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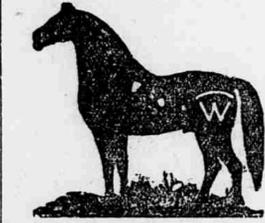
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WHEN MOLLIE BATHES THE BABY.

When Mollie bathes the baby I lay my book aside And watch the operation With deep paternal pride: I scan the dimpled body Of the struggling little elf For undeveloped points of Resemblance to myself.

When Mollie bathes the baby She always says to me: "Isn't he just as cunning And sweet as he can be? Just see those pretty dimples! Aren't his eyes a lovely blue?" And then, "You precious darling, I could bite those arms in two."

When Mollie bathes the baby I always say to her: "Look out now, don't drop him." And she answers back, "No, sir!" Then I talk about his rosy cheeks, The muscles in his arms, His shapely head, his sturdy legs, And other many charms.

When Mollie bathes the baby The household bends its knee, And shows him greater deference Than ever it shows to me But I feel no jealous goading, As they laud him to the skies, For every one assures me That he has his father's eyes. —Ladies' Home Journal

A Passive Crime.

BY "THE DUCHESS."

CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED.

"Well, my dear, perhaps so. I own I am stupid," said Mrs. Neville, who, though the best and kindest of women, is certainly in no danger of setting the Thames afire with her cleverness. "Though I can't see why you should dislike the idea so much. He is quite charming, in my opinion, and so handsome! Then there is Lord Stretton; you can't tell me that he does not adore the very ground you walk on!"

"Oh, Stretton!" said Maud, disdainfully. "Dick Penruddock is, of course, in many ways far preferable," she says, presently, shifting ground. "He is quite as rich, and is younger, and has prettier manners. But, then, you say you object to Dick, also."

"No, I don't object to Mr. Penruddock," says the girl, with a soft, slow blush; "that is not it. You mistake me, Mimi." (This is the pet name she gave to Mrs. Neville when a child.) "I only mean that I shall never marry."

"But why—why?" impatiently. "Can you ask me that?" returns she, with a glance full of the liveliest reproach. "But the thing is not a secret—all the world knows how I adopted you, and that you are the daughter of some poor mechanic, dead before I ever saw you. But they know, too, that you are the most beautiful and the most charming girl in the town! Yes, you are! In answer to a deprecating shake of Miss Neville's head; and if these men love you, and choose to overlook such a little fault, why, then, I cannot see—"

"A little fault!" repeats she sadly. Then with a touch of pride, "Nay it is no fault at all, but it is a great misfortune; and though Stretton—or Mr. Penruddock may, perhaps, foolishly wish to marry me, do you honestly believe their families would receive me with open arms? Do you think it at all likely that Dick's father would be glad to see him married to a girl without name? It is impossible, Mimi!"

"I know not what they think or say, but I know that if he were my son I would gladly see him married to you," says Mimi, maintaining her cause stoutly. "That is because you love me, and because you are different from all the rest of the world," says the girl, gently, looking at her through a soft mist, that dims the beauty of her eyes, and is born of tenderness, and gratitude, and deep affection.

CHAPTER V.

After the Dance.

It is many hours later, and the dance is at its best and gayest. The sound of music and the delicate perfume of dying flowers are in the air. The rooms are filled with all that London can afford of its brightest and highest, and best; and pretty women in toilets almost as desirable as themselves, are smiling and waving their fans, and doing all the damage that soft eyes and softer speech are supposed to do. It is the third waltz and the band is playing "Mon Reve." In Dick Penruddock's opinion it is the waltz of the evening, as his arm is round Maud Neville, and her perfect head is very near his own. He is as happy as a man can be who holds all he deems most precious for one moment to his heart, knowing that the next might separate them forever. Presently they pause to rest, and find themselves near the door of the conservatory.

"Are you tired?" asks he, seeing she sighs, and raises one hand in a half-wearied fashion to smooth back some loose hairs that have wandered across her forehead. Come in here and sit down for a little while." He tightens his arm on the hand resting upon it, and moves toward the cool retreat before them.

