

W. H. Bain



POETRY.

Every Day.

Oh, trifling tasks, so often done,  
Yet ever to be done anew!  
Oh, cares, which come with every sun,  
Morn after morn, the long years through!  
We shrink beneath their paltry sway—  
The irksome calls of every day.

The restless sense of wasted power,  
The tiresome round of little things,  
Are hard to bear, as hour by hour  
Its tedious iteration brings;  
Who shall evade or who delay  
The small demands of every day?

We rise to meet a heavy bow—  
Our souls a sudden bravery fills—  
But we endure not always so  
The drop by drop of little ill:  
We still deplore and still obey  
The hard behests of every day.

The heart which boldly faces death  
Upon the battle field, and dares  
Cannon and bayonet, faints beneath  
The needle points of frets and cares;  
The stoutest spirits they dismay—  
The tiny stings of every day.

And even saints of holy fame,  
Whose souls by faith have overcome,  
Who wore amid the cruel flame  
The molten crown of martyrdom,  
Bore not without complaint away  
The petty pains of every day.

Ah, more than martyr's aureole,  
And more than hero's heart of fire,  
We need the humble strength of soul  
Which daily toils and ills require;  
Sweet patience, grant us if you may,  
An added grace for every day.

Jessie's Test.

Miss Jerusha Jenkinson folded her napkin with slow, precise carefulness, and then followed her pretty little hostess from the dining-room back to the parlor, where the soft astral lamp glowed like a silver moon, and the illuminated stove made red shadows on the brown rep easy-chair in which Miss Jenkinson ensconced herself.

'I really don't know what to do about it, Miss Jerusha. If I once thought Rich was guilty of such indiscretions as you declare he is, I do believe I should—die!'

Jesse Wintringham winked away a suspicious brightness from her pretty curling brown lashes, and looked eagerly at her guest's sarcastic countenance.

'I dare say there are a great many people who would say I was very officious, my dear, because I tell you what I think of that good-looking husband of yours. But I feel I have your interest at heart; and if no one else has the courage and charity to point out to a young wife of half a year the goings-on of her husband—why, my dear Mrs. Wintringham, I'll stand by you, and take your part.'

Her solemn words made little shivers of vague terror thrill all over Jessie.

'I dare say you are very kind indeed, Miss Jerusha, only I can't believe that Rich is such a flirt as you say—always paying such exclusive attention to ladies when he is away from home.'

'You must think just what you please, my dear. Only, I suppose if you were to see for yourself, you would believe the evidence of your own eyes.'

Jessie's slightly-flushed cheeks betrayed the painful interest she felt.

'Of course, if I were to see—, Miss Jerusha arose triumphantly.

'Then all you have to do is to take my advice, and the next time Mr. Wintringham has such very important business to New York, do you go by the same train, with your waterproof and a thick veil to disguise you. I must go now, I think, my dear. I'll have to stop at poor Mrs. Delacorn's, and hear if she has heard from that runaway daughter of hers. Thanks for the early cup of tea you made so nicely—and don't forget what I told you, Mrs. Wintringham.

And the abominable old gossip went her way, leaving the arrows of the distrust she had sown rankling painfully in poor, loving, jealous Jessie's heart.

She perfectly adored her handsome young husband; and as always such passionate affection is accompanied by jealousy, this otherwise sensible little woman found it no difficult matter to entertain the doubts her guest expressed.

Rich was so handsome, so stylish, so gallant—why should not ladies enjoy his attentions? And, sitting by the cozy fire, waiting until her husband should come in for his dinner, Jessie almost decided to play the spy upon him at the earliest moment.

Then, when she heard his latch-key in the door, and his quick, firm tread in the hall, and saw his handsome cheerful face as he took her cheek in his hands to kiss her, she felt ashamed and confused.

'I am afraid I shall have to hurry, you dear,' he said linking her arm through his, and leading the way to the dining-room, where the bright light made a genial glow on silver, crystal, and snow-white china.

'Hurry me--Rich, how?'

'I have to take the seven-thirty train, very unexpectedly, for the city, on important business that cannot be delayed. I shall be home to-morrow night, I expect. Jessie, will you have another piece of the black meat?'

Mrs. Wintringham toyed with her chicken, her appetite entirely destroyed by the news Rich announced.

'On important business.' Yes, that was what Miss Jenkinson had said. And the night train, too! It flashed hotly across Jessie's mind that her husband was going down to the theatre, and if what Miss Jerusha had said was true—not alone!

That second decided her; and as Mr. Wintringham arose from the dining-table, he little knew the thoughts that were thronging in his pretty little wife's head.

'Don't be lonesome, darling, will you? Or shall I stop and tell Florrie to come up to-night?'

