

POETRY.

To-Day.

From early light to late at night, I chatter, chatter, chatter.

Along the brim of life to skim, Not in its depths he sinking.

This is my life: I hate all strife, With none I am a snarler.

To-Morrow.

I will not think the last farewell we hear Is more than brief "good-bye" that a friend saith.

Turning toward home, that to our home lies near; Will not think so harshly of kind death.

will not think the last looks of dear eyes Fade with the light that fades of our dim air.

Our dead have left us for no dark, strangelands, Unwelcomed there, and with no friends to meet.

A BIRTHDAY.

Your birthday, dear—a year ago The world with Maytide joy was glad;

A year ago I brought you flowers, Long sprays of hawthorn, pink and white;

A year ago I wished you joy, That all things good the year might bring;

A year ago I clasped your hand and kissed your brow; Now you have journeyed far away.

A CARDINAL FLOWER.

Darting flame among the ferns, Marvellous new-comer; In thy glowing petals beats The very pulse of summer.

Other blossoms hold their hues In a dainty fashion; Thou art color's very self At its height of passion.

Things are seldom what they seem; Skim milk masquerades as cream;

BY THE DUCHESS.

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

"You will let me put my name down for another before you go?" asks Sir Mark hurriedly, following us a few steps.

"May I have the next after this?" very eagerly I glance at him over my shoulder.

The night wears on. Already it is one hour past midnight. Sir Mark again is my partner.

Up to this the evening has fully answered my fondest expectations. I have danced incessantly. I have been utterly, thoughtlessly happy.

Sir Mark leads me towards a conservatory, dimly lit and exquisitely arranged, at the door of which I stand to bestow a backward glance upon the ball-room.

At a considerable distance I can discern Bebe standing beside Lord Chandos. It is without doubt an interval in their dance, but they are not talking.

Dora is waiting with a "Heavy," and I can see Sir George glowering upon them from a remote corner.

"Still revelling in bliss, Mrs. Carrington?" Sir Mark's voice recalls me. "No flaw as yet?"

"Not one. Of course not. What a ridiculous question! I told you nothing should interfere with my enjoyment this evening. Yet, stay!"—with a demure and dejected shake of the head;

"I shall have plenty of it in the spring," I continue, presently. "Duke says I shall go to London then."

"And so lose the keen sense of pleasure you now possess. What a mistake! Take my advice, and don't go through a London season."

"What stupid advice. Indeed I shall, and enjoy it too. I am only longing for the time to come round. I shall be dreaming of it from now until then."

"You are bent on rushing wildly to your fate," says he, smiling. "Well, do so, and rue it later on. When you come to look on dancing, not as a good thing in itself, but merely as a means to an end, remember I warned you."

"I will remember nothing," I say saucily, "except that I am at this moment without care in the world. Come, let us go in."

"Sir Mark hesitates. 'Shall we finish the dance first?' 'No,' I am looking longingly into the cool green light of the conservatory beyond me. 'See how delicious it is in there. Let us find a seat.'

Still he hesitates, as though unwilling to move in the desired direction. 'It seems a pity to lose this music,' he says. 'Afterwards we could rest.'

I turn my eyes mischievously upon him. 'Who is keen about dancing now?' I ask, gayly. 'Not I. For my part, I pine for a sofa. As you will have it, I confess I am just a little wee bit tired.'

Some tall shrubs are dispersed here and there; behind them cozy seats are hidden; shadows of a darker shade envelope them.

As with purposeless steps I pass by a rather larger one of these I suddenly find myself face to face with Lady Blanche Going and—Marmaduke.

Now there is no earthly reason why they should not be here alone together; hundreds of other couples, tired and warm from dancing, have probably done the same; yet, as my eyes fall upon them, a strange feeling that is partly anger, partly pain, troubles me.

As my glance fastens more directly upon 'Duke, I see he too is looking unlike himself. There is a dark, almost fierce expression in his eyes; his lips are compressed.

There is a dark, almost fierce expression in his eyes; his lips are compressed. A slight movement of the thin nostrils as he draws his breath tells me he is evidently suppressing some strong emotion.

Her ladyship, exquisitely lovely in deep cream-colored silk, with something scarlet in her dark hair, is nestling among the orimone cushions of the lounge, and does not deign to raise herself as we approach.

Her eyes are a degree larger, more languid than usual; her complexion, always good, is perfect in this soft light. Her fan is in my husband's hands.

