

Literature, &c.

THE ELOPEMENT:

OR, THE MERCENARY MARRIAGE.

We must return to Mr and Mrs Courtenay, who quietly seated by an open window, were quietly partaking of the repast which had been provided for them by our host, and enjoying the coolness of the breeze, which breathed upon them, as the bride expressed it,

'Like gales from Eden's bowers.'

Notwithstanding her recent alarm, Mrs Courtenay soon regained her wonted composure, and tried to look very interesting; indeed, she so won upon Henry that he began to think that, after all, she was not so very ugly; there were many worse; and then she was so agreeable, and so very rich. The image of the fascinating Emily gradually faded from his imagination, and his mind was occupied with dreams of a splendid equipage, a fine stud of horses, an elegant mansion, &c., while the bride gazed in admiration at his handsome countenance, and felt quite sure that he was the sweetest, dearest, kindest, and best creature in the world. A thousand expressions passed between them, which did not fail to sweeten their repast, and the bride improved so much, in her superlatively excellent husband's opinion, that he was beginning to discover that she was really pretty and infinitely superior in many respects to Emily, when the sound of a soft voice struck upon his ear. Why that voice should disturb him we cannot say, but it is, nevertheless, true that its melody seemed to produce no common effect upon him. It was the voice of the beautiful bride who had a short time before excited his admiration.

Leaning upon the arm of her husband, Emily (for she it was) approached the window where they sat, and, without perceiving them, continued to converse with him in a lively strain. When they were close to the window, she stopped to point out to him the beauties of the evening.

The tinted sky, the setting sun, surrounded by gorgeous clouds, attracted her eye, and she warmly expressed her admiration of them.

'It is certainly a glorious sight, my beloved one,' said the bridegroom; 'but even though the sky were dark and lowering, your presence would shed brightness and beauty around. Forgive me, if I invest a sublunary object with so much beauty that I am incapable of participating in your admiration of celestial ones. But I fear you are fatigued, dearest. I am afraid our hurried journey has been too much for your strength.'

'Fatigued!' exclaimed the bride, in a sweet, gay tone: 'oh, no! I cannot feel fatigued when you are near me, and when I feel so very, very happy.'

'Are you, then, so very happy?' asked the bridegroom, pressing the hand he held in his own.

A smile was the reply, but Courtenay did not see the smile, for they were turned from the window, and that tiresome veil still concealed the countenance from his view, but he knew that love has a language deeper than words, and, as he saw the exulting, yet tender, glance the bridegroom gave in return, he almost envied him the affection of so apparently a lovely creature.

A moment more, and the speakers, entering the house, came, without ceremony, into the room where Mr and Mrs Courtenay sat.

Fitzroy started on observing that the room was occupied, and apologizing for their intrusion, was hastily retiring, when Courtenay rose and expressed his pleasure at meeting with what he conjectured must be agreeable company in a strange place, and begged they would remain till some refreshments had been prepared for them.

Fitzroy cheerfully accepted the invitation, and, leaving his bride with them, went out to order supper.

Courtenay handed the lady to a seat. Her veil was carelessly thrown back, and her face, in loveliness and beauty he beheld Emily Stanhope. He started as he encountered a triumphant glance from her bright eye.

'Emily!' he exclaimed, in amazement.

'Oh! Mr Courtenay,' said Emily, gaily, 'I am happy to see you. Well, really, how fortunate to meet here. Is it not strange that we should fix upon the same day as the happy one? Had you a pleasant journey?'

Courtenay was, probably, dreaming, for he did not reply to the question.

'How strange!' muttered he to himself; 'Emily, we have both been deceived.'

'This is an illusive world, Mr Cour-

tenay,' said Emily, philosophically, 'but I am sorry that you have proved it to be so.'

Courtenay frowned and coughed. 'I did not expect to see you here, Emily; I mean Miss Stanhope—I beg your pardon, Mrs —'

'Fitzroy,' said Emily, pitying his embarrassment, yet unwilling to relieve it. 'Well, it was quite to gratify a caprice we came here; we thought we should have more enjoyment in this retirement than amid the splendours of a public marriage, and every place is alike when we are in the society of those we love. Do you not think so, Mr Courtenay?'

