The Switchman's Child.

At Littleton Station lived little Lem Fitch,
Who minded the depot and tended the switch—
A gay-hearted fellow, with dark, wavy hair—
A novice to grief and a stranger to care.
His home was a haven of sunshine and joy,
With his happy young wife and his bright little boy.

Twas late on a midsummer, mild afternoon;
The train from Topeka was due very soon.
Lem stepped from the station and sidetracked a freight;
Then, having a few idle moments to wait,
He twitted the brakeman of falling in love
With a red-headed girl at the station above,
And said, in conclusion, "Let marriage alone
Till the fuzz on your lip to a moustache has grown."
He laughed a loud laugh. He looked carelessly back—
He saw his boy-baby creep on to the track!

Then came through the cut, with a crash and a roar,
The train from Topeka. In ten moments more
The child would be cruelly mangled and crushed
'Neath the wheels of the train. To the switch-bar he rushed;
When the terrible thought through him suddenly thrilled:
The train will be wrecked, and the passengers killed!"

Far out of his reach sat his beautiful child,
Who called out his name and in innocence smiled.
Lem loosened his grip from the switch, and stepped back:
He shouted in terror, "Get off from the track!"
Then, playfully plying each plump little hand,
The baby crept off, and rolled down in the sand,
As past leaped the train with a hiss and a bound.
And swept out of sight with a thundering sound,

"God's hand helped my baby," said little Lem Fitch,
"Because I was trusty and true at the switch!"

Eugene J. Hall, in Chicago Tribune.

PHYLLIS.

BY THE DUCHESS.

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

Still admirable as he is, I have no desire for him to grow demonstrative so soon again; therefore continue the conversation hastily.

"Were you never in love before?" I ask, without motive.

It occurs to me that like a flash a faint change crosses his face.

"All men have fancies he answers, and something tells me he is evading a strict reply.

"I don't mean a fancy; I mean a real attachment. Did you ever ask any woman except me to be your wife?"

"Why?" he asks, with an attempt at laughter that ends in dismal failure beneath my remorseless eyes. "Will you throw me over if I say, 'Yes?'"

"No, of course not. But I think you might have told me before. Here have you been pretending all along you never loved any one but me, and now I discover accidentally that long before you knew me you had broken your heart over dozens of women."

"I had not," angrily. "Why do you misconstrue my words?"

"Oh, of course you had."

"I really wish, Phyllis, you would not give yourself the habit of contradicting people so rudely. I tell you I had not."

"Well, you were madly in love with one, at all events," I say, viciously. "I could see that by your eyes when I asked you the question."

"If a man commits a folly once in his life, he is not to be eternally condemned for it, I suppose?"

"I never said it was a folly to love any one; I only suggested it was deceitful of you not to have told me about it before. I hate secrets of any kind." My companion winces visibly. "There, don't be uneasy," I say, loftily. "I have no desire to pry into any of your affairs."

We pace up and down in uncomfortable silence. At length:

"I see you are angry, Phyllis," he says.

"Oh, dear, no. Why should such an insignificant thing that does not affect me in any way make me angry?"

"My darling child, I think you are; and, oh, Phyllis, for what? For a hateful passion that is dead and buried this many a year, and bore no faintest resemblance to the deep true affection I feel for you. Am I the worse in your eyes because I once—when I was a boy—fancied my heart was lost? Be reasonable, and be kind to me. You have been anything but that all this morning."

"Was she dark, or fair?" I ask, in a milder tone, not noticing, however, the hand he holds out to me.

"Dark—abominably dark."

"And tall?"

"Detestably so."

"You need not abuse her now," I say, reprovingly. "You loved her once."

"I did not," he cries with some excitement. "I could never have loved her. It was a mad, boyish infatuation. Let us forget her, Phyllis; the subject is hateful to me. Oh, my darling, my pet, no one ever really crept into my heart except you—you small, cold, cruel, little child."

I am softened. I make up my mind I will not be cold during the remainder of our day, so I slip my ungloved hand into his, and bring myself close up to his side.

"I will forgive you this time," I whisper; "but, Marmaduke, promise me that never in the future will you conceal anything from me."

"I promise—I swear," says my betrothed, eagerly and I receive, and graciously return the kiss of reconciliation he lays upon my lips.

CHAPTER XV.

