

MARRIED FOR MONEY.

BY THE DUCHESS,

AUTHOR OF "PHYLIS," "MOLLY BAWN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

"Striding harsh discords and cupping sharps."

"There are limits to one's patience!" says Sir Wilding, frowning heavily. He is standing on the hearth-rug, with his back to the fire, and has taken up a distinctly menacing position.

"To yours, certainly," replies his daughter, with a faint sneer.

She is a slight girl, with a strangely beautiful face, large dark expressive eyes, and a moutinous mouth. She is holding her head very haughtily just now, and has defiance written in every curve of her lissome figure, in every feature of her perfect face.

"Let us talk sense," says Sir Wilding, either too accustomed to her irreverence—which is not altogether undeserved—or too prudent to notice it. "You must accept Barrington."

"Why?"

"Why? Why should you not?"

"Why should I? You have not answered that."

"For many reasons. We are miserably poor, and he is the richest man we know, for one."

"And the ugliest, for two! That balances your one, and leaves the scales as they were before."

He is a thoroughly good fellow, for another," says Sir Wilding, who detests George Barrington with all his soul.

"There is something I must tell you, Florence," says her father at length huskily.

He still holds the poker in his hand in an unconscious fashion, and keeps his face turned well away from her. If he is afraid of anything on earth it is the cold contemptuous eyes of his only child.

"Well?" says Miss Brand indifferently.

"I don't know if what I am going to say will have the least weight with you. You have always been so ungrateful in your conduct towards me," says Sir Wilding fretfully, with all the air of a man who is about to relate a grievance rather than a backsliding.

"That I dare say you will treat my communication with disrespect; but as it concerns you as well as me, and as George Barrington's proposal has brought matters to a climax, I feel it had better be told."

"What is it?" says Florence, feeling something akin to fear at her heart. She drops into a chair near her, and resting her elbow on the table, regards her father with keen but troubled eyes.

"It all lies in a nutshell," says he, fidgeting nervously. "During the past two years I have borrowed money from old Barrington—the father—that I never can repay."

Beyond the fact that her eyes have grown even harder, Miss Brand betrays no sign of having heard him.

"There is but one way of saving my honor," says Sir Wilding, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other. "I have no money to meet his demands, as you probably know. Even if I sacrificed the furniture, it would not bring in a fourth of the sum. There is really nothing to be sold."

"Except me," says Florence Brand, in a clear metallic tone.

Her father, who has not dared to look at her, lets the poker fall from his hand with a noisy clatter, and busies himself picking it up again as a means of covering his confusion.

"I am the one way, I suppose," she says presently.

"Your marriage with George Barrington, if you could bring yourself to think of it," says Sir Wilding, in a tone that is meant to be pleading, but is only servile, "would settle everything. His father tells me George has set his heart on you. He came here yesterday to speak to me about it, and—"

To Florence his words convey the idea that it was George Barrington not his father, who came yesterday to arrange this vile barter of so much money for one fair body.

"Don't go on," she says hastily.

"Don't seek to cover your relation with soft words. I prefer it crude and harsh like this: You gain, I lose; I am the victim, you the victor. At least, I should be grateful that you have assigned me the nobler part. You were sure, then, of my acquiescence in this scheme?"

"If you refuse," begins Sir Wilding, misled by the scorn of her manner into believing her bent on rebellion, "I can only say—"

"How can I refuse?" cries she, turning upon him with sudden fury. "You have laid a net for me—who shall deliver me from it? Anything before dishonor. I give in; do what you will with me—marry me to this man as soon as the barest decency will permit, and let us be done with it."

"There must, of course, be some usual delay," says Sir Wilding, trying vainly to conceal the exultation her words have caused him. "But—"

"I warn you not to give me time to think," says Miss Brand, rising sullenly. "I shall marry him in a fortnight, or I shall not marry him at all. Understand that, and make no mistake about it. Tell him so."

"But if—"

"There shall be neither ifs nor buts

in this most iniquitous transaction. I am selling my soul for the flimsy thing you call your honor, and you shall certainly undertake all the minor miseries connected with the transfer. Do not mention my name, but let him fully comprehend that the marriage is to be got over before Christmas."

It is now close upon that holy tide; but, afraid to argue with her in her present mood, Sir Wilding agrees to let George Barrington know that the wedding must be both hurried and, comparatively speaking, private.

