Poetry and the Poor.

"The world is very beautiful!" he said,
As yesterday, beside the brimming stream,
Glad and alone, I watched the tremulous gleam
Slant thro' the wintry wood, green carpeted
With moss and fern and curving bramble spray,
And bronze the thousand russet margin-reeds,
And in the sparkling holly glint and play,
And kindle all the briers' flaming seeds.

"The world is very horrible!" I sigh,
As, in my wonted ways, to-day I thread
Chill streets, deformed with dim monotony,
Hiding strange mysteries of unknown dread—
The reeking court, the breathless fever-den,
The haunts where things unholy throng and brood—
Grim crime, the fierce despair of strong-armed men,
Child infamy and shameless womanhood.

And men have looked upon this piteous thing—
Blank lives unvisited by beauty's spell—
And said: Let be; it is not meet to bring
Dreams of sweet freedom to the prison cell.
Sing them no songs of things all bright and fair,
Paint them no visions of the glad and free,
Lest with purged sight their miseries they see
And, thro' vain longings, pass to blank despair.

Oh, brother, treading ever darkening ways,
Oh, sister, whelmed in ever deepening care,
Would God we might unfold before your gaze
Some vision of the pure and true and fair!
Better to know, tho' sudden things be known,
Better to see, tho' tears half blind the sight,
Than thraldom to the sense and heart of stone
And horrible contentment with the night.

Oh! bring we then all sweet and gracious things
To touch the lives that lie so chill and drear,
That they may dream of some diviner sphere,
Whence each soft ray of love and beauty springs,
Each good and perfect gift is from above
And there is healing for earth's direst woes;
God hath unsealed the springs of light and love
To make the desert blossom as the rose.

PHYLLIS.

BY THE DUCHESS

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

CHAPTER I.

"Billy, Billy!" I call eagerly, and at the top of my healthy lungs; but there is no reply. "Where can that boy be?"

"Billy, Billy!" I shout again, more lustily this time, and with my neck craned half-way down the kitchen staircase, but with a like result. There is a sudden movement on the upper landing, and Dora, appearing above, waves her hand frantically towards me to insure attention, while she murmurs, "Hush! Hush!" with hurried emphasis. I look up, and see she is robed in her best French muslin, the faint blue and white of which contrasts so favorably with her delicate skin.

"Hush! There is some one in the drawing-room," says my lovely sister, with the slightest possible show of irritation.

"Who?" I ask, in my loudest whisper, feeling somewhat interested. "Not—not Mr. Carrington—surely?"

"Yes," returns Dora, under her breath; "and, really, Phyllis, I wish you would not give yourself the habit of——"

"What? Already!" I interrupt, with a gasp of surprise. "Well, certainly, he has lost no time. Now, Dora, mind you make a conquest of him, whatever you do, as, being our landlord, he may prove formidable."

Dora blushes—it is a common trick of hers, and she does it very successfully—nods, smiles and goes on to victory. The drawing-room door opens and shuts; I can hear a subdued murmur of voices; some one laughs. It is a man's laugh, and I feel the growth of curiosity strong within my breast. Oh, for some congenial soul to share my thoughts! Where on earth is Billy?"

I am about to prosecute my search for him in person, when he suddenly appears, coming toward me from a totally unexpected direction.

"What's up?" he asks, in his usual neat style.

"Oh, Billy, he is here—Mr. Carrington I mean," I exclaim, eagerly. "Dora and mamma are with him. I wonder will they ask him about the wood?"

"He'd be sure to refuse if they did," says Billy, gloomily. "From all I hear, he must be a regular Tartar. Brewster says he is the hardest landlord in the county, turns all the tenants out of doors at a moment's notice, and counts every rabbit in the place. I'm certain he is a mean beast, and I hope Dora won't ask any favor of him."

I shift the conversation.

"Did you see him come? Where have you been all this time?"

"Outside. There's a grand trap at the door, and two horses. Brewster says he is awfully rich, and of course he's a screw. If there's one thing I hate it's a miser."

"Oh, he is too young to be a miser," say I, in the innocence of my heart. "Papa says he cannot be more than eight-and-twenty. Is he dark or fair, Billy?"

"I didn't see him, but I'm sure he's dark and squat, and probably he squints," says Billy, viciously. "Any one that could turn poor old Mother Haggard out of her house in the frost and snow *must* have a squint."

