

PHYLLIS.

BY THE DUCHESS.

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

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Phyllis, the heroine of the story, is a bright dashing tomboy of a girl just seventeen. She is up to all sorts of mischief ably assisted by her young brother Billy. Mr. Carrington, aged about 30, is their landlord, near neighbor, squire and very wealthy. Dora, Phyllis' sister, is the pink of perfection, the beauty of the family, and is looked upon by them all as the one to captivate Mr. Carrington. They are comparatively poor, having only an income from some investments, barely enough to support them comfortably. Phyllis is introduced to Mr. Carrington when he is calling on the family, as the story opens. A few days afterward she is playing in the woods on Mr. Carrington's property and, while up a tree, Billy announces the approach of Carrington when Phyllis hastens to get down and is caught by a branch and suspended between heaven and earth, showing as Billy said, "only a few inches above her garters," and finally after a good deal of struggling frees herself scratching her arm severely. Carrington skillfully binds it up with his handkerchief and falls in love with Phyllis unknown to her. A few days after he takes Phyllis and Dora and a number of their neighbors off for a long drive and a picnic. Snowing marked attention to Dora. On the way home however, Phyllis is invited to take the seat of honour by the side of Mr. Carrington who is driving and Phyllis gets a sort of misty notion that Carrington loves her. Next day Dora who is communing with herself in the woods accidentally comes on Carrington unheard, and finds him frantically kissing a miniature in his locket which turns out to be Phyllis. Dora returns home heartbroken, and Roland her elder brother who happens to be home from college threatens to call Carrington out. Phyllis is always run on by the whole family who never suspect that he is in love with Phyllis, she has met Carrington several times, and he at length declares himself and they are engaged to be married in one year. Phyllis cannot sustain courage enough to announce to the household, the fact of the case for some days, when she does they all look upon her as having done Dora a great wrong, who goes around the house red-eyed and tearful.

CHAPTER XIV.—CONTINUED.

"If you admire her so much, why don't you marry her?" I, say sharply. Although I am not in love with Marmaduke, I strongly object to his expressing unlimited admiration for my sister or any other woman.

"Shall I tell you?" said he, suddenly, coming back to me to take me in his arms and strain me close to him. "Because in my eyes you are ten times lovelier. Because your hair, though darker, pleases me more. Because your complexion, though browner, is to me more fair. Because your smile, though less uniformly sweet, is merrier and tenderer, and more lovable. There! have I given you enough reasons for the silly preference I feel for a little girl who does not care a straw about me?"

"Oh, yes, I do: I like you very much," I answer, greatly mollified. "I do really—better and better every day."

"Do you indeed?" rapturously. "My own darling!"

"Yes," I say, in a thoroughly matter-of-fact tone, with a view to bringing him back to earth again without any unnecessary delay. "But how can you be so fond of me, Marmaduke, when you say I am so cross? Now, tell me this," laying the first finger of my right hand upon his lips, and beating time there with it to each of my words: "why did you first take a fancy to me?"

"Just because you are Phyllis: I have no other reason. If you were any one else, or changed in any way, I would not care in the least for you."

"At that rate we are likely to have a happy time of it," I say, sarcastically, "considering I am never the same for two weeks running. And papa says every one's disposition undergoes a complete alteration every seven years."

"I'll risk that," says he, laughing. "Seven years are a long way off."

"But I shall change in less than seven years," I say, persistently. "Don't you see? I have done so twice already, at seven and fourteen, and I shall do so again at twenty-one. Therefore, in four years' time I shall be a different person altogether, and you will cease to care for me."

"I shall always adore you, Phyllis," declares my lover, earnestly, "whether we live together for four or fourteen or one hundred and fourteen years."

This leaves nothing more to be said, so I am silent for a moment or two, and gaze at him with some degree of pride as he stands beside me, with his blue eyes, tender and impassioned—as handsome a man as ever made vain love to a graceless maiden.