Jessie laughed—a little forcedly.

'You over anxious fellow! What do I want of sister Florrie? I shall not be lonely at all.'

'Brave little woman; kiss me good-night, then, dear.'

He was so kind and thoughtful; and Jessie's fond, foolish heart almost misgave her as she watched him off.

'It is downright wicked to distrust him! but then it is just these elegant, fascinating men who are so agreeable to other women besides their wives—at least Miss Jerusha says so, and she's old enough to know.'

She watched the ivory hands of the cuckoo clock hastening toward seven-thirty.

'Well—I shall do it—this once, anyhow.'

And she went up to her room with sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks.

'Is this seat engaged, sir?'

It was a low, sweet voice that addressed Mr. Richmond Wintringham, as the seven thirty train steamed on after calling at the last station before reaching the Jersey City terminus.

Mr. Wintringham arose courteously, glancing at the small, graceful figure in navy-blue waterproof and double veil.

'Take the seat by the window, madam.'

She glided in, and Mr Wintringham, sat down beside her, all unconscious of the sidelong glance from a pair of eager eyes under the veil.

'How handsome he is, and he hasn't the least idea who I am!'

For of course it was Jessie who had taken the train at the same station with Rich, but had waited until the last station had been reached before she changed her seat in the car for the one she now occupied.

'I wonder if he does know me! Of course he doesn't, only he don't seem very eager to say anything to me. Then a little fragrantly perfumed handkerchief fluttered accidentally (?) to the floor.

Jessie made a deceitful little dive after it displaying her daintily kidded hand, and round, neatly cuffed wrist.

Rich quickly anticipated her, and handed the handkerchief quietly to her.

'Allow me, madam.'

'Oh, thank you! I am sorry to trouble you so much. I was very awkward.'

Jessie's cheeks were blushing furiously under her double dark brown veil.

'I will give him a chance, anyhow,' she thought.

But Mr. Wintringham only bowed gravely, and maintained a courteous silence.

The train slowed up, and Jessie, with persistent determination to draw him into conversation, made a feint of alarm that amused herself as she peered out of the window, then at her seat mate.

'What are we stopping for? This isn't a station—oh! is anything the matter?'

Rich smiled—this little woman was such an odd one.

'There is no need of apprehension, madam. We are entering the tunnel.'

'The tunnel! oh, dear, the tunnel!'

But Rich didn't "take" at all. He only settled cozily back and slouched his seal-skin hat on his forehead, leaving his companion to fight the imaginary terrors of the tunnel as best she might.

The train had come to its final standstill at the depot, and just as Wintringham arose to leave the car, he felt the timid touch of fingers on his coat-sleeve.

'Please pardon me—but—but—there is a ferryboat to cross in—isn't there? and if you would be so kind as to tell me which way it is to the St. Julian hotel?'

Rich buttoned up his overcoat deliberately while she spoke.

'The "St Julian?" I am going there myself, madam. If you are unaccompanied I will see you there. This way, please'

At last! Jessie's cheeks were as hot as fire now, and her eyes bright as stars as she walked through the long depot and ferry-house beside her husband. In the ladies' cabin Rich gave her a seat, then left her to join a group of gentlemen who were conversing near the door, and at the New York dock he escorted her to a St. Julian transfer coach, much as if she had been a child in his charge, whom he was bound to do his duty by, and yet considered somewhat of a nuisance.

As it happened the transfer coach had other passengers, so that the hot color had time to die out from Jessie's face, although she mentally regarded him "a darling provoking fellow!"

'If you please, sir, an answer is wanted'

One of the waiters at the St Julian handed a tiny notelet to Mr. Rich Wintringham just after that gentleman had inspected the arrangements of his room and was settled down for a half hour's examination of sundry papers in his memorandum book.

'An answer!—a letter for me—oh, yes, from Ned Hathaway, about the shares—'

His eyes opened widely as he carelessly tore it open, to find, not a business communication from Ned Hathaway, but a dainty little note, in a graceful, flowing back hand.

'TO THE GENTLEMAN IN THE SEAL-SKIN CAP:  
"You have made me desire very much to see you again. Is there not time to attend the theatre?"  
"YOUR LADY ADMIRER."

Rich drew a long breath of surprise.

'So that's the little game, is it?'

Then he rapidly wrote an answer and dispatched it by the man, who grinned knowingly as he received a twenty-five cent stamp from Jessie's trembling fingers.

'Now, then, I've caught him this time. Suppose he consents—'

The ebbing color on her cheeks, the quivering of her pretty mouth, was ample evidence of the state of her feelings; and she opened the sealed envelope as one does a telegram—trying to assure one's self nothing is amiss, and yet feeling it necessary to be prepared for the worst.

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