

Old Echoes.

You wonder that my tears should flow
In listening to that simple strain;
That those unkind sounds should fill
My soul with joy and pain—

PHYLLIS.

BY THE DUCHESS.

Author of "Molly Bawn," "The Baby," "Airy
Fairly Lillian," etc., etc.

Of course in another moment I am
folded in mother's arms, and her soft hand
presses my graceless head down upon the
bosom that never yet in all my griefs has
failed me.

"My darling child," she whispers, "have
I been too unkind to you? I did not mean
it, Phyllis; but I have been made so miser-
able by all I have heard."

"But you don't think me deceitful,
mother?"

"No, no; now—not at any time, I think;
but I was greatly upset by Dora's disap-
pointment. My darling, I hope you will be
happy in your choice, and in my heart I
believe you will. At all events, he is blind
to the virtues of my dear girl. He loves
you dearly, Phyllis. Are you sure, my
dearest, that you love him?"

"Did you love papa very much when
you married him?"

"Of course, dear," with a faint blush.

"Oh, mother, did you really?" Then,
with a reflective sigh, "at that rate I am
glad that I do not love Mr. Carrington."

"Phyllis! what are you saying? It is
the first duty of every woman to love her
husband. You must try to regard Mr. Car-
rington in that light."

"I like him, and that is better. You were
blind to papa's faults because you loved
him; that was a mistake. Now, I shall
not be blind to Marmaduke's; and if he
does anything very horrid, or develops
unpleasant symptoms, I shall be able to
give him up before it is too late. If you
had been fully alive to papa's little tem-
pers, mother, I don't suppose you would
ever have married him; would you?"

"Phyllis, I cannot allow you to discuss
your father in this manner. It is neither
dutiful nor proper; and it vexes me very
much."

"Then I won't vex you. But I read in a
book the other day, 'It is better to respect
your husband than to love him.'"

"One should do both, of course; but, oh,
Phyllis, to love him; that is the great soft-
ener in the married life, it is so easy to
forgive when love urges. You are wrong,
my pet, but you have a tender heart, and
so I pray all may be well with you. Yet
when I think of your leaving me to face
the wide world, I feel lonely. I fancy I
could have better spared Dora than my own
wild Phyllis."

"She whispers this soothingly into my ear,
kisses me as only a mother can kiss, and
leaves me presently well comforted. If
mother indeed loves me, the scapgrace, bet-
ter than her model Dora, I have reason to
feel glad and grateful."

Meanwhile the household is divided.
The boy Billy, as Roland calls him, has
been sent for two hours into solitary con-
finement, because, on hearing the news he
exclaimed, "Didn't I tell you all along
how it would be," in a heartless and trium-
phant manner, thus adding insult to Dora's
injury.

Roly is also on my side, and comes
upstairs to tell me so.

"You have twice the spirit, you know,"
he says, in a tone meant to compliment
"Dora is too dead-and-alive; no man born
would be tormented with her. I am
awfully glad, Phyllis."

When by chance during the evening
papa and I meet, though his manner is
frozen he makes no offensive remarks; and,
strange as it appears to me, I seem to have
earned some dignity in his eyes. So the
long hours of that day drag by, and night
falls at last.

After dinner Dora comes creeping in, her
eyelids red and swollen, her dainty cheeks
bera of their usual soft look. Misery and
despair are depicted in every line of her
face and figure.

Papa rises ostentatiously and pushes an
easy chair towards the fire for her (already
the touch of winter is upon her). I sit
apart and think myself a murderer.

I begin to vaguely wonder whether, were
I in Dora's place, all these delicate atten-
tions would be showered upon me. I also
try to decide whether, if I had been slighted
by my beloved, I would publish the fact
upon the house-tops and come down to the
bosom of my family with scarlet eyes and
pallid face and hair effectively loosened;
or whether I would hide my sorrow with
my life and endure all in heroic silence. I
have got so far as the Spartan boy in my
meditations, when Roland, bringing his
fingers to meet upon the fleshy part of my
arm, causes me to spring from my seat and
give utterance to an emphatic "Oh!" while
Cheekie, the rat-terrier, who is crouching
in her favorite position at my feet, coming
in for a full share of my weight, sets up a
corresponding howl, and altogether the
confusion is complete. When it has sub-
sided there ensues an awful pause. Then
papa speaks.