'Oh! certainly, certainly; yes; at least I should suppose so,' said Courtenay, doubly embarrassed.

'You suppose so! Oh! you have told me so a thousand times in days of old, but perhaps you do not feel now as you did then. Well, it is not to be expected. Early feelings will decay. In fact, I really believe, that, at life's first opening we live in a world of dreamy imaginations, and draw pictures which can or never ought never to be realized. It is necessary that we should wake from these delusions—necessary both for our happiness and prosperity. Have you not found it so, Courtenay?'

'Perhaps so—that is—yes—well, no—I cannot say.'

'I long to introduce you to Mr Fitzroy. I am sure you will like him. He is generally beloved and esteemed, and no person can be more worthy of esteem than he is, but you must judge for yourself, of course; I do not speak impartially.'

Of course not; to be sure, it must be expected that you would feel his worth more than any one else, and view him as something superior to any one else.'

'Oh! infinitely,' exclaimed Emily, 'so different to the flattering, empty-minded, capricious, vain creatures we often meet with among our acquaintances.'

Courtenay frowned, blushed, coughed, nay, we even believe he blushed from embarrassment. He glanced at his bride, who was listening in surprise to this conversation, and we are sorry to say he was guilty of the sin of drawing a comparison between the two rather to her disadvantage. Emily, certainly, never looked better than at this moment. Excitement had lit up her eyes with an unusual lustre, and her cheek glowed with a bewitching brightness, and the beautiful smile that played upon her features, mingled with an expression of triumph, added to the brilliancy of her countenance.

At this moment Fitzroy entered the room. 'My dearest Frederick,' said Emily, gaily, 'I have met with an old acquaintance of mine, whom I have the pleasure of introducing to you. Mr Courtenay, Mr Fitzroy.'

Courtenay bowed stiffly and awkwardly, as Emily thought.

'Really, Mr Courtenay, you are getting very inattentive,' said Emily, laughingly, 'you have never introduced me to your lady.' 'Mrs Courtenay, I presume,' said she, presenting her hand with such an inimitable grace. It was accepted by the lady, who could not refrain from casting enquiring glances now and then at her husband. We do not say that she was actually jealous of the admiration with which he appeared to regard Emily, but certain it is that she began to feel rather tired, and her head began to ache, and numberless other symptoms appeared, which led Emily to conclude, that her presence was far from agreeable to Mrs Courtenay, and she was therefore sorry when the waiter, entered to tell them that supper was waiting in another room.

Fitzroy politely requested the favour of their company to supper, but this compliment was as politely declined. Emily rose to leave the room, with her husband. Courtenay started from his seat and grasped her hand. 'Heaven bless you, Emily,' whispered he, emphatically.

'I am obliged to you for your good wishes, Mr Courtenay,' said Emily, 'and I sincerely wish you every happiness.'

'Ineffectual wish, dearest Emily, since you are lost to me for ever.'

Emily started, she stopped to hear no more, but, grasping Fitzroy's arm, hastily left the room.

The morning dawned. All nature looked bright. With a light step and lighter heart, Emily followed Fitzroy to the carriage which was to convey them home.

They were seated in the carriage before they perceived Courtenay, who standing at a window, was watching their every movement with apparent interest. Emily waved her hand as a farewell, and the compliment was returned by a melan-

choly smile and languid move from Courtenay.

The postilion mounted; they set off at full speed, and in a few moments Emily was lost to the sight of her mortified and repentant lover.

We will leave Mr and Mrs Courtenay to themselves, we have no right to pry into their concerns; but we imagine many a happier honeymoon than theirs has succeeded a Gretna Green marriage. But we need not draw a veil over the face of Fitzroy and his beautiful bride did time allow us to enlarge upon it, for, like all other unions where mutual confidence and esteem exist, it proved a happy and a blissful one.

The joy of Mr Stanhope, on seeing his dear children, can be better imagined than described. Tears of joy ran down his cheeks as he imprinted a father's kiss upon Emily's cheek, and welcomed the amiable Fitzroy as the son of his love; yet, his brow became clouded as he reflected that he should part with his Emily; she who had been the prop of his declining years; she who had been his pride his joy, his all.

'And will you leave me, then, my dear children?' said the old man, in a faltering voice. 'Must we then part?'