It is impossible for me, without being guilty of positive rudeness, to turn and leave them without a word. I stand, therefore, silent, a pale, slight child, next to her, in all her supercilious beauty—with little of the woman about me except my trailing velvet and golden ring, and glittering, gleaming jewels.

"Are you having a good time, Mrs. Carrington?" asks Lady Blanche, sweetly. "Very, thank you," with extreme coldness. "I had no idea I could enjoy anything so much."

"You look happy," with increased amiability and a soft, indulgent smile, such as one would use toward an excitable child. "I suppose you will find pleasure in dancing?"

"Yes. I believe I have a good many years yet to run before I must, for decency's sake, declare myself tired of it."

"Until you are an old married woman like me?" "Yes," with much complacency. "You are fortunate in your partner. All the world acknowledges Sir Mark to be above praise—in the dancing line. Even I!"—with a sudden and to me utterly inexplicable glance at the gentleman in question—"can remember how desirable he used to be."

Dead silence, and a slight bow on the part of Sir Mark.

"Indeed?" say I, turning a smile of exaggerated friendliness upon him. "Then consider how doubly good it is of him to waste so much of his time upon a mere novice like me."

I hardly know what prompts this speech. Perhaps a faint remembrance of how at certain times, when conversing with Mark Gore, I have looked across the rooms or gardens, or wherever we might chance to be, and seen a glance that was almost hatred fall on me from her ladyship's eyes.

Now, however my spiteful little speech has no greater effect than to cause Marmaduke's fingers to close with vicious force around the painted satin toy he holds.

Why does he not speak? Why will he not even suffer his gaze to meet mine? I feel angry and reckless. He is sitting a little forward, with his head slightly bent, and a determined expression upon his face. Is he anxious for my departure? Have I disturbed his interesting *tete-a-tete*?

I will show him how little power he has over me for either joy or sorrow.

I turn away, and with a backward careless nod at Lady Blanche, say lightly—"Take care you don't suffer for sitting there. There are so many draughts in a conservatory. We even consider the open air safer."

And with that, though it was by no means my original intention, I go out through the glass door into the silent starlight night, and even manage to laugh gayly before we are beyond earshot.

As we touch the gravel, however, I face Sir Mark, and, foolishly unmindful of how my words may impress him, cry fiercely, "Did you bring me there on purpose?"

"Where?" he asks, with such wide astonishment as instantly brings me to my senses. I feel overpowered with shame, and try to turn it off, clumsily enough.

"Into Lady Blanche's presence," I say, frantically. "You know that woman always puts me out."

"Was it not yourself who insisted on going there?" Sir Mark reminds me, gravely.

"True," I reply, and then I laugh a little, and, taking higher ground, continue, "You are horrified at my ill temper, are you not? And indeed I have behaved disgracefully. After all, I don't know why I should feel bitterly towards her; it is a mere unfounded prejudice on my part. You think me wretchedly petty?"

"I do not, indeed," very quietly. "Of course I can fully understand how utterly impossible it would be for you and Blanche Going to have a single idea in common."

"She is so clever, you mean," with a small frown.

"She is such an *intrigante*, I mean," replies my companion quite coolly.

"Let us go in, it is cold," I say, with a quick shiver. So we go round by the hall door, and soon again find ourselves in the ball-room. As we enter I determinately

put from me all thought of 'Duke's dark, passionate face. I will be happy. I will wrench from the flying hours all they have worth taking. Why should I care, who never really loved, whether or not he finds contentment in another woman's society.

"I am tired and somewhat dispirited. The rooms are growing thinner. A voice at my side makes me start and turn. 'If not engaged, will you give me this?' asks 'Duke, ceremoniously.

"Certainly, if you wish it. But are you so badly off for a partner? To dance with one's wife must be—to say the least of it—insipid."

He makes no reply, but places his arms around my waist in silence. It is a waltz. "Do you know this is the first time I ever danced with you?" I say, struck myself by the oddness of the idea.

"I know." And in another moment we are keeping time to one of the dreamiest airs of Strauss. No, not even Mark Gore is a better dancer than Marmaduke.

When we have taken just one bare turn round the room, 'Duke stops short and leads me on to a balcony that by some chance is vacant.

"There! I won't inflict myself upon you any longer," he says, quietly. "You dance very well. After all practice has nothing to do with it. Will you sit down? Or shall I find you a partner for the remainder of this waltz?"

