

Pollie was a splendid creature of two or three and twenty. Her face exhibited the peculiar pallor, the firmness of flesh and mobility of feature, together with the wide awake and brilliant eye which are generally characteristic of the theatrical profession. Her hair was tightly gathered up on the back part of the crown, being cunningly turned outside in there somehow so as to reduce it to the very smallest compass—a proceeding at which it apparently rebelled, to judge by the crisp curling of the small quantity left free upon her forehead, which was so full of electricity that when Pollie passed a comb through it in a dark room it emitted a perfect coruscation of sparks. Her intense vitality, was, perhaps, one of her chiefest charms. Her features were regular, her figure perfect, and her walk, when she wished to express dignity—a poem.

After dinner they entered a cab and drove to the theatre, where the two young men watched Pollie for about an hour, while she depicted a young soubrette, demure and innocent eyed, who was called "my dear child" by her mistress, until she ran away with the son of the house, married him, and became her child in reality.

Then Pollie suggested they might as well go home and have a game at cards, and her companions assenting, they drove off.

"Just let us see if the babies are all right," said Pollie, leading the way into a spacious bed chamber to the left of the salon as they entered. Here, in a dainty crib, lay two small children, asleep. But on little Rose's face there was a troubled air, and a feverish flush. As Pollie knelt and pressed a light kiss upon the cherub face, the child turned slightly, folded its chubby hands and babbled—

"Dad bress pappa and Dad bress mamma, and make us dood tildren," and then with a sigh of relief, turned to its pillow and fell peacefully asleep.

"Didn't the children say prayers to-night?" inquired Pollie of the little maid who was folding the tiny garments, and otherwise neatening the apartment.

"O, yes, ma'am but Miss Rosey was so very tired she went off before she could get through."

"So that was what was troubling my darling," said Polly, as adjusting the lace curtain, she rose from her knees, and turned toward Lorimer who, standing bashfully near the door, watched the scene with a puzzled face.

"You seem surprised, sir," said the mother, "yet you see we actresses are not all quite heathens after all. When you know us better, you will find we are more like other people than you think."

"If John were not so busy," proceeded Pollie, as they regained the sitting room, "I would ask him to take a hand at whist, but I know it would only bother him. The fact is," she went on, "that little Rose is to make her first appearance next month and John is busy finishing the play in which she and I take parts. It begins with a mother and child—that's Rose—getting lost in the snow, and being discovered by a St. Bernard dog. The mother dies, but the child is saved, and turns out to be heiress to a big amount, but it is difficult to prove her identity. Meantime she accidentally meets the man who—failing this—claims the fortune, and they fall in love; so that everything is arranged happily, and the lawyers are bamboozled. Pretty, isn't it? And there will be lots of realistic scenery. I am the dead mother in the first act, and little Rose, grown up afterwards. Now, as John is not available, we must play enclure by ourselves."

Presently, Tom declared he had an appointment, but would be back in less than an hour, "you and Pollie," said he, "can keep the game alive till I reappear."

But Frank, though he had managed to take a third hand tolerably, soon showed that he was distracted. He made no end of mistakes and finally threw his cards on the table in despair.

"I can't play to-night, Mrs. Morris," said he, "let us talk. Can you advise me on a delicate point? What are the best words in which to pop the question?"

"Please don't call me Mrs. Morris," she replied. "I am never anything but Pollie inside these walls. And as for your question, a man who is really in earnest can never lack words, I fancy, and the more earnest he is the simpler his declaration will be. I know John just said to me 'Pollie, dear, will you be my wife?' Of course he had a deal more to say, you know. He told me how young I was in the profession, and how bad it was for a young girl to learn such a life when she had no settled object for her affection, and how he would make me happy and take care of me. Oh," she said, clasping her hands together in her lap, and lowering her voice as if speaking to herself, while grateful tears dimmed her bright eyes, "John has been so very, very good to me. When I married him he was partner in a theatrical agency and we lived in the suburbs of London, and often and often I have driven home in a handsome or gone down by the early morning train, only in time to kiss him 'good-bye,' on the door mat as he left for the office in the morning. It is such a happy thing to have a husband who you know trusts you. Only think, in a profession such as mine, what miserable lives we should lead if he were unjustly jealous. And when men talk nonsense, I just point to my wedding ring and tell them that little gold band goes right round my heart, and that there isn't the least little bit in the world over for anybody else."