"It would be waste of time to appeal to
your better feelings, Phyllis; you have none!
But that you are hopelessly wanting in all
delicacy of sentiment, you would under-
stand that this is no time to indulge in a
vulgar overflow of spirits. Do you not see
how your sister is suffering? Your heart-
lessness is downright disgusting. Leave the
room."

I instantly avail myself of the permission
to withdraw, only too glad of the excuse,
and retire, followed closely by Roland, who
I can see is choking with suppressed
laughter.

"How could you do it?" I ask, reproach-

fully, as we gain the hall-door. "They are
all angry enough as it is."

"I could not help it," returns Roly, still
struggling with his merriment; "the
solemnity of the whole thing was too much
for me. I knew I was going to laugh out
loud, so pinched you to draw off attention."

"I think you might have chosen Billy."

"He was too far off; you were the most
convenient."

"And so you sacrificed me to save your-
self?" I exclaim indignantly.

"Like all men, Roland is unutterably
selfish; unlike all men, he is ever ready to
make atonement, once the selfish act is
accomplished."

CHAPTER XIII.

Our engagement having received the
openly expressed, though secretly unwill-
ing sanction of my father, Mr. Carrington
comes over every day to our house,
where he of course meets with overpow-
ering sweetness from everybody—Dora
excepted. Not that she shows any demon-
strative dislike. A heavy sense of injury is
upon her, impossible to lift.

At times I am a little unhappy, but very
seldom. On such occasions the horrible
doubt that I am marrying Marmaduke for
his money crushes me. Every now and
then I catch myself revelling in the thought
of what I shall do for Billy and Roly and
all of them, when plenty of gold is at my
disposal. I try to think how much I like
him, how handsome he is, how kind, how
good to me, but always at the end of my
cogitations I find my thoughts reverting to
the grand house in which I am to reign as
queen, or to the fine velvet dress I mean to
wear as soon as I can afford to buy it.

I now glory in an engagement ring that
sparkles fairly and gives me much pleasure.
I have also an enormous locket, on which
the letters P. M. V. are marked out by bril-
liants. This latter contains an exquisitely
painted miniature of my betrothed, and is
given to me by him in a manner that beto-
kens doubt of its being acceptable.

"I don't suppose you will care for the
picture part of it," he says, with a laugh
and a rather heightened color.

But I do care for it, picture and all, and
tell him so, to his lasting satisfaction,
though it must be confessed I look often-
er at the outside of that locket than at any
other part of it. Thus by degrees I find
myself laden with gifts of all kinds—for
the most part costly; and, as trinkets are
scarce with us and jewels imaginary, it will
be understood that each new ornament
added to my store raises me higher in the
social scale.

So time speeds and Christmas passes and
gentle spring grows apace.

"Come out," says Billy one morning
early in April, thrusting a dishevelled head
into my room; "come out; it is almost
warm." Whereupon I don my hat and
sally forth, my Billy in attendance.

Mechanically we make for the small belt
of trees that encircles and bounds our home,
and is by courtesy "our wood." It is my
favorite retreat—the spot most dear to me
at Summerless. Ah! how sweet is every-
thing-to-day, how fragrant! The prim-
rose gold in its mossy bed, supported by its
myriad friends; the pretty purple violet—the
white one prettier still. I sigh and
look about me sadly.

"This is the very last spring I shall ever
spend at home," I say, at length, being in
one of my sentimental and regretful moods.

"Yes," returns Billy; "this time next
year, I suppose, you will be holding high
court at Strangemore. How funny you
will look? you are so small! Why, you
will be an out-and-out swell then, Phyllis,
and can out the country if you choose.
What are you so doleful about? Ain't you
glad?"