"Are you in such a hurry to be gone?" "No; certainly not," seating himself beside me.

Silence. "I really wish, Marmaduke," I burst out, petulantly, "you would say what has aggrieved you, instead of sitting there frowning and glowering at one and making people feel uncomfortable. If you want to sould me, do so. I dare say I shall survive it."

This piece of impertinence rouses no wrath in the person addressed, and draws no reply.

"Well, what is it?" I go on. "I have been quite happy all the evening—until now. Every one else has been civil to me. If you must be disagreeable, be so at once. What have I done?"

"I have accused you of nothing, Phyllis."

"No!"—in an agitated tone—"I wish you would. I might then know why you are looking so cross."

"Of course I am quite aware you can be supremely happy without me. There was no necessity for you to hint at it so broadly."

"And you cannot without me, I suppose? You appeared very comfortable in the conservatory some time ago."

"Did I," with a quick return of the angry expression he then had worn. "My face belied me then. I could hardly feel comfortable when I saw you laying yourself open to the ill-natured comments of the entire room."

"What do you mean, Marmaduke?" "You know what I mean. Is it the correct thing to dance the whole evening with one man?"

"What man?" "Gore, of course. Every one remarked it. I wish you would try to be a little more dignified, and remember how censorious is the world in which we are living."

"Do you want me to understand that you think I was flirting with Sir Mark Gore?" I am literally trembling with indignation.

"No, I merely wish you to see how foolishly you have acted."

"Was it with such base insinuations against your wife Lady Blanche amused you to-night? Do you think it was becoming conduct on your part to listen to such lies being uttered without rebuke?"

I have risen, and, with folded hands and white lips, am looking down upon him.

"Phyllis! How can you suppose that I would listen calmly to any one who could speak evil of you?"

"I can readily suppose anything after what you have said. Is it not worse of you to think evil of me? Flirting! You beyond all people are in a position to acquire me of that. I had plenty of opportunities; did I ever flirt with you?"

"You did not, indeed. I tell you I don't for a moment suspect you of such a thing; only—"

Here, looking up, we both became aware of Sir Mark's approach. He is still some distance from us.

"Are you engaged to him for this, Phyllis?" asks my husband, in a low, hurried tone.

"Yes."

"Don't dance it, then," imploringly. "Say you will not, if only to oblige me."

"Why? What excuse can I offer? You ask me to be rude to him, and yet give no reason why I should be so."

"You intend dancing with him, then?" sternly.

"Certainly," in a freezing tone. "Very good. Do so." And, turning on his heel, he walks quietly and slowly away.

"I fear I have displaced a better man," says Sir Mark, lightly, as he joins me. "Will you forgive me? I could not resist reminding you of your promise of this."

"I fear I must undo that promise," I return gayly. "I am really fatigued. To dance with me now would be no advantage to any one."

"Am I to thank Carrington for this disappointment? Was he fearful of being over-tired?" He is courteous as ever, yet it seems to me the very faintest suspicion of a sneer comes to his lips—so faint that a moment later I doubt it has ever been.

"No," I return, calmly. "You give him credit for too much thoughtfulness. So far from dreaming of fatigue, he even asked me just now to dance with him—was not that self-denying of him?—but I only took one small turn. You forget I am not yet in proper training. I have had very little practice in my time."

"Let me get you an ice. No? Some champagne, then? Iced water?" "Nothing thank you."

"At least let me stay and talk to you."

"I shall be glad of that. You never met any one with such a rooted objection to her own society as I have," I answer, laughing. Then the strain loosens; the smile dies off my lips. How ardently do I long to be alone! Why does not this man get up and leave me? At all events, Marmaduke will see I have repented of my ill-temper, and am not dancing.

As I sit moodily staring through the window at the gay scene within it so happens the Duke of Chillington, with one or two other men, passes slowly by.

"Our cousin of Chillington," says Sir Mark, with an amused air—he is a second

cousin of his Grace—"has expressed himself enraptured with his hostess."

I raise my eyebrows and betray some slight surprise. "I think you must mistake. When speaking to him, in the earlier part of the evening, he gave me to understand—politely, it is true, but none the less plainly—that he considered me a very mediocre sort of person."

"In that case I fear we must believe his lordship to be an arch old hypocrite, as he told me he thought your manner and expression above all praise."

"Well, I think him a very stupid old gentleman," I reply, ungraciously.