"But he was in Italy then: perhaps he didn't know anything about it," I put in, as one giving the benefit of a bare doubt.

"Oh, didn't he?" says Billy, with withering contempt. "He didn't send his orders, I suppose? Oh, no!" Once fairly started in his Billingsgate strain, it is impossible to say where my brother will choose to draw a line, but fortunately for Mr. Carrington's character, Martha, our parlor servant, makes her appearance at this moment and comes up to us with an all-important expression upon her jovial face.

"Miss Phyllis, your ma wants you in the drawing-room at once," she says. "The strange gentleman is there, and——"

"Wants *me?*" I ask, in astonishment, not being usually regarded as a drawing-room ornament. "Martha, is my hair tidy?"

"'Tis lovely!" returns Martha. And, thus encouraged, I give my dress one or two hasty pulls and follow in Dora's footsteps.

A quarter of an hour later I rush back to Billy, and discover him standing, with bent head and shoulders, in a tiny closet that opens off the hall, and is only divided from the drawing-room by the very frailest of partitions. His attitude is crumpled, but his face betrays the liveliest interest as he listens assiduously to all that is going on inside.

"Well, what is he like?" he asks in a stage whisper, straightening himself as he sees me, and pointing in the direction of the closet.

"Very nice," I answer with decision, "and not dark at all—quite fair. I asked him about the wood when I got the chance, and he said we might go there whenever we chose, and that it would give him great pleasure if we would consider it as our own. There! And it was not he turned out old Nancy Haggard; it was the wretch Simmons, the steward, without any orders; and Mr. Carrington has dismissed him, and——"

Here Billy slips off a jam-pot, on which he has been standing, with a view to raising himself, stumbles heavily, and creates an appalling row; after which, mindful of consequences, he picks himself up silently, and together we turn and flee.

CHAPTER II.

I am 17—not sweet 17; there is nothing sweet about *me*. I am neither fair nor dark, nor tall nor short, nor indeed anything in particular that might distinguish me from the common herd. This is rather hard upon me, as all the rest of us can lay claim to beauty in one form or another. Thus, Roland, my eldest brother, is tall, very aristocratic in appearance, and extremely good to look at; Dora, who comes next, is small and exquisitely pretty, in a fresh fairy-like style; while Billy, the youngest born, has one of the handsomest faces imaginable, with liquid brown eyes of a gentle, pleading expression, that smile continually, and utterly belie the character of their owner.

Why I was born at all, or why, my creation being a settled matter, I was not given to the world as a boy, has puzzled and vexed me for many years. I am entirely without any of the little graceful kittenish blandishments of manner that go far to make Dora the charming creature she is; I have too much of Billy's recklessness, mixed up with natural carelessness of my own, to make me a success in the family circle. To quote papa in his mildest form, I am a "sad mistake," and not one easy to be rectified, while mother, who is the gentlest soul alive, reproves and comforts me from morning until night, without any result to speak of.

I am something over five feet two, with brown hair and a brown skin, and eyes that might be blue or gray, according to fancy. My feet are small and well shaped, and so are my hands: but as for seventeen years I have borne an undying hatred towards gloves, these latter cannot be regarded with admiration. My mouth is of goodly size, and rather determined in expression; while as to my figure, if Roland is to be believed, it resembles nothing so much as a fishing-rod. But my nose—that at least is presentable and worthy of a better resting-place; it is indeed a most desireable nose in every way, and, being my only redeeming point, is one of which I am justly proud.

Nevertheless, as one swallow makes no summer, so one feature will not beautify a plain face; and in spite of my Grecian treasure I still remain obscure. If not ornamental, however, I manage to be useful; I am an excellent foil to my sister Dora. She is beyond dispute our bright particular star, and revels in that knowledge. To be admired is sun and air and life to Dora, who resembles nothing in the world so much as an exquisite little Dresden figure, so delicate, so pink and white so yellow-haired, and always so bewitchingly attired. She never gets into a passion, is never unduly excited. She is too pretty and too fragile for the idea, else I might be tempted to say that on rare occasions she sulks. Still, she is notably good-tempered, and has a positive talent for evading all unpleasant topics that may affect her own peace of mind.