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 asked, 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 have 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 folly to love any one; I only suggested it was deceitful of you not to have told 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," cries he, 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 remarkably late, but that is scarcely a matter for wonder, considering the animal we drove and the vehicle in which we journeyed. We have been bumped and jolted and saddened all the way from Summerleas, besides having endured agonies of shame and fear less any of the grander folk meeting us upon the road should look down upon us from their aristocratic equipages and scorn our dilapidated condition. By taking an unfrequented route, however, we arrive unseen, and are spared so much humiliation.

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 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!

First came the battle with papa about the necessary garments to be worn at it—gowns we should have and gowns we had not—and a skirmish naturally followed. Mamma and Dora undertook to face the foe alone in this instance (it being unanimously decided in conclave that my presence on the scene would only hinder any chance of success), and after a severe encounter Dora triumphed—as somehow Dora always does triumph—though I am bound to admit many tears were shed and many reproaches uttered before victory was declared in our favor.

Then came the getting to Strangemore in the disgraceful fossil that clings to us like a nightmare, and won't fall to pieces from decay.

Half an hour before we start, papa caroles away on his sprightly roan, got up regardless of expense, leaving Brewster to drive us, with Billy seated beside him on the box-seat; while we three women sit inside and try to think our dresses are not crushed, while undergoing the hour and a half of anguish before described on our way.

As we are fully alive to the fact that to face the hall-door at Strangemore and the assembled country 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 answer no inconvenient questions, we alight, and, shaking out our trains, proceed towards the gardens.

My dress is composed of a simple batiste, but is a wonderful mingling of palest pink and blue, impossible to describe; my hat is also pink and blue, my gloves delicately tinted. Marmaduke's ear-rings and locket and bracelets and rings 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.

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

She and Dora march on 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 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. What-ever an infatuated person may have chosen

to consider me in the past, I 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 is so pretty. Look at it Marmaduke."

He turns his head willingly in my direction, but his gaze gets little further 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, comically. Then, "Come with me to the other side, Phyllis; I want to introduce you to Lady Alicia Slate-Gore."

"Lady Alicia!" I gasp, awe-struck. "Is—is she the duke here?"

"No; he is in Scotland. Lady Alicia came 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's 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 smiling at 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 her 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 bird-like 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 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, a 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, 'm sure. Quite understood from Lady Alicia—most awkward—inexcusable 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; and 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 how 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 meet 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?" asks Marmaduke, tenderly.

"Hardly. You see, I have had scarcely time—I have been enjoying myself so much

It has been a delicious day altogether. Have you enjoyed it, Marmaduke?"

"N. I was away from you. There is a world of reproach in his tone.

"True; I had forgotten that," I say, wicely. 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 so long?"

"What unbearable conceit! I could not come to you a moment sooner. If I had to get through as much hard work every day as was put on 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 *tele-a-tele* alone with me—rejoiced, too, at the chance of getting rid for awhile 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 eye rewards me for the treadmill work I have undergone for the threshold.

Beneath me lie the gardens, a mass of glowing color, while far beyond them as the eye can reach stretches the wood in all its green and brown-tinted 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 movements of one of the guests, who hitherto has been unnoticed by me.

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

Marmaduke starts. "Sir Mark is here," he says. "Do you know him?"

"Of course I do," I answer, gayly, craning my neck further 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 today!"

"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 well able, and to speed us on our homeward journey. Was it not well 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 her or that; which disappointed us all very much, as Mrs. 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—olious little things with no hair on their tails—and a squirrel; 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."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

NEWS IN A NUTSHELL.

Five Minutes Select Reading—Summary of Foreign, Domestic and War Items—Concise, Pithy and Pointed.

DOMESTIC.

Winnipeg hotels are filled to overflowing. The C. P. R. shops are not to be moved from Prescott.

The creditors of the Montreal abattoir have granted the company six months' extension.

The value of last year's output of coal from Nova Scotia mines was \$80,000 in excess of that of 1880.

Mrs. Ellen Collins, an Irishwoman, long resident in St. John, N. B., died recently in her 104th year.

A farm of 160 acres adjoining Brandon has been sold for \$20,000 to an Ontario gentleman for a market garden.

The body of a new-born infant was found at the back door of a house in St. John, N. B. The infant had been frozen to death.