Sir Mark turns his eyes upon me thoughtfully. "Have you found that 'little rift' after all, Mrs. Carrington?" asks he gravely.

"Yes—I suppose so," with impatience. Really the man grows very tiresome. "I must have been mad to hope we wretched mortals could have five whole hours of unbroken happiness."

"True: Every white must have its black, And every sweet its sour."

"Another quotation?" superciliously. I am not in an amiable mood. "You seem to have them ready for all emergencies. How closely you must attend to your poetical studies! How fond of them you must be!"

"I am. Does that surprise you? Do you find a difficulty in associating me with polite verse?"

He has his elbows on his knee; his fingers caresses his heavy black mustache. He is regarding me with the profoundest interest.

"I really never thought about it," I return, wearily, with a rather petulant movement of the head.

O that this hateful ball was at an end! The last guest has departed. We of the household have gone up to our rooms. Now that it is all over, I feel strangely inclined to sit down and have a good cry. In the solitude of my own room Marmaduke's words and glances come back to me, making me miserable, now that excitement is no longer at hand to help me to forget. One by one they return with cruel clearness.

If he would only come up from that horrid smoking-room and be good-natured once more and make friends with me! I think I could forgive and forget everything, and look upon the remembrance of this ball with much delight and satisfaction.

My slight jealousy of Blanche Going has disappeared, and weighs not at all in the scale with my other miseries. Indeed, I have almost forgotten the incident in which she figured.

Hark! A distant door bangs. Now surely he is coming. Will he enter my room first, I wonder, to speak to me as he always does? Or will he at once shut himself morosely into his dressing-room?

Steps upon the stairs, steps along the corridor. A laugh.

"Good-night" from Sir Mark Gore. "Good-night," heartily returned Marmaduke. Bah! how needlessly I have worried myself! He is not angry at all. If he can jest and talk so easily with the cause of all our disputes, he can certainly entertain no bitter thoughts towards me.

I hear Marmaduke cross the inside room and approach mine. I feel confident he is coming to "make it up" with me. I turn my chair so as to face the door and be ready to meet him half-way in the reconciliation; though—lest he may think me too eager—I find it my duty to let a gently aggrieved shadow fall upon my face.

The door opens and he comes in, walks deliberately to my dressing-table, lights a candle, and then, without so much as a glance at the fire-place, where I sit, prepares to return to his room.

"Marmaduke!" I cry, in dismay, springing to my feet.

He stops and regards me coldly. "Do you want me? Can I do anything for you?"

"Duke! how can you be so unkind, so unforgiving, so—so cruel to me?" I exclaim, going a little nearer, a suspicion of tears in my voice, large visible drops in my eyes. "Are you going away without saying one word to me?"

"What have I to say? You have left me nothing. When last we spoke I asked you to do a very simple thing to please me, and you refused."

"I know. But afterwards I was sorry. I—you must have seen—I did not mean to vex you."

"I saw nothing. The knowledge of what I was to see in defiance of my entreaty was not reassuring. I left the ball-room then and did not return to it again. I was glad there was no necessity why I should do so; they were all going."

"Then you do not know—I did not dance with Sir Mark—after all?" I ask, eagerly, laying the bare tips of my fingers upon his arm.

"No!" laying down the candle, while his color grows a shade deeper. "Did you refuse him, then?"

"Yes; I said I was too tired; I said—"

"Oh! Phyllis! darling—darling!" cries 'Duke, catching me in his arms before I can finish my confession, and straining me to his heart.

"So you see you need not have been so very cold to me," I whisper from this safe retreat, feeling much relieved. It is positive torture to me to quarrel with any one.

"Forgive me, my own. It is our first disagreement; it shall be our last. What a miserable hour and a half I might have spared myself had I but known!"

"But 'Duke, you said I behaved foolishly all the evening."

"Never mind what I said."

"But I must know who put it into your head. Was it Blanche Going?" "She said something about it, certainly. It was a mere careless remark she made, but it struck me. I don't believe she knew she said it."

imagine any one might, by chance, misinterpret your conduct."

"And you will never be cross to me again?" "Never."

"And you are deeply grieved you behaved so infamously to me?" "I am indeed."

"And I looked lovely all the evening?" "I never beheld anything half so lovely."

"And I danced very nicely?" "Beautifully. Quite like a fairy."

Whereupon we both laugh merrily, and anger and resentment are forgotten.

CHAP. XXIII.

We are all more or less late for breakfast next morning, Mr. Thornton being the only one who exhibits much symptom of life.