Papa is a person to be feared; mother is not; consequently, we all love mother best. In appearance the head of our family is tall, lean and unspeakably severe With him a spade is always a spade, and his *nay* is indeed nay. According to a tradition among us, that has grown with our growth, in his nose—which is singularly large and obtrusive—lies all the harshness that characterizes his every action. Indeed, many a time and oft have Billy and I speculated as to whether, were he suddenly shorn of his proboscis, he would also find himself deprived of his strength of mind. He is calm, and decidedly well-bred, both in manner and expression—two charms we do not appreciate, as, on such frequent occasions as when disgrace falls upon one or all of the household, the calmness and breeding become so terrible that, without so much as a frown, he can wither us beyond recognition.

I am his particular *bete noire*; my hoydenish ways jar every hour of the day upon his sensitive nerves. He never tires of contrasting me unfavorably with his gentle elegant Dora. He detests gushing people, and I, unhappily for myself, am naturally very affectionate. I feel not only a desire to love, but a times an unconquerable longing to openly declare my love; and as Roland is generally with his regiment, and Dora is a sort of person who would die if violently embraced, I am perforce obliged to expend all my superfluous affection upon our darling mother and Billy.

Strict economy prevails among us; more through necessity, indeed, than from any unholy desire to save. Our annual income of eight hundred pounds goes but a short way under any circumstances, and the hundred pounds a year out of this we allow Roland (who is always in a state of insolvency) leaves us "poor indeed." A new dress is, therefore, a rarity—not perhaps so strange a thing to Dora as it is to me—and any amusement that costs money would be an unheard of luxury. Out-door conveyances we have none, unless one is compelled to mention a startling vehicle that lies in the coach-house, and was bought no one remembers when and where. It is probably an heir-loom, and is popularly supposed to have cost a fabulous sum in the days of its youth and beauty, but it is now ancient and sadly disreputable, and not one of us but feels low and dejected when, tucked into it on Sunday mornings, we are driven by papa to attend the parish church. I even remember Dora shedding tears now and then as this ordeal drew nigh; but that was when the Desmonds or the Cuppaidges had young man staying with them, who might reasonably be expected to put in an appearance during the service, and who would be sure to linger and witness our disgraceful retreat afterward.

Of course papa has his two hunters. We have been taught that no gentleman could possibly get on without them in a stupid country place, and that it is more from a noble desire to sustain the respectability of the family than from any pleasure that may be derived from them, that they are kept. We try to believe this—but we don't.

We see very few neighbors, for the simple reason that there are very few to see. This limits dinner parties, and saves expense in many ways, but rather throws us younger fry upon our own resources. No outsiders come to disturb our uninteresting calm; we have no companions, no friends beyond our hearthstone. No alarming incidents occur to season our deadened existence; no one ever elopes with the wife of his bosom friend. All is flat, stale and unprofitable.

It is then with mingled feelings of fear and delight that we hear of Strangemore being put in readiness to receive its master. Mr. Carrington, our new landlord—our old one died about five years ago—has at length wearied of a foreign sojourn, and is hastening to the land of his fathers. So ran report three weeks before my story opens, and for once truly. He came, he saw, he ——. No, we have all arranged ages ago—it is Dora who is to conquer.

"He is exceedingly to be liked," says mamma that night at dinner, addressing papa, and alluding to our landlord, "and so very distinguished-looking. I rather think he admired Dora; he never removed his eyes from her face the entire time he stayed." And mother nods and smiles approvingly at my sister

"That must have been rather embarrassing," says papa in his even way; but I know by his tone he too is secretly pleased at Mr. Carrington's rudeness.

Dora blushes, utters a faint disclaimer, and then laughs—her own low cooing laugh, that s such a wonderful piece of performance. I have spent hours in my bedroom endeavoring patiently to copy that laugh of Dora's, with failure as the only result.

"And he is so good-natured!" I break in, eagerly. "The very moment I mentioned the subject, he gave us permission to go to Brinsley Wood as often as ever we choose, and seemed quite pleased at my asking him if we might; didn't he, mother?"

"Yes, dear."

"Could you find no more interesting topic to discuss with him than that?" asked papa with contemptuous displeasure. "Was his first visit a fitting opportunity to demand a favor of him? It is a pity, Phyllis, you cannot put yourself and your own amusements out of sight, even on an occasion. There is no vice so detestable as selfishness."

I think of the two hunters, and of how long mother's last black silk has been her best gown, and feel rebellious; but, long and early training having taught me to subdue my emotions, I accept the snub dutifully and relapse into taciturnity.

"It was not he turned out poor old Mother Haggard after all, papa," puts in Billy; "It was Simmons; and he is to be dismissed immediately."