"No, I am not," I reply emphatically;
"I am sorry! I am wretched! Everything
will be so new and big and strange, and—
you will not be there. Oh, Billy!" flinging
my arms around his neck. "I feel that worst
of all. I am too fond of you, and that's a fact."

"Well, I am awfully fond of you too,"
says Billy, giving me a bear-like hug that
horribly disarranges my appearance, but is
sweet to me, so much do I adore my "boy
Billee."

We seat ourselves on a grassy knoll and
give ourselves up to gloomy foreboding.

"It is a beastly nuisance, your getting
married at all," says Billy, grumpily. "If it
had been Dora, now, it would have been a
cause for public rejoicing; but you are differ-
ent. What am I to do without you in this
stupid hole is more than I can tell. I shall
get papa to send me to a boarding-school
when you go." (The Eton plan has not yet
been divulged.) "Why on earth did you
take a fancy to that fellow, Phyllis? Were
you not very well as you were?"

"I know how it will be," says Billy,
moodyly; "you will be an old woman before
your time."

"Indeed I shall not," I cry, with much
indignation, viewing with discomfort the
ruins to which he has reduced my hand-
some castle. "I intend to keep young for
ever so long. Why, I am only eighteen
now, and I shan't be old until I am thirty
and, Billy," coaxingly, "you shall see what
I shall do for you; I will send you to Eton.
There!"

"Why don't you say you will send me
to the moon?" replies he, with withering
contempt.

"But I will really; Marmaduke says I
shall; and you are to spend all your holi-
days at Strangemore; and I will keep a
gun for you, and a dog; and maybe he will
let me give you a horse."

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" says the dear boy.
"Draw a line somewhere. You have said
too much; and I've outgrown my belief in
the 'Arabian Nights.' I will be quite con-
tent with the dog and gun."

"Well, you shall see. And Roland shall
have money every now and then to pay his
debts; and Dora shall have as many new
dresses as she can wear; and for mamma
I will get one of those delightful easy-
chairs we saw in the shop-window in Car-
ston, the one that moves up and down, you
know—and—Oh, Billy! I think it is a
glorious thing to be rich. If I could only
do all I say, I believe I would marry him
were he as ugly as sin."

In the enthusiasm of the moment I
spring to my feet, and as I do so become
fatally aware that not two yards from me
stands Marmaduke, leaning against a tree.
There is a curious, not altogether amiable,
expression upon his face, that assures me

he has overheard our conversation. Yet one
cannot accuse him of eavesdropping, as if
we had only taken the trouble to raise our
heads our eyes must inevitably have met
his.

I am palmed with shame and horror; I
am stricken dumb; and Billy, looking lazily
upwards from where he is stretched at full
length upon the sward to discover the
cause, in his turn becomes aware of the
enemy's presence. A moment later he is
on his feet and has beaten a masterly
retreat, leaving me alone to face the foe.

Mr. Carrington comes slowly forward.

"Yes, I heard every word," he says,
calmly, anger and reproach in his eyes.

I make no reply; I feel myself incapable
of speech.

"So this is the light in which you regard
our marriage!" he goes on bitterly; "as a
means to an end—no more. At the close
of six months I find myself as far from
having gained a place in your affections as
when we first met. I may well despair.
Your heart seems full of thought and of
love for every one, Phyllis, except for the
man you have promised to marry."

"Then give me up," I say, defiantly,
though my false courage sinks as I remem-
ber what a row there will be at home if he
takes me at my word.

"No, I will not give you up. I will
marry you in spite of your coldness; I am
more determined on it now than ever," he
makes answer, almost fiercely.

I feel uneasy, not to say unhappy. I
have heard of men marrying women for
spite and revenging themselves upon them
afterwards. This recollection is not assur-
ing. I glance at Marmaduke furtively, and
persuade myself he is looking downright
vindictive.

"Yes," I murmur, doubtfully, "and per-
haps, afterwards, when I was your wife
you would be cruel to me, and—"

"Phyllis," he interrupts me, hastily,
"what are you saying? Who has put such
a detestable idea into your head? I unkind
to you, or cruel! Child, can you not even
imagine the depth of the love I bear you?"

