

Miss Fortescue the Seamstress, —OR— FORTUNE'S CHANGES.

CONCLUDED.

It cannot be denied that Alice entertained the most favorable sentiments towards this gentleman. Gratitude, at first, was the predominant feeling. She felt that to him she was indebted for her situation in the choir, and indirectly for her success in obtaining pupils, inasmuch as her singing in church had advertised to the public her musical capacities.

Again, Mr. Stanley's personal appearance and address were very prepossessing. His form and features bore the impress of true manly beauty. Of the man himself, or all that constitutes the man, the mind, we have already briefly spoken. Altogether, he was one eminently calculated to make a deep and abiding impression on a young and susceptible heart.

Had Alice's heart been thus impressed? She would not, perhaps, have acknowledged it; but certain it is, she would not have anticipated with so much pleasure those musical reunions, or looked forward to the evenings of rehearsal with such unabated interest, had it been made known to her that young Stanley would not be present.

In regard to the young gentleman's sentiments towards Alice, there could be but little mistake. He had been taken captive by her voice, and the personal acquaintance that followed only rendered his captivity the more certain. It was not for her personal beauty merely, preeminent as it was, nor for her wonderful accomplishments, that he felt drawn towards her. He had learned her history. Tenderly reared and accustomed to all the refinements of a high social position, he had witnessed her brave endurance in adversity. He had observed, how, under circumstances calculated sorely to test her forbearance, she had steadfastly retained her equanimity, and preserved unruffled the sweetness of her disposition. He had moreover, in his intercourse with her, discovered that she possessed a mind of more than ordinary depth, rare judgment and discrimination, and a heart brimming with gentle and affectionate impulses. In a word, he saw that she was endowed with every noble and womanly attribute, and that she was eminently fitted to adorn whatever station in life she might be called upon to fill.

Viewing her in this light, he resolved to secure, if possible, this rare prize. That she had been a sewing-girl, that she now sang in a choir and taught music for a living, did not in the least shock his so-called aristocratic feelings. That which degraded her in the eyes of the Gates and Dunbars of the world, ennobled her in his; what they accounted a disgrace, he esteemed an honor; and his great desire and cherished design were, to place her in a station where she would not be subjected to the sneers of the ill bred, but rather become an object of envy to that vulgar fashionable set who affected a superiority over her.

As a matter of course, the partiality evinced by Stanley for Alice did not escape the lynx-eyes of those whose sole business seems to be to pry into the affairs of their neighbors.

As usual, the tongue of gossip was busy in arraigning them—Alice for her folly and presumption in seeking to win the attention of one "so much above her," as they worded it, and Stanley, for the something worse than folly, in endeavoring to entrap a young girl's affections. That he would "stoop to marry her," they did not for an instant suppose.

Alice and Stanley were happily ignorant of these remarks, although, if they had reflected a moment, they must have known they could not escape them. Yet Alice, in her happy innocence of any design on Stanley, did not dream of such animadversions, and the latter was too high-minded to bestow a thought on the subject. By some means, however, Mrs. Fortescue caught a whisper of these reports, and in her motherly anxiety she brought the matter to the notice of Alice.

"Who came home with you last night, my daughter?" she asked one morning in an apparently careless manner.

"Mr. Stanley, mother," was the reply; a slight blush rising to the respondent's cheek.

"He generally accompanies you home from the music parties and rehearsals, does he not?"

"Yes, mother." The blush perceptibly deepened.

"Has it ever occurred to you, my daughter, that these attentions, not the least reprehensible, may give occasion to ill-natured remarks?"

"It had not entered my mind until this moment," Alice frankly replied; "but I now am aware that they may."

"Is it not best, my child, to avoid, if we can, giving rise to them?"

"Certainly, dear mother, but how can I avoid it? It would be very rude in me to decline the gentleman's civilities without assigning some reason."

"I fully appreciate the situation in which this idle talk has placed you, Alice. It is an experience which, sometime in their lives, most girls are forced to encounter, and many a friendship in consequence has

been sacrificed on the altar of gossip. If people generally would follow out poor Richard's maxim,—"Mind your own business," we should be spared many annoyances."