"I am glad of that," says papa, viciously. "A more thorough going rascal never disgraced a neighborhood. He will be doing a really sensible thing if he sends that fellow adrift. I am gratified to find Carrington capable of acting with such sound common sense. None of the absurd worn-out prejudices in favor of old servants about him. I have no doubt he will prove an acquisition to the county."

Altogether, it is plainly to be seen, we every one of us intend approving of our new neighbor.

"Yes, indeed," says mother, "It is quite delightful to think of a young man being anywhere near. We are sadly in want of cheerful society. What a pity he did not come home directly his uncle died and left him the property, instead of wasting these last five years abroad!"

"I think he was right," returns papa, gracefully; "there is nothing like seeing life. When hampered with a wife and children he will regret he did not enjoy more of it before tying himself down irretrievably."

An uncomfortable silence follows this speech. We all feel guiltily conscious that we are hampering our father—that but for our unwelcome existence he might at the present hour be enjoying all the goods and gayeties of life: all, that is, except Billy, who is insensible to inuendoes, and never sees or feels anything that is not put before him in the plainest terms. He cheerfully puts an end now to the awkward silence.

"I can tell you, if you marry Mr. Carrington, you will be on the pig's back," he says, knowingly addressing Dora. Billy is not choice in his expressions. "He has no end of tin, and the gamest lot of horses in his stables to be seen anywhere. Brewster was telling me about it."

Nobody says anything.

"You will be on the pig's back, I can tell you," repeats Billy, with emphasis. Now, this is more than rashness, it is madness, on Billy's part; he is ignorantly offering himself to the knife. The fact that his vulgarity has been passed by unnoticed once is no reason why leniency should be shown towards him a second time. Papa looks up blandly.

"May I ask what you mean by being 'on the pig's back?' he asks, with a suspicious thirst for information.

"Oh, it means being in luck, I suppose," returns Billy, only slightly taken aback.

"I do not think I should consider it a lucky thing if I found myself on a pig's back," says papa, still apparently abroad, still desirous of having his ignorance enlightened.

"*I* don't suppose you would," responds Billy, gruffly; and, being an English boy, abhorrent of irony, he makes a most unnecessary clatter with his fork and spoon.

"*I* know what papa means," says Dora, sweetly, coming prettily to the rescue. One of Dora's favorite roles is to act as peace-maker on such public occasions as the present, when the innate goodness of her disposition can be successfully paraded. "It is that he wishes you to see how unmeaning are your words, and how vulgar are all hackneyed expressions. Besides"—running back to Billy's former speech—"you should not believe all Brewster tells you; he is only a groom, and probably says a good deal more than—than he ought."

"There!" cries Billy, with wrathful triumph, "you were just going to say 'more than his prayers,' and if *that* isn't a 'hackneyed expression,' I don't know what's what. You ought to correct yourself, Miss Dora, before you begin correcting other people."

"I was *not* going to say that," declares Dora, in a rather sharper tone.

"Yes, you were, though. It was on the very tip of your tongue."

"I was *not*," reiterates Dora, her pretty oval cheeks growing pink as the heart of a rose, while her liquid blue eyes changed to steel gray.

"That's a ——"

"William, be silent," interrupts papa, with authority, and so for a time puts a stop to the family feud.

Ah! Love was never without
The pang, the agony, the doubt.—BYRON.

CHAPTER III.

The next day Mr. Carrington calls again—this time ostensibly on business matters—and papa and he discuss turnips and other farm produce in the study, until the interview becomes so extended that it occurs to the rest of us they must faint.

Before leaving, Mr. Carrington finds his way to the drawing-room, where Dora and I are seated alone, he, having greeted us, drags a chair lazily after him, until he gets within a few feet of Dora. Here he seats himself.

Dora is tatting. Dora is always tatting; she never does anything else; and surely there is no work so pretty, so becoming to white fingers, as that in which the swift little shuttle is brought to bear. Nevertheless, though he is beside my sister, I never raise my head without encountering his blue eyes fixed upon me.

His eyes are very handsome, large and very dark, and wonderfully kind, eyes that let one see into the true heart beyond, indeed his whole face is full of beauty. He makes no unwise attempt to hide it, beyond the cultivation of a fair brown moustache that does not altogether conceal the delicately-formed mouth beneath, the lips of which are fine and almost sensitive enough to be womanish, but for a certain touch of quiet determination about them and the lower jaw. He is tall and rather slightly molded, and has a very clean-shaped head. His hands are white and thin, but large; his feet very passable.