As she rises to leave the room, he goes up to her, and lays his hands in a would-be-fatherly fashion upon her shoulders.

"I have to thank you," he is beginning sentimentally, but by a sudden movement she shakes herself free of him.

"I have to thank you, too," she says, with passionate bitterness. "This hateful marriage has at least one sweet side to it. It will separate me finally from you."

She turns, and, without another glance, sweeps imperiously from the room.

CHAPTER II.

"Moderation is the silken string running through the pearl chain of all virtues."

It is a dull dark day, one of Nature's most barren efforts. The rain is falling in sullen drops, and the wind is moaning heavily. Above, in the cloud-laden sky, the sound of distant storms, in "hollow murmurs dies away."

A fresh and angry burst of rain is dashing itself against the drawing-room window-panes of Brand House as the servant opens the door and an-

"Not yet," says Barrington, "that is scarcely to be wondered at; you have seen me but four times altogether, I think."

"That is just the number of times you have seen me; and yet—"

"You should remember the difference between us, interrupts he quietly. The manly humility of his tone would probably have touched any woman but one determined to regard him at his worst.

"And yet," she goes on haughtily, as though disdaining the interruption, "you say—at least, my father says—that you love me."

"Your father says less than the truth. That you should love me so short an acquaintance is more than I ever hoped."

"Well, I have told you," said Miss Brand, after a slight pause; "I thought so much was due to you."

"It was. But is that all?" asks he, regarding her closely.

"Is it not enough?" asks she in turn contemptuously. "Were I you, I should hesitate."

"You are not me; I do not hesitate. I accept the risk," returns he slowly.

"You are a brave man!" she says, with a curl of her beautiful lip.

In this spirit they got married some few weeks later. The ceremony is got over very creditably, not so much as a tear falling to dim its lustre. The bride, according to some, is too self-possessed—almost stoical in her calm; but according to others, sufficiently pale to carry off any suspicion of want of feeling. The bridegroom, being the inferior article on all such occasions, a little commented upon.



"MY FATHER TOLD YOU, NO DOUBT, I WAS WILLING TO MARRY YOU."

nounces "Mr. Barrington."

It is not the old Barrington who is ushered in, but the young man, his only son. Of the old Barrington it will be sufficient to say that he is "a man of an unbounded stomach," (giving that sentence its most simple meaning) and a very handsome face. Indeed, the Barringtons for generations have been so famed for their beauty that it was considered remarkable when the young man of the present time grew up without even one presentable feature. It earned him the sobriquet of "Ugly Barrington," though there are certainly many men more worthy of the adjective than he.

Yet now, as he enters the room and one looks at him, it must be acknowledged he is an ugly man. But with such a calm earnestness of purpose in his eyes, and with a mouth so characterized by a certain firm sweetness, as serves, in a great measure, to redeem his face from actual plainness, and elevate it into something beyond mere beauty. To many this man is dear; by a few he is well beloved. He is about twenty-nine, and stands a shade less than six feet in height.

He comes quickly up to Florence Brand, as the door closes behind him, and says, without any preface,

"Your father tells me there is some hope for me."

"My father told you, no doubt, I was willing to marry you," returns she slowly. Her eyes do not fall before his. On the contrary, they look at him steadily and half defiantly.

"Yes. I could not bring myself to believe in my good fortune, however; so came to hear from your own lips whether it be really so."

"My father spoke the truth"—"for once," is on the tip of her tongue, but by an effort she restrains herself; "yet there is something more that probably he did not tell you. I can marry you, indeed, but I cannot love you."

After the wedding breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Barrington start for town, on their way to the Continent. Just at the end every one makes way for the father to bestow a last embrace upon his only child; but the only child so evidently shrinks from this public demonstration that a slight awkwardness is the result; and finally her husband carries her off hurriedly to the waiting carriage.

But this unpleasant little episode happened quite three hours ago; and now Florence finds herself in a private sitting-room at the Langham. It is a very pretty room, wonderfully homelike and cozy for a hotel; and Florence sinking languidly into a deeply cushioned chair, tells herself, with a sigh of thankfulness, at last she is alone.

She had said some little thing to Mr. Barrington shortly after their arrival that had left him no alternative but to relieve her of his presence; and now, letting her face sink into her palm, she gives herself up to thought for the first time for many days.