We are unmistakably and most remarkably late, but that is scarcely a matter for wonder, considering the animal we drove and the vehicle in which we journeyed.

When Mr. Carrington asked me a week ago if a garden party at Strangemore would give me any pleasure—so little are we accustomed to gayeties of any kind—my spirits rose to fever height, and I told him without any hesitation nothing on earth he could do for me would occasion me greater delight than his ordering and regulating a *fete* in which I might bear a part. Afterwards, when I fully understood the consequences of my rash words, how heartily did I repent them!

As we are all fully alive to the fact that to face the hall-door at Strangemore and the assembled county in our shandrydan is more than we can endure, we enter the grounds by a back way; and having given Brewster strict orders to reach the yard without being seen, and if seen, to answer no inconvenient questions, we alight, and shaking out our trains, proceed towards the gardens.

My dress is composed of simple batiste, but is a wonderful mingaling of palest pink and blue impossible to describe, my hat is also pink and blue, my gloves delicately tinted. Marmaduke's earrings and locket and bracelets and ring are scattered all over my person; and altogether I flatter myself, I am looking as well as it is possible for Phyllis Vernon to look.

Dora is in a ravishing costume, of which blue silk forms the principal part, and has put on a half-pouting, just-awakened expression, that makes her appear a lovely grown up-baby.

Mamma is looking as she always looks in my eyes, perfectly beautiful.

She and Dora march in front, while Billy and I bring up the rear. To my excited imagination it seems as if all the world were met together on the croquet lawn. I say, "Oh, Billy!" in an exhilarated tone, and give his arm a squeeze; but, as the dear fellow thinks it necessary to be morose on the occasion, he takes it badly, and tells me angrily to moderate my transports, or people will say I have never been at any entertainment before—which if people did say it would be unusually near the truth.

Presently Marmaduke, seeing us, comes quickly up, and, having welcomed mother and Dora, offers me his arm with the air of a proprietor, and carries me away from my family.

I feel as though treading on air, and am deliciously far from shyness of any description. Before we have gone very far my conversational powers assert themselves.

"Marmaduke, don't you think I am looking very nice?" I say naively

"Very, darling. You always look that."

This general praise disappoints me. Whatever an infatuated person may have chosen to consider me in the time past, am satisfied that at the present moment I really am worthy of admiration.

"But you cannot have seen my dress," I persist; "it came all the way from London; and *we* all think it so pretty. Look at it, Marmaduke."

He turns his head willingly in my direction, but his gaze gets little farther than my face.

"It is charming," he says, with enthusiasm. "That pale green suits you tremendously."

"Pale-green!" and I am all faintest azure. I break into a merry laugh, and give him an imperceptible shake.

"Green, you ridiculous boy! Why, there is not a particle of green about me. I am nothing but pink and blue. Do look at me again, Marmaduke, or I shall die of chagrin."

"Well, it was the blue I meant," declares my lover, composedly, "Then, come with me to the other side, Phyllis; I want to introduce you to Lady Alicia Slate-Gore."

"Lady Alicia!" I gasp, awestruck. "Is—is the duke here?"

"No; he is in Scotland. Lady Alicia came by herself. She is an old friend of mine, darling, and I am very fond of her. I want you, therefore, to be particularly charming to her."

"How can you expect me to be that—under the circumstances?" I ask, lightly, glancing up at him from under my lashes with a sudden and altogether new touch of coquetry born of the hour and my gay attire. "How can I be amiable, when you tell me in that bare-faced fashion of your adoration for her? Of course I shall be desperately jealous and desperately disagreeable during the entire interview."

Marmaduke's face betrays the intense delight all men feel when receiving flattery from the beloved one. Perhaps, indeed, he appears a trifle sillier than the generality of them, incense coming from me being so totally unexpected. I know by his eyes he would give anything to kiss me, were it not for shame sake and the gaping crowd.

"Is your Lady Alicia very terrific?" I ask, fearfully, and then almost before he has time to answer my question, we are standing before a tall, benevolent-looking woman of forty-five, with a hooked nose, and a scarlet feather in her bonnet, and I am bowing and smirking to Lady Alicia Slate-Gore.

She is more than civil—she is radiant. She taps me on the cheek with her fan, and calls me "my dear," and asks me a hundred questions in a breath. She taps Marmaduke on the arm and asks him what he means by making love to a child who ought to be in the nursery dreaming fairy tales.