"But," she said, brushing away her tears and resuming her bright smile, "to return to

our muttons! There is an infinite choice of ways. For example there is the plain and straightforward way as illustrated by the American sitting on the fence, whittling a stick and saying 'Look here, Sall, if you're for gittin' hitched, I'm in.' Or there's the humorous-sentimental as instanced in a case confided to me the other day. Jack Bryant, you know, brought his wife home from Scandinavia. He was touring in the North when, at a dance in Stockholm, his partner finding a difficulty in conversing with him, conjured up from the depths of her memory, a few words of the English she had learnt at school, and asked: 'Are you Engelsman?' 'No,' he answered, 'not exactly just yet, though who knows if some day I may not marry some Swedish Froken, beautiful and good, and so become an Engelsman; if you divide the word so, you know, it means—angel's husband.' That little bit of blarney caught her. Or there's the tragic style, 'Say yes, or by all the fiends in hades, I'll ber-low out my ber-rains!' Or there's the poetical style made use of by Claul Melnotte, 'Lik'st thou the picture?' Or, to come back to the point from which we started, there is the simple phrase which will never be old-fashioned, and is not to be excelled: 'I love you, do you love me?' Anyway, when the time comes, be sure the words will come too."

"Oh, it's all very well to say that," said Frank, "when it's an ordinary girl, that you feel equal to or superior to. But when it is an angel, a being immeasurably one's superior, whom it seems an audacity to address at all—then it's a different thing."

Polly laughed. "I wouldn't give much for a marriage where the suitor had the sentiments you profess. He is in love with an ideal, and before the honeymoon was half over, the pious would fall from his angel, the gilt rub off the golden idol, and he would turn disgusted from the discovery of the feet of clay."

Lorimer had risen unperceived. "Mrs. Morris, I pray you to forgive me if I go. We shall scarcely see Tom any more to-night, and it is getting late."

"No, no, don't go," pleaded Pollie. "Tom always keeps his promises. At any rate John and I are going to have stout and oysters directly, and—"

But Frank was gone.

"Hoity-toity," said Pollie, as she softly entered her husband's den and pressed her pouting lips to the little bald spot just commencing to make an appearance on his cranium—"What a queer little thing love is, John!"

And John, as he turned to her's face which brightened at her smile, drew her on his knee, and pressed her to his breast, would have made it very plain to any beholder, had such there been, that at least, his idol needed no regilding yet.

#### IV. DIANA.

When a young man is very much in love, he is not a fit subject for common sense, and must be spoken to according to his folly. Frank Lorimer left Pollie's rooms in dudgeon, and as he found a brilliant moonlight outside, congenial to the indulgence of poetic rapture, he was soon wandering across the rocky path that led in the direction of his love's abode, and presently was standing in the shadow of a tree, gazing, as he might have expressed it, on the casket which contained the jewel. While folding his arms, crossing one foot over the other in that position which is the nearest human approach to that of a horse resting, and arranging himself generally in an easy and romantic attitude to gaze at length upon her window, he became aware that a small gate in the garden wall was standing open, and that two figures were approaching it over the turf, who as they reached it separated—the man going rapidly down the path towards the town—the woman entering and closing the gate behind her. "That was awfully like Tom," was the thought that first struck Lorimer, "and the other was just Diana's size, but of course it could not be. Bah! Some servant girl philandering with her young man—only what servant girl could walk like that!" And when a figure, unmistakably Diana's this time, came out upon the balcony in front of her window, bent over some plants, looked around at the scene made fairy-like by the moonlight, and then reentered, closing the French windows of the apartment—his suspicions became certainty. But was it Tom? Was Tom his rival, and a rival so favoured as to make appointments by moonlight? When he reached the outskirts of the city and passed Pollie's windows all was dark there—the portals of the Egyptians frowned impregnable on all who owned not the Open Sesame of a latch key, and all he could do was to betake himself home to his own bed to snatch such sleep as a disturbed mind would let him.

Awaking late from an uneasy slumber which had delayed its advent till morning, he dressed and sought the Egyptian Chambers, with an intention of "having it out" with Tom Lue. In this he was balked, however, as on reaching No. 9 he found a notice on the door in Tom's bold, black scrawl—"Gone West. Back on Friday"—and his steps turned instinctively towards the hills with a somewhat less defined intention of "having it out" with Diana. It is doubtful, perhaps, if he would not have found his courage oozing at his fingers' ends before he reached the house, had not fortune favoured him by presenting before him among the rocks, Diana herself, accompanied by her great tawny mastiff Lion, and armed with a botanical case in which she was collecting specimens for an old school friend and constant correspondent.