Recent events attract first the idle workings of the brain. The cold dawn when she had awakened and risen, and gone stolidly about such preparations as must belong to a coming marriage, whether distasteful or otherwise; the drive to church; the wedding; every smallest word uttered by her or him (she shudders), every pulsation of her carefully subdued heart, now returns to her clearly as when the actual hour was at hand. The breakfast, where he (another shudder) had spoken a few quiet words, and where the bishop had been more hopelessly silly than even his worst enemies could have anticipated—all comes to her now. All seems clear as "a dream within a dream." Yet everything is reality. In that lies the sting, she tells herself, with a start of anguish. A few short hours ago! and now how willingly would she return to it! She must have

been mad!

She has risen to her feet with an impulsive desire to do something that may recall her liberty, but sinks back again into her seat, overpowered by the weight that has been brought to bear upon her. She is irrevocably bound to the man she does not love. She is forever separated from the man she could have loved with all her soul, so she believes. As this cruel certainty comes to her, she does not curse Fate, but she sighs; her lips pale, her eyes enlarge; evidently a struggle is going on within her. Finally, Satan conquers. Drawing a small morocco case from her pocket she opens it, and gazes eagerly and longingly at its contents.

She had been twenty minutes so occupied, with pauses between (because I could not gaze for so long without intruding thoughts upon the object of her most sacred adoration, when the door opens, and a waiter entering the room puts sentimental regrets to flight.

He throws some coal on the fire with a considerable amount of noise; and I don't know whether George Barrington is suggestive of coal, but certainly the trimming of the fire suggests to Mrs. Barrington that she has not seen her newly-acquired husband for a considerable time.

"Can I do anything for you, ma'am?" asks the waiter, when he had finished making the coals a nuisance.

"No, thank you," says Mrs. Barrington curtly. In reality, she is curious enough to inquire where Mr. Barrington may be, but cannot bring herself to ask the question. Then the waiter goes away, and she falls again to contemplating the portrait in the case, and finally dreams away an hour gazing into the glowing fire; yet the absorption that had been hers during that first twenty minutes does not return to her again. Instinctively, though nervously, she feels that she is listening for the opening of the door behind her.

About two hours later, Mr. Barrington, opening this door, comes leisurely into the room. There is no lover-like haste in his footsteps. He walks straight up to where his wife is sitting in her low chair before the fire.

She does not lift her head at his approach, but still stares earnestly into the blazing coals. Who shall say what phantoms she is conjuring up from the caverns and hollows that lie amongst them!

"Florence," says Barrington at length, as though to attract attention. A tide of color sweeps over her face for an instant, leaving her paler than before.

"Well?" she says, resting her eyes by an effort upon his.

"I am afraid I have roused you from happy thoughts," he says quietly. "But I find it necessary to ask you again where you would like to go."

"I thought Rome was our destination."

"It was. But it shall be home again instead, if you wish it."

"Why should I wish it?" asks she, flashing a sudden glance at him.

"There, or at Rome, it will be all the same to me; I shall be as happy in one place as in the other."

"Or as unhappy! That is what you mean, of course?"

Seeing she will not answer, he goes on again:

"Be candid with me at least; I shall never forgive myself for having tempted you to this marriage; therefore I cannot expect you to forgive me. But let there be no polite reservations."

"You can hardly accuse me of hypocrisy so far," she says rising suddenly, and going nearer to him. The coldness, the half-suppressed aversion, she had displayed during his courtship now comes vividly back to her. "Why did you marry me?" she says, lifting her eyes to his.

"For want of a more fashionable reason, let us say because I loved you," returns he in an unmoved tone.

"At least," says Florence, subdued by his earnestness, "I did not deceive you. I told you openly, distinctly, that I did not love you."

"You did, indeed. Do you imagine I have forgotten one look or tone of yours on that occasion. And yet I hoped! Some fool has said, 'Hope is the anchor of the soul.' It has failed me, however. My bark has gone down; has foundered, with all hands on board."

"I warned you," she says sullenly. "I told you the worst."

"The worst?" His glance is scrutinizing.

"Yes. What could there be worse than the fact that I bore you no affection—none; not even the smallest friendliness?"

"There might be far worse," says Barrington slowly; "there might be, for instance, the fact that you loved another."

The blood recedes from lip and brow; but she does not lower her eyes before his.