"I do think a ball in a country-house the most using-up thing I know," he says, helping himself generously to cold game-pie. "It is twice the fun of a town affair, but it knocks one up—no doubt of it—makes a fellow feel so seedy and languid, and ruins the appetite."

"I think you will do uncommonly well if you finish what you have there," remarks Sir Mark, languidly.

Thornton roars; so does Billy. "You have me there," says Chips. "I ought to have known better than to introduce that subject. My appetite is my weak point."

"Your strong point I suppose you mean," puts in Sir Mark, faintly amused.

"I think the worse thing about a country ball is this," says Bebe; "one feels so lonesome, so purposeless, when it is over. In town one will probably be going to another next evening; here one can do nothing but regret past glories. I wish it were all going to happen over again to-night."

"So do I," says Thornton, casting a sentimental glance at the speaker. "I would go over every hour of it again gladly—old maids and all—for the sake of the few minutes of real happiness I enjoyed. There are some people one could dance with forever."

Lord Chandos, raising his head, bestows a haughty stare upon the youthful Chips, which is quite thrown away, as that gay young Don is staring in turn, with all his might, and with the liveliest admiration, at Miss Beatoun.

"Could you?" asks that fascinating person innocently. "Now I could not; at least I think I would like to sit down now and then. But, Phyllis, dear, seriously, I wish we were going to do something out of common this evening."

"Try charades or tableaux," suggests 'Duke brilliantly.

"The very thing! We will have them in the library, where the folding-doors will come in capitally."

"You used to be a great man at tableaux, Carrington," says Sir George; "and I shall never forget seeing Lady Blanche once as Guinevere."

Her ladyship raises her white lids and smiles faintly.

"You were Lancelot, Gore, on that occasion," continues this well-meaning but blundering young man. "You remember eh?"

"Distinctly—quite as if it happened yesterday," replies Sir Mark, with a studied indifference little suited to the emphatic words. "Have some of this hot cake, Thornton? You are eating nothing."

"Thanks; I don't know but I will," says Chips, totally unabashed. "You could hardly give me anything I like so well as hot cake for breakfast."

"You will make a point of remembering that, I trust, Mrs. Carrington," says Sir Mark, gravely.

"Phyllis, you would look such a good Desdemona," says Bebe, who is now fairly started. "I am sure she must have been very young to let herself be beguiled into a marriage with that horrid Othello."

"And who would represent the Moor?" "Sir Mark, I suppose; he looks more like it than any one else."

"You flatter me, Miss Beatoun," murmurs Sir Mark, with a slight bow.

"Oh, I only mean you are darker than any of the others, except James, and I am sure he never could look sufficiently ferocious," answers Bebe, laughing.

"And you think I can!" "You will have to. When we have blackened you a little, and bent your eyebrows into a murderous scowl, and made you look thoroughly odious, you will do very well."

"How one does enjoy the prospect of tableaux. I rather think I shall rival Salvini by the time I am out of your hands."

"I hope not. I can't bear Salvini," says Harriet mildly.

"That is going rather far, Harry. Why don't you say you can't bear his figure? We might believe that."

(To be continued)

Applying the Protective Principle.

"The last time I saw you were farming. How came you to go into the manufacturing business?"

"Why, the tariff is so high that all the farmers in our section of the country were becoming bankrupt, and I had to get out or go to the poorhouse."

"But they say overproduction has made even manufacturing unprofitable."

"That is true of a great many industries, but we applied the protective principle to our business and now we're making money."

"What do you mean by applying the protective principle?"

"We reduced the wages of our workmen 25 per cent."—Brooklyn Eagle.

The professional umpire will soon require a mask for his entire body. He appears to run far greater risk of peril than the catcher, whose post has hitherto been regarded as the most difficult and dangerous one. The trouble does not come from the game itself, but from its over-excited spectators, many of whom, when an umpire gives a decision that does not exactly suit them, are ready to club him to death. This was the fate which the gentleman who acted as umpire in the game between the Louisville and Baltimore clubs at Louisville on Saturday narrowly escaped. A mob of several thousands set upon the unfortunate individual, and would have killed him, but for the interference of the police. By and bye no umpire will venture on a baseball ground in the States unless he is encased in a suit of armor and locked up in a club proof cage. To such a pass has professional ball-playing come!

We have been at a great feast of language and have stolen all the scraps.—Shakespeare.