At this Marmaduke laughs, and says I am older than I look—for which I am grateful to him.

"Old!" says my lady, with a rapid birdlike glance at me. "The world will soon be upside down. Am I to consider fourteen old?"

"Phyllis will soon be nineteen," says Marmaduke; for which I feel still more grateful, as it was only two months ago I attained my eighteenth year.

"Indeed! indeed! You should give your friends your receipt, child. You have stolen a good five years from Father Time, and just when you least want it. Now, if you could only give us old people a written prescription," etc., etc.

Marmaduke leaves us to go and receive some other guests, and her ladyship still chatters on to me; while I, catching the infection of her spirits, chatter back again to her, until she declares me vastly amusing, and is persuaded Marmaduke has gained a prize in the life-lottery.

Then Bobby De Vere comes up, little later, and addresses me in his usual florid style; so does fat Mr. Hastings; and presently Lady Alicia appears again, bringing with her a tall, gaunt man with a prickly beard, who, she says, is desirous of being introduced.

He is probably a well-intentioned person, but he is very deaf, and has evidently mistaken the whole affair. For example, after a moment or two he electrifies me by saying "You are fortunate, Mrs. Carrington, in having so magnificent a day for your *fete*."

I color painfully, stammer a good deal and finally explain, rather lamely. I am not yet Mrs. Carrington, and that my proper name is Vernon. Upon which he too is covered with confusion and makes a hurried and very unintelligible apology.

"Beg pardon, I'm sure. Quite understood from Lady Alicia—most awkward—inexcusably so. Only arrived at the castle late last night, and am a stranger to every one here. Pray pardon me."

I put an end to his misery by smiling and asking him if he would like to walk about a little—an invitation he accepts with effusion.

There are dear little colored tents scattered all over the place. Bands are playing; so are fountains; and flowers are everywhere. I drink iced Moselle and eat strawberries, and am supremely happy.

My emaciated cavalier escorts me hither and thither, and does all he knows to entertain me. After an hour or so he leaves me, only shortly to return again, and it becomes evident he is bent on studying human nature in a new form as he listens with every appearance of the gravest interest to the ceaseless babble that flows from my lips.

The day wears on, and I see hardly anything of Marmaduke; it is already half-past five, and in another hour my joy must end. I stand at the door of a tent, framed in by blue and white canvas, with a crimson strawberry on its way to my lips, and am vaguely wondering at my lover's absence, when I see him coming towards me, by degrees, and with that guilty air that distinguishes most men when endeavoring secretly to achieve some cherished design. He looks slightly bored, but brightens as his eyes meets mine and hurries his footsteps.

As he draws nearer I address to him some commonplace remark, upon which the two or three men who have been amusing me—my gaunt companion included—sheer off from me as though I had the plague; it being thoroughly understood on all sides that in me they behold the "coming Queen" of Strangemore.

Their defection, however, disconcerts me not at all. I am too glad, too utterly gay on this glorious afternoon to let any trifles annoy me.

"Did you miss me?" asked Marmaduke, tenderly.

"Hardly. You see, I had scarcely time—have been enjoying myself so much. It has been a delicious day altogether. Have you enjoyed it, Marmaduke?"

"No. I was away from you." There is a world of reproach in his tone.

"True; I had forgotten that," I say, wickedly. Then, "To tell the truth, 'Duke, I was just beginning to wonder had you forgotten my existence. How did you manage to keep away from me for so long?"

"What unbearable conceit! I could not come to you a moment sooner. If I had to get through so much hard work every day as was put upon me this afternoon, I believe I should die of a decline. Don't you feel as if you hated all these people, Phyllis? I do."

"No, indeed; I bear them nothing but good will. They have all helped by their presence to make up the sum of my enjoyment."

"I am so glad the day has been a success—to you at least. Are you looking at that old turret, darling? There is such a beautiful view of the gardens from one of those windows?" This last suggestively.

"Is there?" I answer, with careless indifference. Then, good-naturedly, "I think I would like to see it."

"Would you?" much gratified. "Then come with me."

In his heart I know he is rejoiced at the prospect of a *tete-a-tete* alone with me—rejoiced, too, at the chance of getting rid for a while of all the turmoil and elegant bustle of the crowd.

