Kinsella, requite no advocate."

The old maid brightens up perceptibly, and gives her head an airy little shake. Eloquent! Yes, she has felt that all her life. But it is pleasant to see the fact acknowledged at last.

"Well, me dear, there's some truth in what you say," returns she modestly, "and I'll take the note. Whilst you're writing it, I'm thinking I'll tell you a little thing I said to that brazen creature, Mrs. Dyson-Moore. My gracious, Mr. Clifford, did ye see her petticoats?"

"I tried hard," says Clifford. "I think, after a bit, I did."

"Scandalous! Scandalous!" Miss Kinsella uplifts her arms.

"What did you say to her, Miss Kinsella?" asks Hilary.

"Just a word, me dear. No more. I went up to her when she was dancing with one o' them stravaglers from the barracks, an' I asked her wouldn't she like the loan of a kilt? It struck me," says Miss Kinsella thoughtfully, "that she was a little short with me, when I met her at supper afterward."

"You?" begins Clifford, "but——"

At this moment a loud knock at the hall door is heard.

"Who's that?" demands Miss Kinsella, eagerly.

"Some friend, no doubt," says Diana carelessly. "Now, here is the note. Yau ought to take it at once. You know if the account is sent to the papers——"

"I know." Miss Kinsella is peering out of the window that commands the hall door. "Why—if it isn't that young man that is staying with Mrs. Dyson-Moore."

"Is it? Very likely. You really ought to see about that at once, if your nephew——"

"Is he coming to see you now, or Miss Burroughs?"

"Both—he," desperately, "is a sort of cousin of ours. But if you don't——"

"A cousin? You don't say so. On the mother's side, or the father's?"

"The father's. No, the mother's—I assure you the first——"

"Then, let me see, his name should be——"

"I'll see you to the gate, Miss Kinsella," says Clifford genially, conveying the old lady safely out of the room just as Ker enters. Miss Kinsella manages to give him a good stare, however, as they pass each other.

(To be Continued.)

JAPANESE BABIES.

Common Sights in the Streets of all Jap Cities.

The streets of Yokohama and for that matter, of all Japanese cities and towns, fairly swarm with children, says a writer in the Brooklyn Eagle, and the question of race suicide certainly cannot be raised here. It seems in many streets that we see more children than adults, which may be partially accounted for by the fact that many of the adults are indoors, while the children usually are not. They are of all ages, and when old enough romp around the streets and engage in their games with the greatest vim. A book could be written on this feature of street life in Japanese cities, and the subject would not then be exhausted. Almost every woman is carrying a child on her back, as the universal way of carrying them is in a sort of a bag, made by tying the ends of a piece of cotton cloth around the shoulders and depositing the baby in the receptacle thus formed. Some of these babies seem entirely too large to be thus carried, and they are not, as a rule, agreeable objects to look upon, for when they are awake their heads are lying on one side, with a most stupid expression. In most cases they are asleep, and it would seem, from the way their heads hang over the bag, that their necks would be dislocated. They certainly possess the power of sleeping under the most discouraging circumstances as the mothers go about just as if the child were not there, and stoop over when necessary in their work.

Many mothers do not bathe their children until they are two years old at least, not because they desire to avoid the labor involved, but because they have been taught for a generation that this was the proper course to pursue. The result, as a matter of fact, is not pleasing to European eyes.

As soon as a female child grows to a certain age she is also utilized to carry the baby, which is sure to be in the family, and little girls often go around with huge babies on their backs, almost half as large as themselves, and romp and play with the utmose indifference as regards their burden the stupid eyes of the baby blinking, if awake, as if it did not mind in the least having its head almost jounced from its neck.

HIS SERIOUS STUDIES.

"What studies are you pursuing?" asked the landlady of the new boarder, who had told her he was a student.

"I am studying psychology," he answered. "I am delving into unstrayed fields. I'm studying the—"

Just then someone passed him the dish of hash.

"I am," he continued, "fathoming the mysterious unknown."