I know I am going to cry. Already are
my eyes suffusing; my nose develops a
tickling sensation. If I cry before him
now he will think—

"Phyllis, do you really wish to marry
me?" asks Mr. Carrington, suddenly, trying
to read my hot and averted face. "If you
repent your promise, say so; it is not yet
too late to withdraw. Better bear pain
now than lasting misery hereafter. Answer
me truly, do you wish to be my wife?"

"I do," I return, earnestly. "I shall be
happier with you, who are always kind to
me, than I am at home. It is only at times
I feel regretful. But of course—if you
don't want to marry me—I pause by the
ignominy of this thought."

Mr. Carrington takes my hand.

"I would give half my possessions to
gain your love," he says, softly; "but,
even as it is, no bribe on earth could induce
me to relinquish you. Don't talk about my
giving you up. That is out of the question.
I could as easily part with my life as with
my Phyllis. Perhaps," with a rather sad
little smile, "some time in the future you
may deem me worthy to be placed in the
category with Billy and Roland and the
rest of them."

A mournful sound breaks from me. I
search my pocket for a handkerchief where-
with to wipe away the solitary tear that
meanders down my cheek. Need I say it
is not there? Mr. Carrington guessing my
want, produces a very snowy article from
somewhere and hands it to me.

"Do you want one?" he asks, tenderly,
and presently I am dissolved in tears, my
nose buried in my lover's cambric.

"I am sure you must hate me," I whis-
per, dimly. "I make you unhappy
every time we meet. Mr. Carrington, will
you try to forget what I said just now, and
forgive me?"

"How can I forgive you anything when
you call me Mr. Carrington?"

"Marmaduke, then." He presses me
closer to him, and I rub my stained and
humid countenance up and down against
his coat. I am altogether penitent.

"After all, Marmaduke, maybe I didn't
say anything so very dreadful," I venture,
at the end of a pause. "I was only think-
ing and deciding on what I would like to
make everybody when—when I was your
wife. Was that very bad?"

"No; there was nothing to vex me in
all that; it only showed me what a loving,
generous little heart my pet has. But
then, Phyllis, why did you give me so
plainly to understand you were marrying
me only for the sake of my odious money,
by saying—that you did in your last
speech?"

"What did I say?"

"That for the sake of being rich you
would marry me (or any one else, your
tone meant) even were I 'as ugly as sin.'"

"If I said that, it was an untruth,
because if you were as ugly as Bobby De
Vere, for instance, I most certainly would
not marry you. I detest plain people."

"Well, at all events, I think you owe me
some reparation for the pain you have
inflicted."

"I do, indeed," I admit eagerly. "Lay
any penance you like upon me, and I will
not shrink from it. I will do whatever you
ask."

"Will you?" quickly. "Then kiss me
of your own accord. I don't believe up to
this, Phyllis, you have ever yet done so of
your own sweet will."

"I will do it now, then," I return, hero-
ically, and straightway, raising myself on
tiptoe, without the smallest pretence at pru-
dery, I fling myself into his arms and kiss
him with all my heart.

No accomplished coquette seeking after
effect could have achieved a more complete
success by her arts than I have by this
simple act, which is with me an everyday
occurrence where the boys are concerned.
By it I have obtained a thousand pardons,
if need be.

He is evidently surprised, and grows a
little pale, then smiles, and strains me to
him with passionate fervor.

"My darling—my own! Oh, Phyllis! if
I could only make you love me!" he whis-
pers, longingly.

"Marmaduke," I say presently, in a
rather bashful tone, trifling with the lapel
of his coat.

"Well, my pet?"

"I have something to say to you."

"Have you, darling?"

"I want to tell you that I think I must
be growing fond of you."

"My angel!"

"Yes. And do you know why I think
so?"

"No. I cannot imagine how anything

so unlikely and desirable should come to
pass."

"I will tell you. Do you remember how,
long ago, when first you kissed me, I dis-
liked it so much that it made me cry?"