"If you wish it," replies she, uncertainly, and with some slight hesitation in her manner. Yet she goes with him into the dimly-lighted conservatory, where a little fountain is splashing, sending forth a cold, sweet music of its own, and where green leaves are glistening calmly beneath the beams of the subdued lamps. The time—the hour—the very drip, drip of the fountain—all bespeak loneliness; and to feel one's self alone with a beloved object, as a rule, kills wisdom. Penruddock, who all day long has been enduring suspense, and an uncertainty that borders on hope, suddenly loses his head. Laying his head on Maud's he bends down to

her, and whispers something in a soft, impassioned voice. The girl appears neither startled nor surprised, and when she speaks, her tone, though perhaps a shade slower than usual, is firmer than ever. Only she changes color, or grows pale until her very lips are bloodless.

"You speak without thought or reflection," she says, gently. "You have considered nothing. No, no; do not interrupt me! I am sorry this has occurred; but there is no reason why we should not forget what you have just said, and be good friends as we were before."

"There is a reason, and a strong one," returns he, very quietly now; "and as to our being mere friends, that is quite out of the question. Do you imagine me an impulsive boy to say a thing one moment and regret it the next? I have dared to say tonight what I have wanted to say for many days. And I must have my answer now."

"And my birth—have you forgotten that?" demanded she, looking at him fixedly.

"I have forgotten nothing. But to me it makes no difference. Princess or peasant, how can it matter? I love you. Darling," says the young man very earnestly, taking both of her hands and holding them closely, "I implore you to believe in my love! Take time for reflection, consider well. I entreat you to give me no hurried answer."

"I do not hurry," returns she, in a strange tone; "I will not even argue with you. Let us say no more about it; and please let my hands go, Mr. Penruddock. I cannot marry you—indeed I cannot."

"But why—at least, tell me that," demands he desperately, refusing to release her hands. "Maud, answer me! Do you—is it true that you love another better, and that is why you cannot care for me?"

"No; that is untrue," replies she, with quick pain in voice and eyes. "I love no one better than you; which means, of course"—hurriedly, and with a sad little quivering laugh—"that I love no one. You will understand me."

"Only too well," returns he sadly. He lifts her hands and kisses them separately, in a forlorn, lingering fashion. "And yet there is some talk of Stretton," he says, miserably, his face haggard and unhappy.

"Believe nothing you hear," she says impressively; only this—that I shall never marry."

Rising and turning abruptly from him, she moves toward the ball-room, and standing in the doorway, gazes, without seeing anything, at the swaying crowd before her. Presently she becomes conscious that two dark eyes are fixed upon her; she turns restlessly, and Captain Saumarez stands at her side.

"Not dancing, Miss Neville?" begins he, lightly. "And all alone, too!" Then with a change of manner, and throwing some concern into his tone, he says, quietly, "You look overtired. May I take you out of this to one of the smaller rooms beyond, or in here?" pointing to the conservatory she had just quitted.

"Oh, no; not in there!" exclaims she with some distress. "But I shall be glad to get away for a little while."

Taking his arm, she makes her way slowly through the dancers and the lingerers at the doorway, and presently sinks with a sigh of relief, into a low chair, in a small room that opens off an ante-chamber. The music seems so very far away that the noise and confusion could almost be forgotten. Oh, that she could not get rid of her companion, and find herself, if only for one short half hour, alone!

"Something has annoyed you. Can I help you in any way?" says Saumarez, in his gentlest manner. "You are very good. No; it is nothing. I am only slightly fatigued," returns she, listlessly.

"May I get you something? A glass of wine—some ice water?" "Thank you—nothing."

Her evident determination not to be friendly, her extreme coldness of voice and gesture, pique him beyond endurance. What has he done to her that this proud girl should treat him with such open disdain? "I saw you go into the conservatory about ten minutes ago," he says, after a slight pause, some reckless desire to rouse her from her apathy, and bring anger, if he cannot summon love, into those beautiful eyes below him, inciting him to his speech. "You seemed greatly disturbed when you came out again. Was that boy rude to you?"

"That boy?" repeats she, in an impassable tone. "I am speaking of Penruddock," returns he, with a cool persistence. "Was he rude?" "I hardly know how to answer such a question," says Miss Neville, frigidly. "I never knew until now—to-night—that any man could be rude to me."