"That is the truth, mother. But unless I greatly err in my estimate of Mr. Stanley's character, there will be no sacrifice in this case. I see but one course left to me," continued Alice, after a moment's reflection; "it is to state frankly to Mr. Stanley the whole matter. It is a delicate thing to undertake, but I feel sure that his good sense will see the propriety of my action, and approve of it."

"It is what I would have suggested, my dear child," said the mother, with a smile of pleasure. "But your task will be a delicate one, and I hardly see how you can execute it without great embarrassment."

"Trust to me, mother," said Alice, whose spirits, for a moment dashed, had resumed their elasticity. "I shall throw aside all circumlocution and, as the lawyers say, 'speak directly to the point.'"

After Alice had retired she thought the whole matter over. The extreme delicacy of the task she proposed to undertake became more apparent to her, and she passed many sleepless hours in conjecturing how she could best accomplish it. The more she revolved the matter in her mind, the more difficult and distasteful it appeared.

To say to the gentleman, "Mr. Stanley, I must decline your civilities for the future because they give occasion to public scandal," was simple enough, but how would such an avowal be received? Would he not infer at once that she considered his attention too pointed, unless he intended to make an offer of his hand? Or that she regarded this idle talk more than she did his friendship? If she assigned no reason for declining his civilities, would he not, on the other hand, suppose that they were disagreeable to her?"

"Mother," said Alice, the next morning, "if it is necessary to say anything to Mr. Stanley in regard to this miserable tattle, I must beg of you to do it. I thought last night I could do it myself, but I cannot. After all, what necessity is there of mentioning the matter to him? He tells me that he shall soon start on a long contemplated tour in Europe. When he is gone all this scandal will cease, and the busy-bodies will seek in some new quarter food for gossip."

"That alters the case materially," said Mrs. Fortescue, "and perhaps it will be well to let the matter drop. I was not aware that such was Mr. Stanley's intention. How long does he expect to be absent?"

"He told me about a year," said Alice, with something like a sigh.

"You will miss him very much," said Mrs. Fortescue, wishing to ascertain, if possible, the state of Alice's feelings in regard to Stanley.

"Yes, but a year soon passes away." "And when the year has passed and he returns, what then, my child? Will the intimacy be renewed?"

"I perceive what is in your thoughts, mother, said Alice, with a faint smile, "but do not press me on that point. What may happen in the future I cannot say. Of one thing be assured, dear mother, that in no event shall I fail to seek and be guided by your counsel."

From this conversation and what followed, Mrs. Fortescue was fully satisfied of the real nature of her daughter's sentiments towards Stanley. The discovery was unwelcome to her; not that she objected to the gentleman, but because she was ignorant of his sentiments and of his intentions. Had she known that the love of Alice was reciprocated, and that the dearest wish of Stanley's heart was to win her for his wife, her joy would have been great, for she believed that he possessed every quality of mind and heart to render a woman happy.

In her state of uncertainty on this point Mrs. Fortescue was very glad to learn that Mr. Stanley was going abroad. If his intentions in respect to Alice were not "serious," the parting could not take place too soon; for his presence would undoubtedly foster the incipient love of her daughter into a strong and enduring passion. On the contrary, his absence, and with nothing on which to feed hope, the impression he had made would very likely soon pass away, as has been similarly instanced time out of mind. Even if their love was mutual, a year's absence, Mrs. Fortescue thought, would do no harm, but serve to test the constancy of the young couple.

On the next Saturday evening as Alice and Stanley were on their way as usual to her home, after the rehearsal, the latter remarked that that was probably the last evening, at least for many months, when he should enjoy the pleasure of acting as her escort.

"Do you leave so soon?" asked Alice, with a slight flutter of the heart.

"I propose to leave in Wednesday's steamer. I assure you, Alice, I shall look back upon these evening walks with pleasant memories, and forward to their renewal with fond anticipations."

Alice said nothing in reply, and they walked on in silence for some time.