"Do you know," he is saying to sympathetic Dora, while I take the above inventory of his charms, "I have quite an affection for this house? I was born here, and lived in it until my father died."

"Yes, I knew that," said Dora softly, with a liquid glance. "And all yesterday, after you had left, I kept wondering whether you felt it very strange and sad, seeing new faces n your old home."

"Did you really bestow a thought upon me when I was out of sight?" he said with mild surprise. "Are you in earnest? Do you know, Miss Vernon, I begin to believe it is a foolish thing to stay too long away from one's native land—away from the society of one's own countrymen; a man feels so dangerously pleased with any little stray kind word that may be said to him on his return. I have been living a rather up-and-down sort of life, not quite so civilized as might have been, I fear, and it now seems absolutely strange that any one should take the trouble to think about me." He says all this in a slow, rather effective tone, looking pensively at Dora the while.

Here is an opportunity not to be wasted, and Dora instantly blushes her very best blush; then becoming charmingly confused, lets her glance once more fall on her tatting.

"That is awfully pretty work you are doing," says Mr. Carrington, taking up the extreme edge of it and examining it with grave interest. "I like to see women working, when their hands are soft and white. But this looks a difficult task: it must have taken you a long time to master the intricacies."

"Oh, no. It is quite simple—just in and out, you see, like this. Any one can learn it, if they just put their mind to it."

"Do you think you could teach me, if I put my mind to it?" asks Mr. Carrington. And then their eyes meet; their heads are close together over the work; they smile and continue the gaze until Dora's lids droop bashfully.

I am disgusted. Evidently they regard me in the light of a babe or a puppy, so little do they allow my presence to interfere with the ripple of their inane conversation. I am more nettled by their indifference than I care to confess even to myself, and come to the uncharitable conclusion that Mr. Carrington is an odious flirt, and my sister Dora a fool.

"When you left this house where did you go then?" asks Dora presently, returning to the charge.

"To Strangemore—to my uncle. Then Ada—that is my sister, Lady Hancock—married, and I went into the Guards. You see I am determined to make friends with you," he says pleasantly, "so I begin by telling you all I know about myself."

"I am glad you wish us to be your friends," murmured Dora innocently. "But I am afraid you will find us very stupid. You, who have seen so much of the world, will hardly content yourself in country quarters, with only country neighbors." Another glance from the large childish eyes.

"Judging by what I have already seen," says Mr. Carrington, returning the glance with interest, "I believe I shall feel not only content, but thoroughly happy in my new home."

"Why did you leave your regiment?" I break in irrelevantly, tired of being left out in the cold, and anxious to hear my own voice again, after the longest silence I had ever kept.

Dora sighs gently and goes back to the tatting. Mr. Carrington turns quickly to me.

"Because I am tired of the life; the ceaseless monotony was more than I could endure. So when my uncle died and I came in for the property, five years ago, I cut it, and took to foreign travelling instead."

"I think if I were a man I would rather be a soldier than anything," I say, with effusion. "I cannot imagine any one disliking the life; it seems to me such a gay one, so good in every respect. And surely anything would be preferable to being an idler."

I am unraveling a quantity of scarlet wool that has been cleverly tangled by Cheekie, my fox-terrier, and so between weariness and the fidgets—brought on by the execution of a task that is utterly foreign to my tastes—I feel snappish, and have pointed my last remark. Dora looks up in mild horror, and casts a deprecating glance at our visitor. Mr. Carrington laughs—a short, thoroughly amused laugh.

"But I am not an idler," he says: "one may find something to do in life besides taking the Queen's money. Pray, Miss Phyllis, do not add to my many vices one of which I am innocent. I cannot accuse myself of having wasted even five minutes since my return home. Do you believe me?"

I hasten to apologize.

"Oh, I did not mean it, indeed," I say earnestly; "I do assure you I do not. Of course you have plenty to do. You must think me very rude."

I am covered with confusion. Had he taken my words in an unfriendly spirit I might have rallied and rather enjoyed my triumph; but his laugh has upset me. I feel odiously, horribly young, both in manner and appearance. Unaccustomed to the society of men, I have not had opportunities of cultivating the well-bred *insouciance* that distinguishes the woman of the world, and therefore betray hopelessly the shyness that is consuming me. He appears cruelly cognizant of the fact, and is evidently highly delighted with my embarrassment.