In consequence of the scarcity of snow lumbering operations in the district on the south side of the Ottawa are almost entirely suspended.

A reward of \$1,400 is offered for information respecting Maggie McVey who disappeared from Yarmouth township, county Elgin in 1878.

Hector McNeil, aged 36, of Taddeek, C. B., perished in the snow-storm recently, within two miles of his home, when returning from Christmas Island.

On Tuesday evening a serious fire occurred at Peter McLaren's shanties, back of the Mississippi. A stable and seven teams of horses were burned.

Capt. Campbell, of St. Hilaire, late of H. M. 92nd Highlanders, has been induced to accept the command of the Royal Scots Fusiliers of Montreal.

Small-pox has broken out at Hamilton. A boarder in a house on Cameron-street was first stricken down. After his removal the keeper of the boarding-house and his wife and child fell victims to this loathsome disease.

The report that mechanics cannot obtain employment in Winnipeg is absurdly false. About \$4,000,000 is projected to be spent in Winnipeg in buildings and other public works this year, and that amount of capital will require more labour than it is feared will reach the city.

UNITED STATES.

A boiler burst at New Carlisle, Ohio, killing five men.

One thousand colored people are starving in the State of Mississippi.

A boiler burst in the Vulcan Works, N. Y., and several men were killed.

The steamship Gallia, on Wednesday took out five hundred thousand dollars in gold from New York.

An appropriation of \$100,000 for the relief of sufferers by the Mississippi flood has been recommended to Congress.

Over three hundred Russian Jews have arrived in Philadelphia. They say that when the riots occurred at Warsaw some of their number were driven out of the city at the point of the bayonet, and forced to fly with their families.

The Congress Committee on the expenses of Garfield's illness have agreed to recommend the payment of \$15,000 each to Agnew and Hamilton, \$10,000 to Bliss, and \$5,000 each to Rebyurn and Boynton. Barnes and Woodward will be compensated otherwise.

GENERAL.

In the French Chamber of Deputies De Freycinet said that England had proposed to submit the Egyptian question to the Powers.

Bradlaugh has met with another reverse, the latest being the decision of the Court of Appeal, reversing the decision of the Court of Queen's Bench, granting a new trial in Clark v. Bradlaugh.

In the French Chamber of Deputies the Minister of Commons has introduced a bill fixing the system to be adopted in regard to English articles imported into France.

A meeting of Scotch iron-masters at Glasgow agreed, subject to the approval of the English masters, to prolong for six months the agreement restricting the manufacture of iron.

The delegates of the Bolton operative spinners overwhelmingly decided at a great meeting to take a ballot of the entire body of operatives as to the advisability of striking for an increase of 5 per cent. wages.

The Hungarian Government objected to the delivery of 100,000 rifles ordered by Serbia, because it apprehends a change in the government of Serbia would bring into power a party sympathizing with the Bosnian insurgents.

In the treaty of commerce between France and Spain, Spain consents that French vessels shall be treated exactly like native vessels as regards regulations and duties on entering or leaving, or during their stay in Spanish and colonial ports.

An off Hand Way to Measure an Acre.

Few farmers know the size of their fields or how many acres they contain. A field of the writer's, before it came into his possession, had been plowed and reaped by contract for fifteen acres. On measuring it was found to have but twelve acres. It is desirable, in fact, indispensable for good work, that a farmer should know how many acres each field contains, for otherwise he cannot apportion seed or manure for it, nor can he tell how much time it would require to be plowed. A measuring cord should be part of the furniture on every farm. To make one procure sixty-seven feet of strong rope, one inch round; make a loop or fasten a ring or a bar at each end, and make these precisely sixty-six feet apart. This is four rods. Then tie a piece of red rag in the centre. One acre of ground will be a piece four of the cords (chains) long and two and one-half wide, equal to sixteen by ten rods, making 160 square rods to one acre. The advantage of the ring or loop is that one person can measure alone by driving a stake in the ground to hold the rope while he stretches it out. The rope should be soaked in tar and dried, which will prevent it from shrinking when wet.