"You do not appear in your usual spirits this evening," at last said Stanley; "are you not feeling well?"

"I have been revolving a very unpleasant query in my mind," replied Alice, slightly hesitating; "whether or not I should say something to you particularly distasteful to myself, and which I fear would be very disagreeable to you."

"Then with my whole heart I conjure you not to say it!" laughingly rejoined the young man. "On this our last walk together, let there be nothing distasteful or disagreeable between us if it can be avoided."

"Alice had almost worked herself up to the point of speaking to her companion on the subject and her mother had lately discussed, but her courage failed her at the last moment, or rather she could not find fitting language in which to express herself.

"I should be very sorry, I assure you, Mr. Stanley," she said, in reply to his remark, "to have any unpleasant associations connected with our parting hour."

"But I trust this is not to be our parting," said Stanley, as they paused at the gate-entrance to Alice's home. "I shall see you to-morrow evening, and on Tuesday I shall call and leave my adieux. To-night permit me to say, *au revoir!*" So saying the young gentleman took his leave.

It chanced the next morning as Stanley was passing Mrs. Fortescue's on his way to church—it was remarkable the roundabout way he had of late taken—that lady was gathering some flowers in the front yard. He learned from her that Alice had already gone to church, and accepting her invitation he entered the house.

Mrs. Fortescue thought that their being together was an opportunity not to be slighted, and very frankly, but with some little embarrassment, she mentioned to her visitor the stories current respecting the courtesy he had shown her daughter, and alluded to the unpleasantness of such reports, etc. Stanley received the information in good part, remarking:

"This accounts for what your daughter said to me last evening, whether she should say something that was distasteful to her and might be disagreeable to me."

Improving the occasion so unexpectedly offered, Stanley then openly declared his love for Alice, and solicited the liberty of paying his addresses to her, for the purpose of proffering his hand. Mrs. Fortescue suggested whether it would not be better to postpone that event until his return; that possibly, in the course of his travels, he might meet with some one whom he would prefer for a wife to Alice, or in the interim of his absence there might be a change in his mind.

The young man strenuously objected to the postponement. As for finding a companion more suitable to his taste, there was not a woman in the world to be compared to Alice—and as for changing his mind, time would only establish more surely his love. The ardent suitor carried his point. Mrs. Fortescue gave her joyful consent, and the youth took his leave in blissful ecstasy.

When Alice returned from church she was not a little surprised at the unwonted spirits manifested by her mother, who had remained at home on the plea of not feeling very well. She was still more surprised in the course of the afternoon, when her mother remarked:

"My daughter, we will have some of your nice preserves for supper, also some of that boasted cake of yours; Mr. Stanley will take tea with us."

"Mr. Stanley take tea with us?" repeated Alice, in open-eyed astonishment.

"Yes, my dear; he happened by here this morning after you had gone to church, and as he was about leaving us so soon, I thought I would invite him to tea. I hope you have no objections to it."

Of course she had none, but she was in a complete state of wonderment all the time she was making preparations for an event so entirely unexpected. This state of mind, however, she did not permit to interfere with her housewifery, which she never displayed to better advantage, you may be sure, than on this important occasion.

A very pleasant, cozy, homelike repast it proved to be. With admirable tact Mrs. Fortescue at once placed her guest at his ease, and from the absence of all formality, it really seemed like a snug little family party.

The vesper services that evening must have been unusually prolonged, or the young couple must have strangely loitered on their way from church, for it was not until long beyond her accustomed hour that Alice arrived home.

As she entered the room where her mother was awaiting her, Alice approached her and holding her in a warm embrace, said, in a choked voice:

"Mother, I am very happy!" her eyes overflowing in the excess of her feeling. But thank God there was no bitterness in those tears!

"And I, too, am happy, my dear child," responded the mother. "Everything, I presume is satisfactorily arranged?"

"Yes, mother, but at my request he consented that the engagement should not be made known. O mother, I little dreamed of this, this morning!" And again the surcharged heart found vent in tears.