"Ah! then I am to understand he did offend?" says Saumarez, insolently, his evil genius at his elbow. "I was not alluding to Mr. Penruddock; he is incapable of any act of ill-breeding; I was alluding to you!" says Maud, in a clear tone, rising as she delivers this retort. She would have swept by him and left the room, but with a smothered exclamation he seizes her hand, and detains her against her will. "Stay!" cried he, with some passion. "I have something to say to you, that I have too long withheld, and that you shall hear now or never."

"Then it shall be never!" says the girl, quickly. "I decline to listen to anything you have to say. Release me, sir; your very touch is hateful to me!"

"Ah, since Penruddock came upon the field. Do you think I am so blind that I cannot see how he has gained favor when all others have been treated with studied coldness? Do you think I have not noticed how he—"

"I decline to discuss Mr. Penruddock with you," says Maud, throwing up her head with a gesture full of graceful dignity that might have adorned a queen.

"Is he so precious in your sight?" says Saumarez, with a sneer. "And is this new lover prepared to overlook the fact of your humble birth?"

"Take care, sir; do not go too far!" says Maud, her voice vibrating with indignation. "I don't care how far I go now," declares he, all the evil blood in his heart surging upward to the surface. "I love you, too! Yes; you shall listen to me, though it be for the last time!" tightening his fingers on her wrist. "I love you, as that boy can never love you—with all the strength of a man's deepest devotion!"

"Hush! your mention of love is but an insult!" says she, in a withering tone. "My voice is not so silken as his, no doubt," replies he, driven to madness by her loathing. "Nor do soft words pierce so readily from my tongue. But will his love stand the test of time? Will he never regret that he has married one who is—"

"Lowly born."

She supplies the words; speaking them bravely, and not flinching from the stroke. "Ay, and basely!" says he, between his teeth. It is a lie, and he knows it. But at this moment he would have uttered any false thing to lower the pride of the woman whom—a strange paradox—he loves, yet hates!

A terrible change passes over Miss Neville's countenance as the words cross his lips. "No, no; it is not true!" she cries, all her courage forsaking her. "I will not believe it! What can you know more than all the others? Ah! is it for this reason I have dreaded you? Have pity, and unsay your words!"

"I do not speak without authority," replies he, quickly, stung again by her admission that she dreads him. "I know all about your birth—there is an air of undoubted truth about these words that strikes cold to her heart—and I tell you again, that you are not only humbly but basely born!"

She shudders violently. A low cry escapes her, and with the hand that still remains free she covers her face.

At this instant Penruddock, followed by Mr. Wilding, with whom he is earnestly conversing, enters the room. He is unfortunately in time to hear Miss Neville's agonized cry, and to hear Saumarez's last words.

Going up to the latter he pushes him backward, releasing Maud from his grasp. "Who has dared to apply such words as 'basely born' to Miss Neville?" he asks, in fiery tones. "I have said so, and say it again!" says Saumarez, with his usual evil sneer.

"You are a coward!" says Penruddock, losing all command of his temper; and, raising his gloved hand he strikes him across the face. There is a second's awful silence; then Saumarez—who has instinctively raised his hand to his cheek, on which a pink line may be traced—says, quietly, turning to Penruddock, "When, and where?"

"The sooner the better," says Dick, still white, and wild with fury. Maud, who had shrunk aside, and who is now standing close to Mr. Wilding, says to him, in a nervous whisper, so low as to be almost unintelligible, "What does it all mean?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Too Small for Cats. The young man from the city had been fishing. He hadn't had much luck, but it was more than he was used to, and he looked very jubilant as he strode into the farmhouse kitchen with his catch. "What's that?" asked his host. "Oh, nothing much. Just a few catfish."

"Mean them?" the farmer inquired, pointing with his pipestem. "Certainly. They're not very large. But there's no doubt about their being catfish."

"Wai, mebbe they passes fur catfish out whur you come from. But here we calls them kitten fish."—Denver Tribune.

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The Whiteness of It. Philadelphia Inquirer: A Boston newspaper which always endeavors to use clear and simple language says that "nature moves in a series of rhythms and passes through alternate epochs of dominance and subsidence." We were positive last summer that something was the matter with the old dame, but we had no idea that matters were so serious. It is to be hoped that the subsidence will yield to treatment and subsidence.



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