What Frank said it is doubtful if he himself could tell, but after the first greetings were over he found the words come fast enough, and, no doubt he pleaded his cause well, because he did so earnestly. But as soon as Diana perceived his drift, and, after that, could get in a word edgewise, she stopped him.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Lorimer, that you should have been at the pains to say all this to me before you could have learnt that it is altogether impossible for me to listen to you. I am already engaged to be married."

"To the gentleman who met you by moonlight alone last evening?" He could have bitten his tongue out, but the words were uttered.

"To Lord X.—I shall no doubt be his wife before Christmas."

"As such, you will have everything that can ensure happiness."

She raised her eyes and looked him in the face. She looked more like one who has heard a death warrant than one who has news that would turn her future life into an earthly paradise.

"I am going to become a very fine lady, I dare say," she said, "I know I am going to be a very miserable woman. You have called me one of the noblest of God's creature—a little lower than the angels—What not? You said you would acquire fame, make yourself a position, be worthy of me, if I would give you a hope—I, whose robe you are not worthy to kiss. Listen to me. I know the lady president of the city refuge. She told me of a woman who came there destitute, whose husband had cast her out in the street—whose lover had deserted her. Now what that woman did to her ruin, I had thought to do with impunity. I loved, but with a love that was so selfish that first I wished to acquire a secure position, before I indulged it. But I had reckoned without my host, and when I faintly foreshadowed to the man I loved the project that I scarcely dared acknowledge to myself I was vile enough to entertain, he poured out upon me such a scorching torrent of words, that I sometimes wonder I could hear them and live. So I have lost my love, and all that is left to me is my misery and my grandeur. And I tell you this that I may destroy at one blow your love and your respect, and restore to you your peace of mind. As well that you should, at what-ever cost to myself, hear it from me, as that it should be told—as it would have been, if necessary for your happiness—by another. Now that I have learnt what you taught me—and you have learnt what I am—all further words are useless. Farewell."

Her auditor, as he listened to this fierce self-denuciation, stood as one dazed. A strange sense of unreality possessed him. He could not convince himself that all was not a dream—some hideous pageant—where, though we actually see and hear, we know that all is fiction. Rousing himself he was about to say some commonplace—"If ever she required a friend—if his services could ever be of the slightest use"—but it occurred to him as an absurdity. What were the services he could offer Lady X.—? To permit a portrait of her favourite dog—her mare—her husband's mansion viewed from the most picturesque point? Deadly pale from intense emotion, he only bowed low and turned upon his heel.

#### V; DORA.

Returning to the town—not by the shady mountain path, but by the dusty road on which the scorching sun shown with pitiless glare, raising white clouds with slovenly tread, careless of his comfort, unheeding of appearance, Frank Lorimer allowed his feelings to work him into frenzy. Was Tom her lover? Did he call that love? Had she offered herself to him—he cried in his madness—on any terms, would he have refused? What had Tom said to her last night. Had they spoken of him. If he thought Tom had been interfering—and lashing himself into an insensate fury against Tom he clenched his fists and felt that he could have flown at and torn his enemy. Then with his head feeling full of clockwork, and limbs refusing their office, he staggered and fell by the way side, grovelling in the dust.

There was a sound of rushing wheels and Dr. Buller, Dora Annerley's foster father, drew up in his little trap, and leaving the reins to the boy in buttons, hastened to succor the dust-stained mass of humanity.

"That you, Doctor," muttered Frank. "My head's all on fire."

"And legs no use at all, eh? Yes, yes, we'll get home as soon as we can and then you can lie down and you'll soon get all right. Come along," and he half carried the dizzy Frank to his conveyance and speedily rattled him off to his room.

Next day the patient was in a raging fever.

When the crisis had come and gone, and, out of danger, he lay with, shaved head and claw-like hands, drifting slowly back to convalescence out of the valley of the shadow of death—Mrs. Buller and Dora Annerley would come and visit him, bearing offerings of small refreshing niceties. One day, as he had swallowed the last spoonful of a jelly with which Dora herself fed him—he seized her hand and dared her to deny that she had nursed him through the worst of the disease.

Taxed thus—she owned she had.