"Thank you," he says; "I am glad you exonerate me. I felt sure that you did not wish to crush me utterly. If you entertained a bad opinion of me, Miss Phyllis, it would hurt me more than I can say."

A faint pause, during which I know his eyes are still fixed with open amusement upon my crimson countenance. I begin to hate him.

"Have you seen the garden?" asks Dora musically. "Perhaps to walk through them would give you pleasure, as they cannot fail to recall old days, and the remembrance of a past that has been happy is so sweet." Dora sighs, as though she were in the habit of remembering perpetual happy pasts.

"I shall be glad to visit them again," answers Mr. Carrington, rising, as my sister lays down the ivory shuttle. He glances wistfully at me, but I have not yet recovered my equanimity, and rivet my gaze upon my wool relentlessly as he passes through the open window.

CHAPTER IV.

It is four o'clock. There is a delicious hush all over the house and grounds, a hush that betrays the absence of the male bird from his nest, and bespeaks security. Billy and I, hat in hand, stand upon the door-step and look with caution round us, preparatory to taking flight to Brinsley Wood! Ever since my unlucky confession of having asked Mr. Carrington's permission to wander through the grounds—thereby betraying the pleasure I feel in such wanderings—we have found it strangely difficult to get beyond the precincts of our home.

To-day, however, brings us such a chance of freedom as we may not have again, business having called our father to an adjoining village, from which he cannot possibly return until the shades of evening have well fallen. Our evil genius, too, has for once been kind, having forgotten to suggest to him before starting the advisability of regulating our movements during the hours he will be absent.

It is that sweetest month of the twelve, September—a glorious ripe September, that has never yet appeared so sweet and golden-brown as on this afternoon, that brings us so near the close of it. High in the trees hang clusters of filberts, that have tempted our imagination for some time, and now, with a basket slung between us, that links us as we walk, we meditate a raid.

As with light, exultant footsteps we hurry onwards, snatches of song fall from my lips—a low, soft contralto voice being my one charm. Now and then Billy's high, boyish notes join mine, making the woods ring, until the song comes to sudden grief through lack of memory when gay laughter changes the echo's tone.

At last the wood we want was reached; the nuts are in full view; our object is attained.

"Now," asks Billy with a sigh of delight, "at which tree shall we begin?"

All the trees are laden; they more than answer our expectations. Each one appears so much better than the other it is difficult to choose between them.

"At this," I say, at length, pointing to one, richly clothed that stands before us.

"Not at all," returns Billy, contemptuously: "It isn't half as good as this one," naming the companion tree to mine; and, his being the master-mind, he carries the day.

"Very good: don't miss your footing," I say anxiously, as he begins to climb, There are no lower branches, no projections of any kind to assist his ascent; the task is far from easy.

"Here, give me a shove," calls out Billy, impatiently, when he had slipped back to mother earth the fourth time, after severely barking his shins. I give him a vigorous push that raises him successfully to an overhanging limb, after which, being merely hand-over-hand work, he rises rapidly and, soon the spoiler reaches his prey.

Down come the little bumping showers; if on my head or arms so much the greater fun. I dodge; Billy aims; the birds grow nervous at our unrestrained laughter. Already our basket is more than half full, and Billy is almost out of sight among the thick foliage, so high has he mounted.

Slower, and with more uncertain aim come the nuts. I begin to grow restless. It is not so amusing as it was ten minutes ago, and I loook vaguely around me in search of newer joys.

At no great distance from me I spy another nut-tree, equally laden with treasure and far easier of access. Low, almost to the ground, some of the branches grow. My eyes fasten upon it; a keen desire to climb and be myself a spoiler seizes upon me. I lay my basket on the ground, and, thought and action being one with me, I steal off without a word to Billy and gain the wished-for spot.

Being very little inferior to Billy in the art of climbing—long and dearly-bought experience having made me nimble, it is at very little risk and with small difficulty I soon find myself at the top of the tree, comfortably seated on a thick arm of wood, plucking my nuts in safety. I feel immensely elated, both at the eminence of my situation and the successful secrecy with which I have carried out my plan. What fun it will be presently to see Billy looking for me everywhere

I fairly laugh to myself as these ideas flit through my idle brain — more, perhaps, through real gayety of heart than from any excellence the joke contains—when, suddenly raising my head, I see what makes my mischievous smile freeze upon my lip.

(To be Continued.)