

POETRY.

THERE'S COMPANY COMING TO TEA.

There's company coming to tea! Oh, what shall we have for 'em, There's sauce and cold meat, And plenty of salt, And custards enough for three.

The caller you'll have to unlock, The butter is there in the crock, I'll get that myself, And from the ewing shelf, Cider and nuts from our crock.

There's company coming to tea! These biscuits are light as can be, Be neat with the table, And spry as you're able, We'll honor our company.

Come, Liza, set over the tea, Then open this case for me, Get pickles and cheese, And cake if you please, We'll have a variety.

Now run and get on a clean frock 'Tis half after five by the clock, The biscuits are done, I wish they would come, What's that? Did I hear a knock?

Now won't you all walk out to tea, We've little you plainly can see, But I'll tell Liza Ann We'll do what we can, For our company come to tea.

SELECT STORY.

QUEEN OF HIS HEART.

CHAPTER I.

CONTINUED.

"I shall never trust you again, Captain, I know you did it on purpose."

"I give you my most solemn word of honor as a gentleman, that—"

"He stopped short as she eyed him with the dark haughty looking man who had come forward to greet the widow."

"This is an unexpected pleasure," she said, "in fact a pleasant ending to an unpleasant afternoon."

"You seem to have been pretty much over the same ground, Captain Gordon—Sir Ralph Tempest."

"Sir Ralph barely inclined his head, the captain bowed low."

"Delighted to make your acquaintance, I am sure, Well, Miss Evelyn, 'pon my word, I never saw you."

"Sir Ralph winced. Until that afternoon he had never called her anything but 'Miss Palmer.'"

"What right had this fellow, who looked an out-and-out scamp, to Miss Evelyn's hair? Perhaps Captain Gordon was aware of the dark scowl his words had brought into the other's face, anyhow he shook Evelyn's irresponsive hand with unusual warmth."

"I hope you will not scold me very much," he said impressively, "but I have not been able to procure that puzzle I promised you."

"Evelyn was rather taken aback. The day before he had been enlarging on some wonderful American puzzle, and she had said in an unbelieving way that she would like to see one, whereupon he had dotted it down in his note book. She had allowed him, believing that it existed solely in his imagination. Now here he was speaking of his promise to her as if they were the best of friends. Tempest was talking to her mother, but his glances caught of his face made her heart sink; he could look terribly hard when displeased."

"I had no idea you had promised me anything," she said icily, determined not to be dragged into any more of his puzzles. "Your memory is an exceedingly short one then," he said affably.

"My memory is an exceedingly good one, Captain Gordon."

"Eve, dear girl, fetch those photos that came home to-day; I want to show them to Mrs. Palmer for once in her life did a kind action—unwittingly of course."

Evelyn instantly left the room, only too thankful to escape. She was just returning with some photographs of her mother in fancy dress when the drawing-room bell rang, the door opened and Tempest came out. Cato was at the door, waiting to show him into the street, so it was impossible to say much more than "good-bye," but he managed to whisper, "To-morrow afternoon," before he left her in a state of blissful happiness, making her look positively radiant."

CHAPTER II.

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CHAPTER II.

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CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER II.

but you are a fool if you think twice about him. Sir Ralph Tempest is known to all by name and that name is not a good one."

"How dare you speak of him at all!" the girl cried angrily. "He is what you are not and never can be."

"And may I enquire what that is?" he sneered.

"Certainly," she said, proudly, "though I doubt if you will understand the meaning of the word. Sir Ralph is a gentleman!" And then she walked out of the room and left him.

He stood staring at the door for a second or two, grinding his teeth behind the heavy fair moustache, and then shook his fist menacingly.

"You little fury!" he snarled. "You stick up little wicket! I'll show you the way round yet. Val Gordon makes a better friend than foe, as you'll find to your cost, you little fool! Ugh! I could have struck you, you fiend!"

He had come at last, the expected and hoped for proposal; but all the same, Mrs. Palmer was not prepared for it. She had so many times got men up to the scratch, and at the last moment they had fled shy and disappeared, that she was growing a trifle out of conceit with herself. This she had had in mind in style, and yet had no answer ready. The fact was she did not feel certain about his financial position, nor did she know how to find out the truth about it.