I go with him down the garden path, through the shrubberies, up the stone steps, and into the large hall, past immodest statues and up interminable stairs, until we reach the small round chamber of which he speaks.

I run to the window and look down eagerly upon the brilliant scene below; and certainly what meets my eyes rewards me for the treadmill work I have undergone for the purpose.

Beneath me lie the gardens, a mass of growing color, while far beyond them as the eye can reach stretches the wood in all its green and bronze and brown-tinged glory. Upon the right spreads the park soft and verdant. Below me the gayly-robed guests pass ceaselessly to and fro, and the sound of their rippling laughter climbs up the old ivy covered walls and enters the window where I stand.

"Oh, how lovely it is!" I cry delightedly. "Oh, I am so glad I came! How far away they all appear, and how small!"

Marmaduke is watching me with open content; he never seems to tire of my many raptures.

Suddenly I lean forward and, with flushed cheeks, follow the movement of one of the guests, who hitherto has been unnoticed by me.

"Surely—," I cry, with considerable excitement, "that is Sir Mark Gore."

Marmakuke stares. "Sir Mark is here," he says. "Do you know him?"

"Of course I do," I answer, gayly, craning my neck farther out of the window, the better to watch my new-old acquaintance; "that is, a little. What a handsome man he is! How odd he should be here to-day!"

"I don't see the oddness of it," rather coldly. "I have known him intimately for many years. How did you become acquainted with him, Phyllis?"

"Oh," I say, laughing, "our first meeting was a very romantic affair—almost as romantic as my second interview with you." I say this with a glance half shy, half merry; but Mr. Carrington does not seem as much alive to my drollery as usual. "Billy and I had ridden into Carston—I on the old white pony, you know—and just as we came to the middle of the High street, Madge shied at a dead sheep, my saddle turned, and but for Sir Mark Gore, who happened to be passing at the moment, I would certainly have fallen off. He rushed to the rescue, caught me in his arms, and deposited me safely on the ground. Was it not near being a tragedy? Afterwards he was even condescending enough to tighten the girths himself, though Billy was as well able, and to speed us on our homeward journey. Was it not well that he was there?"

"Very well, indeed. And was that all you saw of him?"

"Oh, dear, no; we became great friends after that. I found him wonderfully good-natured and kind."

As I speak I am ignorant of the fact that Sir Mark has the reputation of being the fastest man about town.

"I have no doubt you did," says my betrothed, sarcastically. "And where did you meet him again?"

"At a bazaar, a week later. He got Mrs. Leslie, with whom he was staying, to introduce him to me. And then he called with the Leslies, and I think took a fancy to Dora, as he was continually coming to Summerleas after that. Not that he ever came to the point, you know; he did not propose to her or that; which disappointed us all very much, as Mr. Leslie told mamma he was enormously rich and a good match."

"You seem to think a great deal of a good match," says Marmaduke, very bitterly. "Are you so extremely fond of money?"

"Awfully," I say, with charming candor. 'What can there be better than a lot of it? I shall have plenty when I marry you, Marmaduke, shall I not?"

"As much as ever you want," replies he; but there is no warmth in his tones.

"Don't make rash promises. Perhaps I shall want ever so much. Do you know I never had more than two pounds all together at a time in my life, and that only once? My godfather gave it to me the year before last, and it took Billy and me a whole week to decide how we should spend it."

"Well?" absently.

"Well"—utterly unabashed—"finally we divided it into four half-sovereigns. With one we bought a present for mother, and were going to do the same for Dora, only she said she would rather have the money itself than anything we could select. Then Billy bought a puppy he had been longing for for a month with the third, besides a lot of white rats—odious little things with no hair on their tails—and a squirrel; and—and that's all," I wind up abruptly.

"What did you do with the other half-sovereign?" asks 'Duke, more from want of something to say than from any overpowering curiosity.

"Oh, nothing—nothing," I answer, feeling slightly confused, I don't know why. "I cannot remember, it is so long ago."

"Only the year before last, by your own account, and I know your memory to be excellent, Come, tell me what you did with it."

As he grows obstinate, so do I, and therefore answer with gay evasion.

"What would I do with it but one thing? Of course I bought a present for my sweetheart."