And the landlady never knew why all the people round the table smiled audibly.

TESLA'S WIRELESS PLAN

HIS GREAT PLAN TO DISTRIBUTE POWER.

Electric Towers Will Send Out Currents for Lighting and Heating.

An enormous mushroom-shaped tower, has just been completed at Wardenclyffe, Long Island, N.Y., by Mr. Nikola Tesla, the distinguished electric inventor. From this tower Mr. Tesla is now preparing to put into operation the most daring and amazing scheme ever conceived in the development of wireless telegraphy.

For over four years Mr. Tesla has been hard at work almost day and night experimenting and endeavoring to make his marvellous theory practiable.. From time to time during that period he has intimated vaguely the immensity of his plan, and the equally tremendous results that would follow its introduction, and now, at last, he has announced his preparedness to put his theories to their first practical test.

For a large part of the work already done Mr. Tesla is indebted to the generosity of Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, who is extremely interested in the scheme.

Briefly explained, Mr. Tesla's assurance of what we may expect in the next few years are as follows:

NIAGARA TO NEW YORK.

A ceaseless day and night service of millions upon millions of volts of electricity from the electric power plants at Niagara Falls to the Wardenclyffe tower, the electric power being forwarded from there by Tesla's wireless system to New York City for the purpose of illuminating the entire metropolis, running elevated and underground trains and tramways cars, operating lifts, motor-cars, trucks, and ferry-boats, furnishing heat, and even winding up clocks and making them keep perfect time, by a system of half-hourly regulation.

The erection of Tesla towers, similar to the one now at Wardenclyffe, at convenient places everywhere, for the purpose of distributing wireless telegraphy to be used for illumination, power and heat. Only such towers as are erected within a given distance from Niagara Falls will be supplied from the power plants there with electricity, says the New York American.

All the other towers will derive their own power from generating plant erected alongside or between the main uprights, and each will distribute about ten thousand horsepower of wireless electricity under a tension of one hundred million volts. Mr. Tesla declares that he is able to produce and handle that much with perfect safety from one tower.

Each tower will be capable of transmitting heat, power, and light to cities, factories, and private houses within a radius of thirty miles or more.

LIMITLESS SYSTEM.

Eventually Mr. Tesla proposes the extension of this tower system until practically the whole North American continent is dotted over with them spaced about sixty miles apart, so that practically every inch of ground is covered by the new wireless service.

The Wardenclyffe tower is 185 feet high from the ground to the top of the cupola. The smallest dimension across the base of uprights is 97 feet. The height to ledge of cupola is 153 feet, while the cupola itself is 65 feet in diameter. The tower, which is to act as a giant receiver, has eight sides, with a staircase and lift for reaching the cupola platform. It is there that the wireless vibrations are received and shot out again in the voltage desired to given points scattered over a very wide radius.

LIGHTING OUR HOUSES.

One of the chief uses will be the illumination of residences. It takes very little power to light a dwelling with vacum tubes operated by high-frequency currents, and in each instance a terminal, a little above the roof will be sufficient. Another valuable application will be the driving of clocks and other such apparatus. ple, will require absolutely no attention, and will indicate rigorously correct time.

There are innumerable devices of all kinds which are either now employed or can be supplied, and by operating them in this way Mr. Tesla may be able to offer a great convenience to the whole world. The introduction of this system will, according to the inventor, give opportunities for invention and manufacture such as have never presented themselves before.

VEST POCKET WIRELESS.

Among his other schemes Mr. Tesla proposes a perfect system of world-wide wireless telegraphy through which widely separated friends will be able to converse instantaneously and without the slightest danger that their wireless conversation will be overheard by a third person.

Little instruments about the size and shape of a watch will be carried in the vest pocket, and will record market quotations, races and important news features.

Another little watch-like instrument is one with a dial face by means of which the wearer can transmit and receive wireless messages to and from friends many miles away. Watches of both sender and receiver will be keyed to a certain pitch to prevent their communications from going astray or falling into the watches of disinterested third persons.