

A Timely Question.

The Age of Iron is no more;
The earth has moved. We hear it fly
To find, in the descent of vain,
That we've descended to the lily.

Shall we in humble meekness say:
We live but to obey thee, Fashion;
Say how our wives may plait their hair,
What tint of plate we may have hush on?

Or wert it best to step aside
And try to hold the old world steady,
In spite of this æsthetic rush
After a leader, Wilde already?

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 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. Showing marked attention to Dora. On the way home however, Phyllis is invited to take the seat of honor 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 unawares, and finds him frantically kissing a miniature in his pocket 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 XV.—CONTINUED.

"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 should 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, as 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 when a man is jealous he loses all reasoning and perceptive faculties, he might see 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 past and gone 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 had 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—"

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 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 entire 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 pairs 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 coin 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 pinkly 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 lawn is again empty Mr. Carrington drives us all, through the still and dewy 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 Miss Vernons, to go and stay with them for an indefinite period.

These two old ladies—named respectively Aunt Martha and Aunt Priscilla—are maiden sisters of my father's, and are, if possible, more disagreeable than he; so that there is hardly anything—short of committing suicide—we would not do to avoid paying them a visit of any lengthened duration.

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.

An altercation is at all times unpleasant; but in our household it is doubly so, as it has the effect of making the master of it unbearably morose for the remainder of the day or night on which it occurs.

Knowing this, and feeling the roof that covers papa to be, in his present state, unsafe, 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? 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 check if I were you; he wants it badly. It's a shame, that's what it is; and you engaged and all! And what will 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; and I would not give in on any account. But—"

despondingly—"you will never have the

pluck to go through it when it comes to the point. I know you won't."

"I will," I return, gazing back at him with stern determination in my eyes, and then I go into my room and prepare for dinner, leaving him both astonished and pleased at my new-found courage.

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. To me she is particularly attentive, and is apparently deaf to the silence with which I receive her remarks.

Nothing is said on the expected subject of Aunt Martha until it is nearly 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 was 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.

"I would not speak of 'underhand work,' if I were you," returns she, smoothly, with an almost invisible flash from her innocent blue eyes.

"Do not let us discuss the subject further," says papa, in a loud tone. "There is nothing so disagreeable as public recrimination. Understand once for all, Phyllis, the matter is arranged, and you will be ready to go next week."

"I will not!" I cry, passionately, rising and flinging my napkin upon the ground. "I have made up my mind, and I will not go to Quinsley. Not all the fathers in Christendom shall make me."

"Phyllis!" roars papa, making a wild grab at me as I sweep past his chair; but I avoid him defiantly, and, going out, slam the door with much intentional violence behind me.

I fly through the hall and out into the open air. I feel suffocated, half choked, by my angry emotion; but the sweet evening breeze revives me. It is eight o'clock, and a delicious twilight pervades the land.

I run swiftly, an irrepressible sob in my throat, down the lawn, past the paddock, and along the banks of the little stream, until, as I come to what we call the "short cut" to Briersley, I run myself into Mr. Carrington's arms, who is probably on his way to Summerleas.

Usually my greeting to him is a hand outstretched from my body to the length of my arm. Now I cast myself generously into his embrace. I cling to him with almost affectionate fervor. He is very nearly dear to me at this moment, coming to me as a sure and certain friend.

"My darling—my life!" he exclaims, "what is it? You are unhappy; your eyes are full of trouble."

His arms are round me; he presses his lips gently to my forehead; it is a rare thing this kiss, as it is but seldom he caresses me, knowing my antipathy to any demonstrative attentions; but now my evident affliction removes a barrier.

"I want you to marry me—at once," I breathe rather than speak, my hasty running, and my excitement having well nigh stifled me. "You will, will you not? You must. I will not stay here a moment longer than I can help. You said once you wished to marry me in June; you must wish it still."

"I do," he answers, calmly, but his arms tighten round me, and his face flushes. "I will marry you when and where you please. Do you mean to-morrow?—next week?—when?"

"Next month; early next month. I will be ready then. You must tell papa so this evening, and take me away soon. I will show them I will not stay here to be tyrannized over and tormented."