"Then promise me that I may devote the life that belongs to you, to making you as happy as may be in my power. Promise me you will make my life worth living—that you will be my wife."

"Hush!" she said, "We mustn't talk of that until you are well and strong."

"But if you don't say yes, I won't get well. I'll do all I am told not to do. I'll talk, and excite myself, and worry, and rave, and die."

"Then I will say yes, but only on condition that it is to be considered unsaid if you wish when you recover, and your strength of judgment returns to you."

"Then I will get well very fast indeed and next time you shall say 'yes' in church."

There was a very grand wedding indeed, when Diana became Lady X.—which was shortly followed by a less pretentious ceremony at which her sweet "I will" made Dora Annerley Mrs. Lorimer. We are very sure she will never do anything to give her spouse a heart-ache, although we should be sorry to promise as much in regard to Frank. Yet we auger well for the happiness of their married life, for whatever may be Frank's faults, Dora nature is of that sweet and clinging kind, that forgives the delinquencies of others unto seventy times and seven. But as it is not our province to follow them through the vicissitudes of their future; we will take leave of them as they enter the carriage destined to take them on the first stage of their wedding trip.

"Well, you have got me at last, Dora," said Frank, as the door was closed on the pair. "Make the most of me."

"And we may be sure—if the influence of a true, pure, and good woman ever made the most of a man—she did."

#### THE POETRY MARKET.

A timid, but really rather pretty young man came stepping softly into the sanctum recently, when nobody was in but the advertisement solicitor, who was writing a half column puff of Slab & Headstone's new marble shop. The young man took off his hat and said,

"Good morning," and the advertisement man snarled.

"What is poetry worth?" asked the timid, but pretty young man.

"Forty cents a line," said the advertisement man, promptly and rather tenderly, "and you can't do better anywhere. The advantages we offer for the publication of poetry are unsurpassed. Our circulation, standing in five figures the first year, has steadily increased three times an hour ever since, and I poetry published in this paper is placed in the hands of 150,000 families before night. How much have you?"

"Perhaps," said the timid young man, fairly reeling with delight, "it is a little too long."

"Makes no difference," said the advertisement man, beaming upon him kindly, "we'll put it all in if we have to issue a supplement. And everything over 3,000 lines goes at thirty-five cents."

The timid young man looked disappointed.

"It isn't so much then," he said, "when it's very long?"

"Never," replied the advertisement man magnanimously. "Never; less room, more pay; that's the way you make a living. Got your copy with you?"

"Yes, sir," replied the young man joyfully, "would you like to read it, sir, or shall I read it?"

"No, don't care to read it just now. Sit down and we'll count it."

So they sat down and counted it.

"My heart, my heart in throbbing numbers tells," read the ad. man. "Heart medicine, young man!" he asked, in the patronizing way of a man who knows everything.

"No, sir," replied the young man in amazed tones, while the ad. man counted away for dear life. "No, sir; a rhapsody, sir."

"Oh, yes; yes, of course," said the ad. man, in reassuring tones. "Hundred nine, hundred ten, hundred eleven—course, hundred fourteen—hain't done much in rhapsodies since Helmbold failed—hundred twenty-three—good things, though; we took a gross of 'em last spring on Pad & Lotion's column—hundred for two—and I wore one myself two weeks and it made—hundred fifty-four—man of me. One hundred and sixty-eight lines, sir, and we'll throw in a four-line head and won't count the odd half line—\$67.20; call it an even \$65 cash down. Just step down to the business office and I'll give you a receipt."

But the high-souled poet had fled.

PRESENCE OF MIND BEFORE BEING MURDERED.—In "Irish History and Character," by Goldwin Smith, we read the following story: A party of Whiteboys entered a house in which were a man, his wife, and their daughter, a young girl. The three were all together in the same room. The ruffians rushed into the room, dragged the man out of the house, and murdered him. In the room there was a closet with a hole in its door, through which a person placed inside could see into the room. The woman concealed the girl in this closet, and said to her, "Now, child, they are murdering your father downstairs, and when they have murdered him they will come up here and murder me. Take care that while they are doing it, you look well at them, and mind you swear to them when you see them in the court. I will throw turf on the fire to give you light, and will struggle hard that you may have time to take a good view." The young girl looked in through the hole in the closet door while her mother was being murdered; she marked the murderers well. She swore to them when she saw them in a court of justice, and they were convicted on her evidence.