Surely some capricious spirit inhabits this room. For the second time since we entered it Marmaduke's countenance lowers.

"Why, what is the matter now?" I ask, impatiently. "What are you looking so cross about?"

"I am not cross," indignantly. "What is there to make me so? There is no reason why you should not have innumerable sweethearts as well as every other woman."

"Oh!" I say; and his last speech having made me aware that the word "sweetheart" has been the cause of all the ill temper, I go on wickedly, "why, none indeed; and this particular one of whom I speak was such a darling! So good to me, too, he was—I never received an unkind word or a cross look from him. Ah! I shall never forget him."

"You are right there. No virtue is as admirable as sincerity. I wonder how you could bring yourself to resign so desirable a lover."

"I didn't resign him. Circumstances over which we had no control arose, and separated his lot from mine." Here I sigh heavily, and cast my eyes upon the ground with such despairing languor as would have done credit to an Amanda—or a Dora.

"If I am to be considered one of the 'circumstances' in this matter," says my lover hotly, "I may tell you at once I do not at all envy the position. I have no desire to come between you and your affections."

"You do not," I return, mildly; and, but that when a man is jealous he loses all reasoning and perceptive faculties, he might see that I am crimson with suppressed laughter. "Had you never appeared on the scene, still a marriage between us would have been impossible."

"What is his name?" asks 'Duke, abruptly.

"I would rather not tell you."

"I insist upon knowing. I think I have every right to ask."

"Oh, why? If I promised him to keep the matter secret, surely you would not ask me to break my faith?"

"Once engaged to me, I object to your keeping faith with any other man."

"Well, it is all gone and past now," I murmur, sadly. "Why rake up the old ashes? Let us forget it."

"Forget it!" cries Marmaduke, savagely. "How easy you find it to forget! And you, whom I thought so innocent a child—you, who told me you never had a lover until I came to Strangemore! I cannot so readily forget what you have now told me. It maddens me to think another man has been making love to you, has held your hands, has looked into your eyes, has—has—Phyllis"—almost fiercely—"tell me the truth; did he ever kiss you?"

My back is turned to him, but I am visibly shaking. I wonder exceedingly why he does not notice it; but perhaps he does, and puts it down to deep emotion.

"No," I say in a smothered tone, "it never went so far as that."

"Then why not tell me his name?"

"Because—I—cannot."

"Will not you mean. Very good; I will not ask you again. I think we had better return to the grounds."

He moves a step or two away in the direction of the door. Turning, I burst into a perfect peal of laughter, and laugh until the old room echoes again.

"Oh, Marmaduke," I cry holding out to him my hands, "come back to me, and I will tell you all. It was old Tanner, your head gardener, I meant the whole time. He used to give me all your fruit and flowers before he went to America; and I bought him an ear-trumpet with my ten shillings, and—oh! oh! oh!"

"Phyllis, Phyllis!" cries my lover, with reproachful tenderness, and, catching me in his arms, presses upon my lips kisses many and passionate, as punishment for my wrong-doing.

"How could you do it, darling? How could you make me so miserable for even a few minutes?"

"I could not help it. You looked so angry and the idea came into my head. And all about old Tanner! Oh! There—there, please don't make me laugh again."

Friendly intercourse being thus once more restored, and it being necessary we should now return to the guests, I make a bet with him, in which a dozen pair of gloves count as high as three kisses, and race him down all the stairs, through landings and rooms and corridors, until I arrive breathless but triumphant at the hall-door. Here we pause flushed and panting, to recover our equanimity, before marching out together calm and decorous to mingle again among our friends.

Most of them are standing draped and shawled, only waiting to bid farewell to their host. Almost on the steps we come in contact with Sir Mark Gore.

"Miss Vernon," he exclaims, with a start of surprise, "you here! How have I missed seeing you all day? Carrington, when you bring so many people together you should at least give them printed programmes with all their names inscribed, to let them know whom to seek and whom to avoid. Miss Phyllis, how can I tell you how glad I am to see you again?"

"Don't be too glad," says 'Duke, directing a tender smile at me as I stand beaming pinkily upon Sir Mark, "or I shall be jealous."

"How! is it indeed so!" Sir Mark asks, addressing me. He too has only reached the neighborhood within the last few hours, and knows nothing of what has been going on of late in our quiet village.