I burst into tears, and bury my face in his coat.

"You shall not stay an hour longer, if you don't wish it," returns my lover, rather unsteadily. "Come with me now, and I will take you to my sister's, and will marry you to-morrow."

"Oh, no, no," I say, recoiling from him; "not that; I did not mean that. I did not want to run away with you. Next month will be soon enough. It was only they insisted on my going to Quinsley, and I was determined I would not."

"It is disgraceful your being made wretched in this way," exclaims Marmaduke wrathfully. "Tell me what has vexed you?" He is not aware of the Miss Vernon's existence, "Where is Quinsley?"

"It is a horrible place, in Yorkshire, where nobody lives except my aunts. They want me to go to stay there next week for a month. The hateful old things wrote inviting Dora, and when she refused to go papa insisted on victimizing me in her place. If you only knew Aunt Martha and Aunt Priscilla, you would understand my abhorrence—my detestation—of them. They are papa's sisters—the very image of him—and tread and trample on one at every turn. I would rather die than go to them. I would rather marry you."

I hardly guess the significance of my last words until I see my lover wince and wince in the twilight.

"Of course I don't mean that," I say, confusedly, "I only—"

But, as I don't at all feel sure what it is I do mean, I break down here ignominiously and relapse into awkward silence.

"Of course not," he answers. "I quite understand." But, his voice has lost all its enthusiasm, and somehow his words drag.

"Had you not better come back to the house, Phyllis? You will catch cold without your hat and in that light dress."

I am clothed in white muslin, a little open at the throat, and with my arms half bare. A piece of blue ribbon defines my waist, a bow of the same hue is in my hair; the locket that contains his face is round my neck; a great crimson rose lies upon my bosom.

"I am not cold," I reply; "and I am afraid to face papa."

We are separated now, and I stand alone, gazing down into the rippling stream that runs noisily at my feet. Already two or three bright stars are twinkling overhead and shine up at me, reflected from below. Mr. Carrington lets the distance widen between us while regarding me—I feel rather than see—with moody discontented eyes.

"Phyllis," he says, presently in a low tone, "it seems to me a horrible thing that the idea of your marriage should be so distasteful to you—"

"No, no, not distasteful," I interrupt, with deprecation.

"Don't say 'no' if you mean 'yes.' Put my feelings out of the question, and tell me honestly if you are unhappy about it."

"I am not. It does not make me more unhappy to marry you than to marry any one else."

"What an answer!" exclaims Marmaduke, with a groan. "Is that all the consolation you can offer me?"

"That is all. Have not I told you all this long ago?" I cry, angrily, goaded by the reflection that each word I speak only makes matters harder. "Why do you bring the subject up again? Must you too be unkind to me? You cannot have believed me madly in love with you, as I have told you to the contrary ages ago."

"So you did. In my folly I hoped time would change you. What a contemptible lover I must be, having failed in eight long months to gain even the affection of a child! Will you never care for me, Phyllis?"

"I do care for you," I return, doggedly, forcing myself to face him. "After mamma and Billy and Roland, I care for you more than any one else. I like you twenty thousand times better than papa or Dora. I cannot say more."

I tap my foot impatiently upon the ground; my fingers seize and take to pieces wantonly the unoffending rose. As I pull its crimson leaves asunder I drop them in the brook and watch them float away under the moon's pale rays. I would that my cruel words could so depart.

I feel angry, disconsolate, with the knowledge that through my own act I am cruelly wronging the man who, I must confess it, is my truest friend. I half think of apologizing, of saying something gentle, yet without truthfulness, that shall take away the sting I have planted. A few words rise to my lips, I raise my head to give them utterance.

Suddenly his arms are round me; he is kissing me with a passion that is full of sadness. There is so much tenderness mingled with the despair in his face that I, too, am saddened into silence. Repentant, I slip a hand round his neck and give him back one kiss out of the many.

"Don't be sorry," I whisper; "something tells me I shall yet love you with all my heart. Until then, bear with me. Or, if you think it a risk, Marmaduke, and would rather put an end to it all now, do so, and I will not be angry with you."