On the following Wednesday Stanley started upon his tour. We pass over his

parting with Alice, mentioning an incident merely that occurred as he left her. Just as he stepped out of the gate he encountered Miss Dunbar and Miss Gates, to whom he politely raised his hat. Miss Dunbar acknowledged the salutation with a cold bow, but her companion scarcely recognized it, as in her astonishment she exclaimed:

"Did you ever, Miss Dunbar! the idea!" About six months after Stanley left, there came rumors of his meeting with a beautiful young lady among the mountains of Tyrol, where he chanced to be rambling, and that he was particular attentive to her. These were followed by another that he was journeying in company with her through the Alpine region, and rumor told the truth, for a rarity. He had fallen in with an old friend and his sister, and their routes being the same, they had travelled together. All these stories, of course, reached the ears of Alice, with all the exaggerations that petty spite could invent; for the attention of Stanley had not been forgotten, as if it had been a crime in her to receive them, these blessed Christians adopted this method to punish her for it. Wolf-like they eagerly turned to rend the wounded.

Presently the report was that Stanley had arrived at Paris, still in company of the young lady, to whom he was "positively engaged." The next report was that he was immediately to be married and to return home with his bride. These multiplied rumors did not seem to have any marked effect on Alice, although some conjectured that she grew pale and thin, and exhibited an unwonted air of sadness.

When, however, it was announced that Stanley would arrive by the next steamer and be at home on a specified day, and that orders had been received to have the old family mansion in readiness to receive him and his new wife, to the surprise of all, Alice sent in her resignation of the place she held in the choir, and gave up her music class, while Mrs. Fortescue offered her place for sale, and in a few days she and her daughter left town.

It was immediately surmised that the return of Stanley with his bride had something to do with this sudden removal, and many well-meaning souls gravely shook their heads as they spoke of Alice.

"Poor girl!" they said, commiseratingly. It was very wrong for Stanley to show her such marked attentions, but it was very weak in her to build any hopes upon them!"

"She is served just right, the proud minx!" said the more ill-natured; "and it is just punishment for her presumption."

A week or two after the Fortescues left, and people had ceased to talk or think of them, Stanley arrived home with his bride. There was a larger gathering than usual at the station when the train that bore the newly-married couple came in. Many were drawn thither, no doubt, to catch a glimpse of the long-talked-of bride. Their curiosity was, however, baffled, for the lady was closely veiled and not a feature could be seen; but her graceful form, well set off by a neatly fitting travelling dress, excited their highest admiration as her husband handed her to the carriage in waiting.

The new bride was the prominent theme of conversation among a certain set. She had kept so provokingly retired that no one as yet had seen her. But it soon became known that on a certain evening Mrs. Stanley would have a reception, and everybody was on the *qui vive* for an invitation.

The evening assigned for the party came, and the Stanley mansion was early the centre of attraction to a gay and expectant throng. Curiosity overcame even the pique of Miss Dunbar, or she was determined to show to the world that she had not taken to heart Stanley's defection, for she and her inseparable friend, Miss Gates, were among the earliest callers.

When they entered the reception-room the throng was so great that the bride was completely hidden from them; and it was not until almost the very moment of being presented, that they caught a full sight of her. They could not prevent a start of astonishment as they beheld before them, richly arrayed, with orange blossoms in her hair, her face radiant with happiness and beaming smiles of welcome, Mrs. Alice Stanley, *nee Fortescue!*

Miss Dunbar quickly recovered from her embarrassment and went through the usual formalities with much *sang froid*, but her companion was so completely astonished by "the idea," that she could not prevent one or two awkward movements, not marked enough to attract general notice, but which the bride at once detected, and, it may be, enjoyed.

We need not speak of the surprise generally manifested when it was known who the new bride was, for the reader can best imagine it. To the credit of the good people of the place be it said, that the congratulations showered upon Alice were as sincere as they were hearty; if any were false and hollow, they were from those to whose good or ill-will she was in a measure indifferent.