"Yes."

"Well, now I find I don't mind it one
bit!"

Instead of being struck with the good
sense of this discovery, Marmaduke roars
with laughter.

"Oh, you needn't laugh," I say, slightly
offended; "it is a very good sign. I have
read in books how girls shudder and shiver
when kissed by a man they don't like; and,
as I never shudder or shiver when you kiss
me, of course that means that I like you
immensely. Don't you see?"

"I do," says Marmaduke, who is still
laughing heartily. "And I also see it is an
excellent reason why I should instantly
kiss you again. Oh, Phyllis! I think if I
looked into the family Bible we would dis-
cover we had all mistaken your age, and
that you are only ten instead of eighteen."

"Why?"

"For many reasons. Come, let us walk
on."

As luncheon-hour approaches, we retrace our
steps until we reach the principal avenue.
Here Mr. Carrington declines my invitation
to enter the house and partake of such
light refreshments as may be going, and
departs with a promise to take us for a
drive the following day.

Nature tells me the luncheon-hour must
be past, and, impelled by hunger, I run
down the gravel sweep at the top of my
speed; but, just as I get to the thick bunch
of laurels that conceal the house from
view, Billy's voice, coming from nowhere in
particular, stops me. Presently from be-
tween the overgreens his head emerges.

"I thought he was with you," he says,
with an air of intense relief. "Well?"

"Well?" I reiterate.

"Why don't you tell," cries Billy angrily,
"instead of standing there with your
mouth open? Did he hear what we said?"

"Yes, every word."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" with a dismal
groan. "And who is to tell them at home,
I would like to know?"

"Tell them what?"

"Why, about—Surely you don't
mean to tell me he is going to marry you
after all that?" exclaims Billy his eyes
enlarged to twice their usual size.

"Yes, of course he is," I reply, with much
dignity and indignation combined. "When
a man loves a woman he does not give her
up for a trifle."

"A trifle! Well, I never," murmurs
Billy, floored for once in his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

We are in the orchard of Summerless
alone, Mr. Carrington and I, with the warm
but fitful April sun pouring heavily down
upon us.

"It will be a good year for fruit," I tell
my lover, soberly, "the trees are showing
such a fair promise." And my lover laughs,
and tells me I am a wonderful child; that
he has not yet half dived into the deep stores
of private knowledge I possess. He sup-
poses when I come to Strangemore he may
dismiss his steward, as probably I will be
competent to manage everything there—the
manager included.

Whereupon I answer, saucily, I need not
go to Strangemore for that, as I fancy I
have him pretty well under control as it is.
At this he pinches my ear and prophesies
the time will yet come when it will be his
turn to menace me.

High up in the western wall a small green
gate gives entrance to another garden—a
quaint spot, picturesquely wild, that we
children chose to name Queen Elizabeth's
Retreat. Long lines of elms grow here,
through which some paths are out—paths
innocent of gravel and green as the grass
that grows on either side. Here, too, are
beds of flowers and rustic benches.

"Come show me anything as pretty as
this in all Strangemore," I say, with tri-
umph, as we seat ourselves on an ancient
oaken contrivance that threatens at any
moment to bring us down to the ground.

"I wonder if you will ever think anything
at Strangemore as worthy of admiration as
what you have here?" says Marmaduke,
passing his arm lightly round my waist.

"Perhaps. But I know every nook and
cranny of this old place so well and love it
so dearly! I can remember no other home.
We came here you know, when I was very
young and Billy only a baby."

"But Strangemore will be your home
when you come to live with me. You will
try to like it for my sake, will you not? It
is dearer to me than either of the other
places, although they say Luxton is hand-
somer. Don't you think you will be able
to love it, Phyllis?"

"Yes, but not for a long time. I can
like things at once, but it takes me years
and years and years to love anything."

"Does that speech apply to persons? If
so, I have a pleasant prospect before me.
You have known me but a few months;
will it take you 'years and years' to love
me?"

There is lingering hope in his tone, expec-
tancy in his eyes.