"More probably you would be thankful to me," he answers, bitterly.

"I would not. I would far rather trust myself to you than stay at home after what has passed." My voice is trembling, my lips quiver faintly. "But if one of us must be unhappy, let it be me. I release you. I would not—"

"Don't be foolish, child," he makes answer, roughly. "I could not release you, even if I would. You are part of my life, and the best part. No; let us keep to our bargain now, whatever comes of it."

His eyes are fixed on mine; gradually a softer light creeps into his face. Putting up his hand, he smooths back the loose hair from my forehead and kisses me gravely on my lips.

"You are my own little girl," he says, "my most precious possession. I will not have you inconsiderately used. Come, I will speak to your father."

So hand in hand we return to the dragon's den, where Mr. Carrington having faced the dragon and successfully bullied him, peace is restored, and it is finally arranged that in three weeks we are to be married.

And in three weeks we are married. In three short weeks I glide into a new life, in which Phyllis Carrington holds absolute sway, leaving the Phyllis Vernon of the old days—the "general receiver" of the blame of the family—to be buried out of sight for ever.

First of all mother takes me up to London, and puts me into the hands of a celebrated *modiste*, a woman of great reputation, with piercing eyes, who sews at me, prods, taps, and measures me, until I lose sight of my own identity and begin to look upon myself as so many inches and fingers and yards embodied. At length, this terrible person expressing herself satisfied with the examination, we return home again, whither we are shortly followed by many wicker-framed, oil-skin-covered trunks, in which lie the results of all the measuring.

Everything is so fresh, so gay, so dainty, that I, who have been kept on such low diet with regard to clothing, am enraptured, and as I dress myself in each new gown and survey myself in mother's long glass, sustain a sensation of pleasurable admiration that must be conceit in an "ugly duckling."

As Madame charmingly and rather shoppily expresses it, my wedding-dress is a "marvel of elegance and grace"—and lace she might have added, as Brussels is everywhere. Indeed, as I see and think of the bill that must follow, the old deadly fear of a row creeps over me, chilling my joy, until I happily and selfishly remember that when it does fall due I shall be far from Summerleas and papa's wrath, when I become once more enthusiastic in my praise. I even insist on exhibiting myself in it to Marmaduke three nights before the wedding, though all in the house tell me it is unlucky so to do; and Mrs. Tully, the cook, with her eyes full of brandy-and-water, implores me not to be headstrong.

Presents come in from all sides, Bobby De Vere's and Mr. Hastings' being conspicuous more for size than taste. Papa so far overcomes his animosity as to present me with an astonishing travelling desk, the intricacies of which it takes me months to master, even with the help of Marmaduke. Roland, coming from Ireland for the ceremony, brings with him from the Emerald Isle a necklet too handsome for his purse; while Billy, with tears of love in his dark eyes, puts into my arms a snow-white rabbit that for six long months has been the joy of his heart.

Dora, who at first declared her determination of leaving home during the festivities, on second thoughts changes her mind, having discovered that by absenting herself the loss of a new dress is all she will gain; she even consents frostily to be chief bridesmaid. The two Hastings girls, with Billy De Vere's sister and two of Marmaduke's consins, also assist; and Sir Mark Gore is chief mourner.

As the eventful day breaks, I walk and rise, get through the principal part of my dressing without aid, a proceeding that much disappoints mother, who at his last hour of my childhood feels as though I were once more her baby, and would have liked, with lingering touches, to dress me bit by bit.

At eight o'clock Martha knocks at my bedroom door and hands in to me a sealed packet, with "Marmaduke's love" written on the outside, and opening it we disclose to view the Carrington diamonds, reset, remodelled, and magnificent in their brilliancy. This is a happy thought on his part, and raise our spirits for twenty minutes at least; though after this some chance word makes our eyes grow moist again, and we weep systematically all through the morning—during the dressing, and generally up to the very last moment—so that when at length I make my appearance in church and walk up the aisle on papa's arm, I am so white and altogether dejected that I may be considered ghastly.

