



Apollinaris

"THE QUEEN OF TABLE WATERS"

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HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V.

One in a Thousand, BUT TRUE TO THE LAST

CHAPTER XVII.

"Oh, you would soon get over that," he assures her, with the utmost eagerness, "if you began with a quiet, steady horse, just at first, you know!"

Miss Dare laughs—a little, quiet, low, rippling laugh, which is, undoubtedly, very fascinating.

"I may as well tell you plainly, Mr. Wynne," she says, with soft boldness, "that I have never had a horse of any kind."

"But I will find you a mount, with pleasure, while you are in idleness," he says, quickly. "I am sure you would like it."

"I have no doubt; but I cannot take—I mean, I cannot give you so much trouble," she begins, hesitatingly.

"You might teach me to dance, you know," he says, with blundering boldness; "and then we should be quits."

"You will have plenty of opportunities," I say, turning round, "for Miss Dare is coming to stay here this week, and I will lend her a habit. Mine will fit her exactly."

Miss Dare thanks me; but her face is quite unmoved. "If I did not know that she is pretty well versed in the ways of the world, I should say she is a complete innocent. As it is, I think I have set the ball fairly rolling. I leave them alone after this, and Loys asks me to sing. I look at Mrs. Brancepeth, with a smile, as I pass her, and it does my heart good to see how pleased she looks."

"What am I to sing?" I ask of the company, generally.

"You used to sing a pretty thing called 'Golden Hours,'" says Loys. "I should like to hear it, if you can remember it."

It is a sweet, and song—one I was marvelously fond of in the days when trouble was only a word which conveyed no real meaning to my mind. I sang it well then, but now I feel every word with a vividness which is keenest pain to me.

"An hour or two of dreamy talk along the old gray garden walk. A stroll in that sweet hawthorn glade where all our fondest vows were made; The deepening twilight soft and gray To shed around our homeward way The hallowing touch of 'Auld Lang Syne.' Would bring thy wandering heart to mine With all the faith of former years, With all the thronging hopes and fears."

Oh, how I feel it! How I long for the "Auld Lang Syne" which would give me back my love of three months ago! But, alas, the song con-

tinues, and tells that only tears are left, for in the closing verse the maiden wails:

"I would not know those hours again, To feel the waking sting of pain—I would not, if I could, restore The joys that end in 'Never more!'"

I am not like her; I want my brief dream of bliss over again; it seems to me now that I did not make enough of it. I suppose that is the case with everyone who has been shut out of Paradise, and has for the future only the dread "Never more!"

"Dear as remembered kisses after death!" sighs the poet. Ah, but it is not those we think of most! It is those that we have missed, or were too careless to give or take, and when it is too late there is only the sting of regret left. I long for my paradise with a passionate wildness which frightens me, for sometimes I think that it will turn my brain and take away my reason; perhaps I should be at peace then.

When I rise from the piano, I cannot help smiling a little at the startled faces of my hearers. I sit down by Loys, who puts her soft hand in mine.

"I wish, Audrey," she whispers, "that you would not let yourself be carried away like that. You frighten me. I wish I had not asked you to sing it—it is not a song for a bride."

I laugh, for it will not do to let all these people see I was in earnest over it; but my mirth has the hard, un-mirthful ring which it has acquired of late. I must practice carefully to-morrow, that, when necessary, I may laugh better.

After this Edith Dare plays a rattling piece—to rouse us, all, as she says; and then our guests betake themselves away, en masse. I arrange with Miss Dare that she is to come on Thursday, and I ask Mr. Wynne to dine with us that night. I feel that I am rather overstepping the bounds to ask even a single guest; but Theo is not an ordinary widow, and complains so very much of the dullness of her life just now that I am sure she will not mind.

When Adrian has seen the last guest away, he comes back and tells me I make "a grand hostess." The compliment does not please me, for I feel that is the chief thing he wants

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me for. However, he seems not to notice the silence with which I receive his remark, for he says:

"What were you and Wynne putting your heads together about all dinner time? If you don't take care, I shall be jealous." The idea is so utterly absurd that I burst out laughing; but he goes on: "Ah, you may laugh, but it's no light matter to have one's wife carrying on a hot flirtation with a fine, handsome man under one's very nose!"

"Yes, he is very handsome," I say, coolly. "I've asked him for Thursday."

"Upon my word," he ejaculates, "but you're a plucky young woman to own it, Lady Cabrera!"

Then I tell him the whole story, and conclude:

"Don't you think I'm a very benevolent person?"

"Yes; quite the fairy godmother," he laughs. "You'll have to take the colonel in hand yet."

"Ah, but I must find some one for him! And I don't know any more nice girls about here. I might ask one of the girls from Rest—they would soon make short work of him."

"Very well; it will be great fun to see it all."

"Then I'll write for one of them when Theo's gone," I say. "And, meantime, I must cultivate him as much as I can."

"Why?" queries my husband.

"Well, to accustom him to coming to the house, or else he'll take fright at the sight of a petticoat."

"Perhaps Theo will be too many for him," suggests my husband.

A wild wish rises to my heart that Theo may take it into her head to subdue this woman hater. Surely, the prospect of being a duchess will dazzle her, and Col. Cardyllon is handsome enough to attract any woman. I do not mention this to Adrian, for it does not seem decent to be thinking of her marrying again so soon; yet, for my part, I am so thoroughly anxious to be rid of her that I can hardly keep the idea to myself. If only I can bring it about! It seems to be my one chance of deliverance.

The Luttrells have always had the reputation of possessing their full allowance of brains, and I make up my mind that I will adopt a new plan toward Theo. I will be very sweet and sisterly, and utterly scout the idea of there being anything between her and Adrian.

I will show that in the matter of brain power I am not behind the others of my race. I am afraid I have as yet given evidence of very little cleverness; but for the future I will call up that which is lying latent, and secure happiness for myself and a duke for Theo. I am sure Theo ought to be very much obliged to me.

"You look," laughs Adrian, "as if like Atlas, you had the weight of the whole world upon you."

"I was thinking something," I answer.

"That is what you say to me nine times out of every ten that I speak to you. What is it you are plotting for? If you have any designs against the colonel—well, I pity him, that's all; for you look the very personification of resolute determination."

"I am very glad to hear it," I say. "Whatever is the mystery? Is it the colonel?"

"Perhaps," I answer, nodding my head sagely.

"But, my dear child," Adrian continues, in a bantering tone, "if you marry the chief off, just consider the poor wretch of an orderly officer sitting down to dinner quite alone every night!"

"It will save a great deal of money," I urge.

"Oh, yes! But, then, you will earn the everlasting, unyielding hatred of the unfortunate messman. Why, poor beggar, we shouldn't want a messman at all!"

But I am quite ready to risk that. Of course, I know Adrian is only teasing me when he says they will all be married. Still, there really are a great many married officers for one regiment—there is no denying that—and that is not very often the case where the colonel is a bachelor. The officers are so apt to follow his lead in everything—the cut of their coats, the length of their mustaches, the absence or presence of whiskers. Three or four young officers generally give one a pretty fair idea of the style of man the chief is.

As I think this, I suddenly remember that Col. Cardyllon has only had the regiment a few weeks, and, of course, Col. Seymour was married and had a large family. So that it was his example that accounts for these being so many Benedicts in the Cuirassiers. I am too much excited by my new plan to fall asleep. I lie awake for a long time, planning and arranging how I can best throw Col. Cardyllon and Theo together; and then I dream that Adrian has made a present of me to the colonel, and Theo stands by, laughing at my ravings!

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