"It is so sudden," she whispered, copying playing with her rings.

"I had hoped you guessed what I came here so often for."

"Indeed I had no idea—not the slightest—that you came for me," and the widow drooped her eyes shyly.

"For you and your alone," he murmured fondly.

"But I am such a silly little thing,—with a disparaging shrug of her shoulders, and I love fun and pretty frocks. I am afraid when you find out what a real baby I am, you will be disappointed."

"Never. And as to frocks and fun, you can have all you want. I'm not what you would call a rich man, but I've got a thousand a year, and I think I could make you pretty comfortable. We'll put those big children of yours to school—of course not Eve—and take a place anywhere you like, and get in with the county set. What do you say, Queen Mab—does the future please you?"

For answer the widow laid her golden curls on his breast. "If you love me," she cried rapturously, "it is all I ask."

He did not stay very long after the little widow had so graciously consented to become his. Poor Richard Denny disturbed the love making and Captain Gordon departed.

"You are just in time for dinner, Dick," Mrs. Palmer said, trying to hide the flutter she was in.

"Thanks, I don't think I will stay," he said, not even taking the chair she motioned him to. As he had come into the room he had seen what first appeared one dark figure at the fire, but which suddenly divided into two upon hearing his voice. It had opened his eyes at last. Poor Dick! For days past the thought of what seemed about to happen had filled him with sickening dread; and now it had happened, for he could have sworn that Mrs. Palmer had been in Captain Gordon's arms. Her voice shook slightly when she spoke, as if she were excited, and she noticed it at once. "I can't stay," he said huskily. "I only came to see how you were."

"I have neglected me shamefully of late," she said reproachfully. "You never came near me the whole of yesterday, and look in for only two minutes this evening. What is the matter, Dick?" She had that minute parted for a scene with another. "What is the matter?" she repeated, with kindly interest.

"Nothing," he avowed, wretchedly enough. "Nothing—nothing, Mrs. Palmer. I am going back to Oxford and had better say good-bye."

"He could not let him go so easily; her insatiable appetite for flattery must be appeased."

"And is that all?" she asked in a low hurt voice. "All you have to say, Dick, after so many weeks of true friendship?"

"There is nothing else for me to say," he cried with a boyish burst of emotion.

"I love you and you love Gordon, and there's an end to it."

"Ah! Dick, talk of what you understand," she sighed, pressing her handkerchief to his eyes. "You forget the children, Dick. I must think of them; I should not be a true mother and woman if I did not sacrifice myself for their benefit. The man is well off and can do a great deal for them; but as to love—why I am selling myself for them,"—here Mrs. Palmer's feelings overcame her, and she caught her breath in several well executed sobs.

Real tears blinded Dick's honest eyes, as he flung himself beside her and passionately kissed her hands.

"Walk," he implored. "Why should you, so beautiful and good, do this horrible thing? They're not worth it, any one of them. When I come of age I shall have £15,000 a year, and if you'll take me then you shall have it all and do just what you like with it."

Mrs. Palmer only shook her head. Dick was nineteen, and might change his mind before he could have control over this money, and in the meantime she would lose this great chance of improving her position.

"Impossible, dear boy. Don't tempt me from the path of duty, but make my burden less heavy to bear, by always being the kind friend I have found you. Don't forsake me, Dick, because I do what is right."

He begged, implored, prayed, but it was useless; Mrs. Palmer was determined to sacrifice herself for her children, and at length Dick stumbled out of her house quietly. "Why are you so cruel to me, Evelyn, for you know I love you?"

"I know nothing of the sort—and I do not believe it."

"Do you not? Look at that hand; do you see how it trembles? Put your hand here, and feel how my heart is beating. You refuse to touch me! Do you think I shall poison you?"

"I do not wish either to touch or hear you," the girl said with dignity. And for no other reason beyond this: that I do not like nor trust you."

"You are prejudiced," he declared hotly. "There is no earthly reason for you to distrust me. I have never deceived you in anything; and now I offer you what no woman should reject with scorn—a man's true love."

"If I have wronged you I am very sorry; but I do not and never could care for you."

"It is because you fancy you are in love already," he said fiercely. "I guessed as much, when I found that fellow here;

Palmer drew herself up and looked full of importance.