Marmaduke is also extremely pale, but perfectly calm and self-possessed, and has even a smile upon his lips. As he sees me he comes quickly forward, and, taking me from papa, leads me himself to the altar—a proceeding that causes much excitement among the lower members of the congregation, who, in loud whispers, approve his evident fondness for me.

So the holy words are read, and the little mystic golden letter encircles my finger. I write myself Phyllis Marian Vernon for the last time; and Sir Mark Gore, coming up to me in the vestry-room, slips a beautiful bracelet on my arm, and whispers, smiling: "I hope you will accept all good wishes with this—Mrs. Carrington."

I start and blush faintly as the new titles strikes upon my ears, and almost forget to thank him in wondering at its strangeness. Then Marmaduke kisses me gravely, and giving me his arm, leads me back to the carriage, and it is all over!

Am I indeed no longer a child? Is my wish accomplished, and am I at last "grown up?" How short a time ago I stood in my bridal robes in mother's room, still Phyllis Vernon—still a girl—and now—Why, it was only a few minutes ago—

"Oh, Marmaduke, am I really married?" I say, gazing at him with half-frightened eyes; and he says—

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

NOTABLE PEOPLE.

LORD LANDSDOWNE, who succeeded from the Government on the Land bill, was present at Lord Granville's Ministerial banquet.

QUEEN MARGARET of Italy has among the ladies of her court two Americans whose magnificent jewels almost eclipse the famous diamonds of the Roman Princesses. They are the Princess Trigrano Brancacci, nee Field, and the Princess Comi, nee Spencer.

LADY LONSDALE, the widow of the late young earl, will remove to Wilton, the beautiful seat of her brother, the Earl of Pembroke, where she will probably reside with her infant daughter. There is no truth in the report, so widely circulated in society, says the *London World*, that an heir to the earldom is expected.

MME. DE RUPE, nee Bonaparte-Wyse, better known as Mme. Rattazzi, still holds her own. She astonished the Madrilenos the other night by appearing at a ball in an ivory-satin dress embroidered with a "haute" of the date of Philip II.—horses, dogs, and hunters—the whole reproduced in natural colors with the most costly silk needlework, and artistic design.

MR. ARTHUR SULLIVAN is passing the winter in Cairo, where he, in his own words, "jingles about the streets, watching the scene so full of variety and color." If the Egyptian notables are weak enough to spare the life of the author of "Pinafore," it is probable that we shall, before long, be afflicted with another operetta by that prolific writer, for his co-malefactor, Gilbert, is continually sending him parts of a new libretto to be set to music.

CHARLEMONTE, the future residence of Prince Leopold, is being thoroughly overhauled, the drainage is to be put in perfect order, and some structural alterations will be made in the interior of the mansion. The fine ball-room facing the lawn is being converted into a drawing room. This is the chamber in which mass was celebrated during the tenure of the French family—Louis Philippe, Queen Marie Amelie, and the Orleans Princess.

Dr. Berthold Auerbach, says the *Poll-Magazin*, the German and also the Jews lose one of their most popular writers. There is nothing in the productions by which Auerbach is most generally known to show that he was once a Hebrew by race, a Hebrew by religion, and a Hebrew, moreover, by his passionate devotion to all that is honorable in the ancient and distinctive customs of his people. Most of his readers will think of him as a thorough German; but his Jewish sympathies are manifested chiefly and strongly in at least three of his works—his edition of the complete writings of Spinoza, his "Life of Spinoza" (a biographical romance, rather than a systematic historical study), and his "Judaism in Connection with modern Literature." It was probably this last production which suggested to Herr Wagner his treatise on "Judaism in Music." But whereas Herr Wagner makes energetic though unavailing attempts to deprive Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer of the credit which justly belongs to them as great composers, whether of Jewish or of German origin, Auerbach brings out in a striking manner the important part that Jewish writers have played in relation to the literature of modern Europe, from Spinoza to Moses Mendelssohn, and from Moses Mendelssohn to Heinrich Heine, Louis Borne, and, he might have added, himself.

MEN generally put a greater value upon the favours they bestow than upon those they receive.