"Yes, it is indeed so," I return, with an assumption of sauciness, though my cheeks are flaming. Then, half shyly, "Will you not congratulate me?" "No, I shall congratulate Carrington," replies he, shortly, and after a few more words of the most commonplace description, leaves us.

Mother is on her feet, and has assumed an important expression. She has sent Billy in quest of Dora. Marmaduke crosses over to her, whispers, and expostulates for a moment or two, until at length mother sinks back again upon her seat with a resigned smile, and sends Billy off a second time with a message to Brewster to betake himself and the fossil back to Summerleas with all possible speed. And so it comes to pass that when the lawns are again empty Mr. Carrington drives us all, through the still and dewey evening, to our home, where he remains to dine and spend the rest of this eventful day.

CHAPTER XVI.

It is a fortnight later, when the post coming in one morning brings to Dora an invitation from our aunts, the Misses Vernon, to go and stay with them for an indefinite period.

These two old ladies—named respectively Aunt Martha and Priscilla—are maiden sisters of my father's and are, if possible, more disagreeable than he. Being rich, however, they are powerful, and we have been brought up to understand how inadvisable it would be to offend or annoy them in any way.

Dora receives and reads her letter with an unmoved countenance, saying nothing either for or against the proposition it contains, so that breakfast goes on smoothly. So does luncheon; but an hour afterwards, as I happen to be passing through the hall, I hear high words issuing from the library, with now and then between them a disjointed sob, that I know proceeds from Dora. I steal noiselessly to the hall door and, opening it, find refuge in the outer air.

As evening falls, however, I am warned of the approach of dinner-hour, and, returning to the house, am safely up the stairs, when Billy comes to meet me, his face full of indignant information.

"It is a beastly shame," he says, in a subdued whisper, "and I would not submit to it if I were you. When luncheon was over, Dora went to papa and told him she would not go to aunt Martha; and when papa raged and insisted, she began to blubber as usual, and said if you were to take her place it would do just as well; and of course papa jumped at the idea, knowing it would be disagreeable, and says you *shall* go."

"What!" cry I, furious at this new piece of injustice "I shall, shall I? He'll see!"

I turn from my brother with an ominous expression of my lips, and move towards my bedroom door. The action means, "Not words, but deeds."

"That's right," says Billy, following close in the character of a backer-up, and openly delighted at the prospect of a scrimmage. "Fight it out. I would give the governor plenty of cheek if I were you; he wants it badly. Its a shame that's what it is; and you engaged and all! And what will Mr. Carrington say? Do you know"—mysteriously—"It is my opinion Miss Dora thinks she could get inside you, if you were once out of the way? She was always a sneak; so I would not give in on any account. But"—despondingly—"you will never have the pluck to go through with it when it comes to the point. I know you won't."

"I will," I return, gazing back at him with a stern determination in my eyes.

In this defiant mood I dress and go downstairs. All through dinner Dora is more than usually agreeable. She smiles continually, and converses gayly in her pretty, low-toned elegant way.

"Nothing is said on the subject of aunt Martha until it is time for us to retire to the drawing-room, and I am almost beginning to fear the battle will be postponed, when papa, turning to me, says, carelessly, and as though it were a matter of no importance:

"As Dora dislikes the idea of going to your aunts, Phyllis, at this time of year, we have decided on sending you for a month in her place."

"But I dislike the idea too," I reply as calmly as rage will let me.

"That is to be regretted, as I will not have your aunts offended. You are the youngest, and must give way."

"But the invitation was not sent to me.

"That will make little difference, and a sufficient excuse can be offered for Dora. As your marriage does not come off until late in the autumn, there is no reason why you should remain at home all the summer."

"This is some of your underhand work," I say, with suppressed anger, addressing Dora.

(To be continued

Down on Corners.

They arrested a young man in Quincy, Illinois, the other day for having five wives, and during his trial it was discovered that he was engaged to about a dozen other girls. As the prisoner stood up to receive his sentence, the Judge remarked:

"Prisoner, it is hard to discover what motive could have actuated you to conduct yourself in this outrageous manner."

"Nothing mysterious about it, your Honor," was the calm reply. "I was simply making a corner on the marriageable girls in this county."

He got fifteen years.

A 5-year-old cat, of Gainsville, Ga., has given birth to 57 kittens at different times.