"So long as you did decline him, mother, I don't care what the reasons were," the girl said lightly.

She was bubbling over with happiness and contentment; at present her secret was too precious, too sacred to talk over even with her mother. She kept it all to herself with jealous care, dreading the time when it should become public property.

Mrs. Palmer felt annoyed; her news seemed about to fall flat.

"Really, Evelyn, I don't believe you care two straws about me. All you children are utterly selfish. Fortunately I have found one human being who is not—on whom I can lean and in whom I can trust."

"Mother!"—it was all Evelyn could say; the accusation was so groundless, the mention of the so mysterious.

"You may well exclaim," the little woman said scornfully. "I am tired of your dissembling ways, of your heartless conduct, and now I am about to escape them by marrying."

The girl looked at her with large troubled eyes that grew wider at this undesired accusation—this startling news fell on her ears.

She was clever in a certain way; this charming widow. She knew that the prospect of having Valentine Gordon for a step father for her children would be received with indignation and opposition so she paved the way by abusing her daughter, making the girl feel that perhaps she had been too hard on her mother's weakness.

"Mother, for heaven's sake, don't do anything foolish!" Evelyn cried, earnestly. "I have never meant to be selfish, or domineering, and will gladly alter anything you don't like."

"It is too late, Eve. I am not the hard worldly woman you seem to think me. I want a little love and sympathy, but I have done nothing foolish. I have given the step I have taken due consideration; and it is best not only for myself but for all of you."

"Who is it?" Evelyn questioned feeling anxious yet dreading to hear the name.

"Captain Valentine Gordon."

The girl grew white to the lips, her fair face expressing unutterable contempt and disney.

"Mother—not that hateful man, that horrible insolent cad!" she cried vehemently. "I have never meant forgetting yourself. Captain Gordon is a gentleman and my future husband," Mrs. Palmer said coldly.

"He will make you miserable, he is cruel and cunning," the girl said vehemently.

"I will listen to no more of this," Mrs. Palmer cried, with a stamp of her foot. "My mind is quite made up and nothing will alter it; so unless you wish for a serious quarrel you had better say no more about it."

Evelyn hesitated no longer but determined to tell Mrs. Palmer what had passed before the captain offered himself to the elder lady. Surely her mother's pride would rise up in arms against a man who could act so false a part, and pretended to love two women at the same time.

"Will you listen to me for one moment," she pleaded looking half ashamed. "He proposed to me this very afternoon, when you were out of the room."

"You are a soft, Eve. He told me what he had said; it was only done to put you up to your monkey eye. You always show off your tantrums to him, but you will have to behave differently now."

"Never," Eve said, doggedly, as she left the room.

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CHAPTER III.

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in the drawing room. "I'm just writing a business letter and must ask you to excuse me."

Tempest was entirely taken aback, not only by the words but by the insolent swagger of the man which made him long to knock the fellow down.

"Where is your mistress?" he asked haughtily, of the unhappy Cato who felt in a decided fix.

"She's in there," he said pointing to the opposite door, "but she said she was not at home."

"Then what the d— did you admit any one for?" the captain thundered, while Sir Ralph stood like a grim statue, his fierce eyes flashing angrily.

"Sir Ralph asked for Miss Palmer," whimpered Cato.

"It cannot concern this person whom I enquired for," Tempest said, white to the lips with rage.

"It does concern me, though," Gordon drawled, sticking up an eye-glass. "Miss Palmer cannot see you; she is otherwise engaged."

Tempest hissed something between his set teeth adding: "The first time I meet you outside of this house you shall answer for it!"

"Show that fellow out!" the captain said with a wave of the hand, and at the awful command Cato nearly had a fit. He respected Sir Ralph as servants will respect a thorough gentleman, but he stood in awe of Gordon, for it had been whispered in the kitchen that he was to be pelted with stones, without looking at it from his pocket book, wrote on it, folded and handed it to the trembling page.

"Give that yourself to Miss Palmer," he said shortly, and crossing the hall, he hurried out into the sunny street.

Evelyn waited in vain to be summoned to the dining room. She had heard the knock at the front door and guessed who it was, but as the minutes went by and no one came to tell her Sir Ralph had gone, she began to think she had been mistaken and that it had been some one else. She left her room and leaning over the banisters looked down into the hall.

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