"When I asked you to marry me I believed you heart-whole," says Barrington, in the same low even voice he had used all through; "and so believing, I swore to myself I would make you my own, heart and soul, by right of my love, in less than three months. Two hours ago I lost all hope."

"You mean?" she asks, still defiant. She is terribly pale; but her eyes have not fallen. Even at this supreme moment he pauses to cast a thought of admiration upon her undaunted courage.

"I have discovered your love for—Take care!" She has swayed a little, and the lace of her sleeve has caught the flame of the light nearest to her. In an instant a blaze shoots up from her rounded arm. With a swift movement Barrington closes his hand upon the burning lace, and so extinguishes it.

"You are not hurt?" he asks anxiously.

"No."

"Not even scorched?"

He pushes up the half burned sleeve as he speaks, and passes his fingers with a light touch over her arm—the soft pretty arm that is his by lawful right. The remembrance that it is his comes to him at this moment, but fails to conquer him; he throws it out with a mental sneer, and lets the white arm fall to its owner's side.

"Forget my arm," she says, with determination; "just now, you were saying—"

"That Fate had been kind to me."

"Kind?"

"Yes. I can no longer be tricked or befooled. A chance moment has convinced me that though I labored for ever to gain your heart the end would only find me a modern Sisyphus."

She has seated herself again, and is now playing with her fan, with her eyes downcast.

"You have gone so far," she says slowly, "that perhaps you will explain."

"Oh, about that," he says carelessly; "if it be necessary, yes. Some time after our arrival I was coming in here to ask you—I really forget what now; nothing of any importance, I daresay—when I saw that you were sitting just where you are now, and that you were crying! Crying bitterly, as if your heart would break, on the very day of your marriage!"

He pauses. As though she expects his eyes to be on her, she holds herself erect, and flicks her fan to and fro with an air of insolent indifference. Yet she wrings him. He keeps his gaze fixed pertinaciously upon the glass door at the further end of the room.

"I crossed the room silently," he goes on presently, "to ask you what—whether—pshaw!—if I could be of any use to you; and as I approached I saw—I really beg your pardon for my indiscretion, but I couldn't help it—I saw lying on your lap a portrait of Mervyn. Your tears were wetting it. I hope it isn't spoiled? It was a faultless likeness."

No answer. The fan is moving with greater rapidity; but otherwise Mrs. Barrington might be deaf to all that is being said.

"It occurred to me then, though I am generally a dull fellow, that I might as well go back to where I came from. Any consolation I could offer would but add an additional poignancy to your grief."

"Your manner is an insult!" she says slowly, turning her large eyes fully upon his.

"I assure you, you mistake me," he says shrugging his shoulders; "the facts I relate may be considered an insult to a married woman; but I am not responsible for them. You were so absorbed with your portrait you did not hear me. I withdrew. Could I have with more delicate tact? At the door, indeed, I looked back; you were kissing the portrait then. Pah! how hot this room is!"

He walks a step or two, and then returns. By this time she has quite recovered her self-possession.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Antelope and Cold Weather.

Among the novel sights to be seen along the Union Pacific through Wyoming is that of great herds of antelope. One band, which has been about Rock Springs the last ten days, is supposed to number over ten thousand. A party went out from that town one day and returned in two hours with seventeen, which was all they wanted, but they could have killed many more. Another party went from Bryan and bagged thirty-six before they got tired of the sport, and were glutted with meat. So it is all along the road, from Laramie to Carter. Old railroad men say that the bunching of antelope is a good indication that the winter is to be a severe one. They refer to the fall of 1877, when the antelope gathered in great herds and remained together during the winter, which was the worst ever experienced on the road. The same was the case several other winters which proved very severe. But they say they never saw them so thick before. Not only antelope, but all other kinds of game appear to be more abundant in the west than for many years.—Salt Lake Tribune.

Reiteration of a Reassuring Fact.

It is exceedingly reassuring to be told from time to time that "business is business." The repetition of such a statement prevents the hearer from lapsing into an impression that business is a sport, a pastime or a means of relaxation.—Lowell Citizen.

Portugal's Decorated Baby.

The king of Portugal recently conferred the three military orders of Portugal upon the baby king of Spain. It appears that this monarch was highly decorated and expressed his satisfaction by a desperate attempt to swallow one of his new decorations.—Paris Morning News.