

## Before the Ball

By Hester A. Benedict N. York.

I am here in the purple, black twilight;  
My room as you left it remains;  
The picture, the fountain, the flowers;  
The gas is uplifted; it rains;  
And the wind thro' my half-opened shutters  
Goes lonesome and low to me, dear,  
As I cry to you through the darkness.  
Listen, my love! Do you hear?

Do you sit as I sit, with a wonder  
Showing up rank in your heart—  
A thrill in the grain that is tassel'd—  
Why we two are praying apart?  
Do you lean as I lean at this moment  
From darkness to darkness and say,  
"O spirit of Infinite Goodness  
Be good to my darling, I pray!"

Ah well! Over there in the corner  
I can see by the fire's faint light,  
The robe of most delicate amber  
That I am to dance in to night  
There's garniture gorgeous—a snow-shine  
Of pearls and Tokit-applique;  
And yet, O I'm wild for the daisies  
That darken the hills far away!

I want the light-lips of the lilies  
On my lips that quiver and ache  
All the white-bright-lips of the lilies  
That border our own happy lake.  
And I want you, O darling of darlings!  
O, one world of all worlds mine own!  
I want you to laugh or to cry to—  
And still—O, and still, I'm alone,

They are lighting the myriad burners  
At Cassleman's over the way;  
The crowd are beginning to gather;  
The band is beginning to play;  
Hark! What a trotting and bobbing,  
Of melody tender and sweet,  
Till the pulse of the rose on my bosom  
Till it sinks in a swim at my feet.

Hark again! O the musical army  
That climbs the cold steps of the air  
To storm the stronghold of my spirit—  
It gives not a minute for prayer.  
It has me and holds me, a rapture  
Despite all my wish and my will—  
Far from the lake and the lilies—  
Far from the daisy-decked hill.

Yet somehow, it brings you the nearer,  
And the dark grows suddenly light;  
The heart of our bird in his prison,  
Like mine, has forgotten the night.  
The fountain flows freer, the flowers  
Seen swinging in sweetness new;  
And all of earth fades from the heaven  
That comes from the music and you.

## After the Ball

They sat and combed their beautiful hair;  
Their long bright tresses, one by one,  
As they laughed and talked in their chamber <sup>there</sup>,  
After the revel was done

Lolly they talked of waltz and quadrille;  
Lolly they laughed, like other girls,  
Who over the fire when all is still,  
Comb out their braids and curls.

Robes of satin and Brussels lace,  
Knots of flowers and ribbons too,  
Scattered about in every place,  
For the revel is through.

And Mand and Madge in robes of white,  
The prettiest night-gowns under the sun,  
Platiness, sleepless, sit in the night,  
For the revel is done.

Set and comb their beautiful hair,  
The wonderful waves of brown and gold,  
Till the fire is out in the chamber there,  
And the little bare feet are cold.

Then out of the gathering chill,  
All out of the bitter St Agnes weather,  
While the fire is out and the house is still,  
Mand and Madge together,—

Mand and Madge in robes of white,  
The prettiest night-gowns under the sun,  
Quarantined away from the chilly night,  
After the revel is done,—

Float along in a splendid dream,  
To a golden gitterns tinkling tune,  
While a thousand lustres shimmering stream  
In a palace's grand saloon.

Flashing of jewels and flutter of laces,  
Tropical odors sweeter than musk,  
Men and women with beautiful faces,  
And eyes of tropical dusk,—

And one face shining out like a star,  
One face haunting the dreams of each,  
And one voice sweeter than the others are,  
Breaking into silvery speech,—

Telling through lips of bearded bloom,  
The old, old story over again,  
As down the royal bannered room,  
To the golden gitterns strain—

Two and two they dreamily walk,  
While an unseen spirit walks beside,  
And all unheard in the lovers' talk,  
He claimeth one for a bride.

O Mand and Madge dream on together,  
With over a pang of jealous fear!  
For ere the bitter St Agnes weather  
Shall whiten another year.

Robed for the bridal and robed for the tomb,  
Braided brown hair and golden tresses,  
There'll be only one of you left for the bloom,  
Of the bearded lips to press,—

Only one of you for the bridal pearls,  
The robe of the satin and Brussels lace,  
Only one to blush through her curls  
At the sight of a lover's face

O beautiful Madge in your bridal white,  
For you the revel has just begun,  
But for her who sleeps in your arms to night,  
The revel of life is done

But robed and crowned with your saint's blessing  
Queen of heaven and bride of the Sun  
O beautiful Mand you'll never miss,  
The kisses another has won.

## The Watcher

The night was dark and fearful,  
The blast went wailing by;  
A watcher pale and tearful,  
Looked forth with anxious eye;  
How wistfully she gazed,—  
No gleam of moon was there;  
And then her heart upraises  
Its agony of prayer;

Within that dwelling lonely,  
Where want and darkness reign;  
Her precious child, her only,  
Lay moaning in his pain;  
And death alone can free him,  
She feels that this must be;  
"But oh! for morn to see him  
Smile once again on me!"

A hundred lights are glancing  
In yonder mansion fair,  
And merry feet are dancing,  
They heed not morning there;  
Oh! young and joyous creatures,  
One lamp from out your store,  
Would give that poor boy's features  
To her fond gaze once more.