

THE LAY OF THE LAST MISS.

"And shall I dance my last quadrille?"

A maiden faintly said;

"My last? I really think I will"—

Then tossed her dainty head;

And as she mused—alone and still,

Her fancy backward fled.

"There was a season—is it past?

When I was Fashion's pride;

Ah me! why flew those hours so fast?

Yes, I had rather died

Than dreamed of murmuring 'my last';

Mischances I defied.

"It cannot be;—just mark that girl—

She knows she's slaying hearts,

As in the mazy polka's whirl

She scatters Cupid's darts;

Hers is a sweet entrancing curl—

How well she plays her parts!

"Why not? Life's but a varied stage,

My day is not yet done;

I feel not yet the clutch of age—

I've laurels to be won;

There's time enough for precepts sage,

When youth is all outrun.

"I'm told I'm beautiful—don't talk—

My face has still its charm;

Good gracious! what a frumpy gawk

Is clasped by his strong arm

That oft encircled me: I'll balk

Her, just for fun—no harm.

"Yet stay! when did I first come out?

It must be years ago;

Nineteen or twenty? I'm in doubt—

I've had swarms, swarms of beaux;

Where are they all? They're not about;

I'd really like to know.

"Some must have died. Have died? of course.

There was young Major B.,

He caught some horrid thing—got hoarse,

And went away to sea;

Then fell a victim to remorse,

Because—refused by me!

"Poor Major! Hm! It was too bad,

He never used to flirt;

Most majors did. I feel half-sad;

I'm sure I never hurt

His feelings so—the stupid lad!

O what a hideous skirt!

"Some must have married—little Y:—

Who could have loved that man?

What? did I really have a sigh?

Oh yes, you use your fan

Miss, fairly well—not quite so high,

Don't spoil your pretty plan.

"I sighed? Well, I called back to mind

This very room, how strange!

This very room; and I reclined

Just there; now, what a range

Of faces new! why, yes, the blind

Is just the same—no change.

"We had been dancing; then apart

From all the crowd we drew,

I was decked out in gayest art,

I looked him through and through;

He tried to speak—I gave a start.

As if I'd caught the clue.

"He led me to yon quiet nook,

And breathed his vows of love;

My cheek grew scarlet, and I shook

My tiny foot; my glove

Dropped on the floor; and next he took

My hand and called me—dove.

"He vowed I was his true ideal,

His angel, goddess fair—

I wonder if that man can feel

In yonder old nook there

Just what he felt; it seems so real

As I watch that young pair.

"By all the gods he begged my hand—

I never should repent;

He had no money—had no land,

Knew naught of cent percent;

But what were these? Mere shifting sand—

No sooner got than spent!

"He was an innocent young thing,

I liked him—in a way;

I thought it cruel thus to wring

His heart-strings, e'en in play;

But yet I told him not to bring

His love to me—said 'nay.'

"He led me back; he disappeared,

I never saw him more.

The postman left me, as I feared,

Three years ago, no, four,

His wedding cards; a note appeared—

He might call on his tour.

"He did not call; why, I can't tell;

I long to see his wife;

Was Mrs. Y. a ball-room belle,

Or taken from low life?

Y's fate was still unsealed; ah, well!

The world with lies is rife.

"And Y was married! I'm still left,

Though I've waltzed so long;

I feel so lonely, so bereft,

Amid this upstart throng;

A heart was once my usual theft—

There's surely something wrong.

"Do people marry who don't dance?

I'll go and ask Mamma;

They manage matters well in France,

At least, so says

And adds, it's rather odd to prance

At thirty-eight! Sessa!

"Hush, hush! he comes, the only one

Of all that early race

The last lone man—still full of fun—

He sees this vacant place;

I don't think he intends a pun.

There's something in his face.

"He's sitting by me—very near—

I'll look quite unconcerned.

I fancy Jones is true, sincere;

Why have not mankind learned

To go straight to the point? 'tis clear

They don't—Jones shan't be spurned