"You? Oh, I don't know. Perhaps so,"
I reply, with unpleasant truthfulness.

Marmaduke removes his arm from around
me and frowns.

"Your air oozes itself," he says, with
a slight tinge of bitterness.

"I am," I return reluctantly; "I wish
I were not. I am always saying the wrong
thing, and repenting it afterwards. Papa says
my candor makes me downright vulgar.
Marmaduke, but do you think honesty is the
best policy?"

I glance up at him with questioning eyes
from under the flapping hat that has braved
so many summers.

"I do," he answers, warmly; "I think
there is nothing on earth so sweet or so
rare as perfect truthfulness. Be open and
true and honest, darling, and like yourself
as long as you can. Every hour you live
will make the role more difficult."

"But why? You are older than I am,
Marmaduke, would you tell a lie?"

"No, not a direct lie, perhaps, but I
might pretend to what I did not feel."

"Oh, but that is nothing. I would do
that myself," I exclaim, confidentially.

"Many and many a time I have pretended
not to know where Billy was when I knew
papa was going to box his ears. There is
no great harm in that. And Billy has done
it for me."

"You don't mean to say Mr. Vernon ever
boxed your ears?"

I explode at the tragic meaning of his
tone.

"Often," I say, merrily, "shook o

times; but that is not half so bad as being
sent to bed. However"—reassuringly—"he
has not done it now for ever so long—
not since I have been engaged to you."

"I should hope not indeed," hotly.

"Phyllis, why won't you marry me at
once? Surely you would be happier with
me than—than—living as you now do."

"No, no," edging away from him; "I
would not. I am not a bit unhappy as I
am. You mix-take me; and I told you
before he never does it now."

"But it maddens me to think of his
ever having done so. And such pretty little
ears, too, so pink and delicate. Of all the
unmanly blackguards—I beg your pardon, Phyl-
lis, of course it is wrong of me to speak so
of your father."

"Oh, don't mind me," I say, easily.

"Now you are going to be my husband, I
do not care about telling you there is very
little love lost between me and papa."

"Then why not shorten our engagement?
Surely it has now lasted long enough.
There is no reason why you should submit
to any tyranny when you can escape from
it. If you dislike your father's rule, out it
and come to me; you do not dislike me."

"No; but I should dislike being married
very much indeed."

"Why?" impatiently.

"I don't know," I return provokingly;
"but I am sure I should. 'Better to bear
the illa we have, et cetera.'"

"You are trifling," says he, angrily.

"Why not say at once you detest the
idea of having to spend your life with
me? I believe I am simply wasting my
time endeavoring to gain an affection that
will never be mine."

"Then don't waste any more of it," I
retort, tapping the ground petulantly with
my foot while fixing my gaze with affected
unconsciousness on a thick, white cloud that
rests far away in the eternal blue. "I
have no wish to stand in your light. Pray
leave me—I shan't mind it in the least—
and don't throw away any more of your
precious moments."

"Idle advice. I can't leave you now,
and you know it. I must only go on
squandering my life, I suppose, until the
end. I do believe the greatest misfortune
that ever befel me was my meeting with
you."

"Thank you. You are extremely rude
and unkind to me, Marmaduke. If this is
your way of making love, I must say I don't
like it."

"I don't suppose you do, or anything else
connected with me. Of course it was an
unfortunate thing for me, my coming
down here and falling idiotically in love
with a girl who does not care whether I am
dead or alive."

"That is untrue. I care very much indeed
about you being alive."

"Oh! common humanity would suggest
that speech."

He turns abruptly and walks a few paces
away from me. We are both considerably
out of temper by this time, and I make a
solemn vow to myself not to open my
lips again until he offers an apology for
what I am pleased to call his odious cross-
ness.

"Why on earth could you not have fallen
in love with Dora?" I cry, petulantly, to
the back of his head. "She would do you
some credit, and she would love you, too.
Every one would envy you if you married
Dora, she never says the wrong thing; and
she is elegant and very pretty, is she not?"