"What possessed you, Frederick," said Alice, after the company had departed, and they sat talking over the incidents of the evening, "to have these reports circulated of your falling in love abroad. I heard them all you may be sure—and then mys-

tifying everybody by making them believe that you were bringing home a foreign bride?"

"O," said Stanley, laughing heartily, "I knew that it would afford such food for gossip to particular friends of ours; and you cannot imagine, Alice, how often I have chuckled over 'The idea!' of Miss Gates when the truth came out. By the by, did you notice her when she first recognized you this evening? It was all that I could do to keep my countenance."

But little of interest remains of our story. Notwithstanding the general outcry against mothers-in-law, Stanley insisted that Mrs. Fortescue should make her home with them, and never had he occasion to regret he did so.

We need not speak of the happiness of Alice, nor of the pride of her husband, when she saw with what graceful dignity she took her place in the circle to which her marriage with him had introduced her. To his dying day Frederick Stanley will bless the chance that brought about his acquaintance with the sewing girl and the fair singer; while Alice gratefully acknowledged that the change of fortune which compelled her to rely on her own exertions for a livelihood, has proved to her the greatest blessing that could have happened.

How Matsell was Trapped.

Speaking of Mr. M. brings to my mind another little story in which he figures, and which is told by the New York Sun as follows:

Mr. Seth Geer, who resides at the St. Charles Hotel on Broadway, is an old railroad man. In 1852 he was conductor on the New York and Erie railroad, now known as the Erie Railway. It was his duty to take the night express from Binghamton to New York. On one occasion he visited Elmira to see some friends, and returned by the night express to Binghamton as a deadhead. In those days there were no sleeping cars. When he entered the car he found two passengers to every seat except one. On that a stoutheaded gentleman was seated, with his leg up.

"I think there is room for another here," said Mr. Geer, pointing toward the part of the seat occupied by the passenger's leg.

"The passenger glanced at the speaker a moment, and then went on talking to two gentlemen behind him in an utterly unconcerned way.

"I'll trouble you to move your leg, sir," said Mr. Geer to the passenger, at the same time making as though he was going to sit down.

"This seat's engaged," said the passenger.

"I don't see that," said Mr. Geer, who wanted a seat badly.

"I tell you," replied the passenger, "I've got tickets for two seats, and you can't sit here."

"O, if you've got two tickets," Mr. Geer said, "that is another matter," and forthwith he retired.

When the train reached Binghamton, Seth Geer took charge, and put on his official coat and hat.

"Say, Jake," he said to the conductor who was about to retire, "who is that man seated there with his leg on the cushion?"

"Why, don't you know him?" was the reply. "That is Matsell, the Chief of the New York police."

Seth gave a low whistle, and for the next ten minutes a queer smile was on his face. A quarter of an hour after the train left the depot Seth went round to look after his charge. When he came to Chief Matsell, the latter handed up one ticket.

"The other ticket, please," said Seth.

"What other ticket?" the chief exclaimed.

"You told me a short time ago that you had a right to occupy two seats, as you held two tickets," Seth replied.

"Told—you—what?" asked Chief Matsell, slowly, staring at the conductor.

"When I wanted to sit down here some two hours ago, you said I couldn't do it, as you held two tickets. It is my duty to collect two tickets, and I want the other ticket, please."

Chief Matsell looked at Seth from top to toe, and then hauling out his pocket-book, said:

"I guess I'll surrender. What's to pay?"

"Four dollars and fifty cents," was the reply.

A Saving Clause.

English papers tell this story of a lawyer's clerk and the young lady who would fain have sued him for breach of promise. He had paid his addresses chiefly by letter, and in the most tender and poetic strain, to a pretty girl, who, when his affection grew less, was too prudent and energetic not to demand golden comfort for her wounded heart. Her lawyer heard her case with pleasant anticipations of a diabolical but, alas! when he examined the love-letters of the lawyer's clerk, he found his client was put by them entirely out of court. The ingenious young man had invariably signed himself, "Believe me, my own dearest, divinest, dullest Angelina, your fondest, most devoted (but without prejudice) Tommy." The legal phrase, which the gentle Angelina didn't understand, had saved him.