'No, my dear sir,' said Fitzroy, taking his aged hand affectionately, 'you must go with us and share our happiness.'

'And leave my favorite abode, my old haunts, my faithful domestics. Oh! no, no, I must live and die here.'

'Bring your servants all with you,' said Fitzroy.

'Bless you! bless you!' said the old man, the tears trickling down his venerable cheeks, 'I feel your kindness, but I cannot leave my early home. It would break my heart. But Emily and you will often come and see me, and stop a while with me, to gladden my last days, will you not?'

'We will never leave you, my dear sir, if Emily is as willing to remain here as I am. She shall yet be your soother, and rejoice your heart while you are spared to us, which, Heaven grant, may be long. What say you, my Emily?'

Emily was overcome with emotion, and, taking a hand of each, her eyes beaming tenderly on Fitzroy, she said; 'Oh! let nothing but death part us. I shall be so happy to have my dear Frederick, my dear father, the same sweet home. Earth could not bestow more felicity, Dearest Fitzroy, how indulgent you are. How can I thank you for your kindness?'

'I want no thanks, my beloved Emily. Did I not promise that your will should be my law?'

'Beware what you say or promise, Frederick,' said Emily, laughing, 'I may prove tyrannical.'

'And what tyranny so sweet as the tyranny of love? what fetters so enchanting as thine?' whispered Fitzroy. 'But, as you promised to obey, I must request that you will leave papa for a few days, and go with me to M—— to make the necessary arrangements for my removal, and to meet a host of kind friends who are waiting your arrival impatiently, for I promised to bring my bride to my country villa on our return. Oh! if my dear parents had been living, how gladly would they have welcomed so lovely a daughter to their home and hearts. But, doubtless, they are even now witnessing and rejoicing at our felicity, and will watch over us as guardian angels protecting us from evil and danger. But I have an uncle, Emily, whom I have not mentioned to you before. We must visit him on our journey. I am sure you will like him, and no less sure that he will be very apt, by his kindness, to spoil you, and perhaps make you prove refractory to my will.'

'A very natural consequence, certainly; but do not blame me if it should be so, for I warned you of my selfwill. Papa knows I am spoiled already. Do you not, papa?'

'Spoiled! Yes, she is one of the dearest but most self-willed creatures in existence, and, what makes it worse, she bends you to her will. I never could refuse her anything she asked me. She accompanies all her requests with so pretty a smile, as her poor dear mamma used to do. Oh! the influence of a wife, Fitzroy, I defy you to resist it. And as for that girl, I have a good deal of resolution, but I never could manage her, young as she is, the little syren.'

'Oh Fitzroy,' said Emily, archly, 'you do not know what a task you have undertaken; but I will promise to be very good. Now, what must I do first?'

'Why, make preparations for another journey, and prepare to look irresistible and charm the hearts of our country friends, for I have given them such an exalted description of my fairy nymph

that they will expect to find you a perfect prodigy of perfection.'

'Well I will look as bewitching as I can to please you, though the effect may be rather dangerous, specially in your uncle's case; but I will obey, only I demand three days to prepare to make my appearance as a sylph. Nay, now, not a word, I must fly. Adieu! Am I not a good, obedient creature?'

So saying, the light-hearted bride left the room to commence her preparations for entering into new scenes and new enjoyments.

In a few days the happy pair, after a tender farewell and many blessings from Mr. Stanhope, set out upon their journey.

Emily was received most cordially by her husband's friends, for he was generally beloved, and, independently of this, Emily's appearance and manners were calculated to excite interest and admiration in the mind of every beholder. They stayed but a short at M—— but even that time she had so ingratiated herself into their favour that many a sigh was breathed, when the moment of their departure arrived, from those friendly hearts.

The hearty welcome they received from Fitzroy's venerable uncle was exceedingly gratifying to Emily, and, during the short visit they paid to him, she had every reason to feel that Frederick's choice was approved of by his nearest living relative; and how pleasing must it be to a young bride to perceive that she can claim the affection of those who are dear to him, the chosen of her heart.

Words would fail to express the enthusiasm with which they were greeted on their return to their paternal home. The old domestics crowded about Emily and overpowered her with their prayers and blessings; nor did the liberty with which Fitzroy treated them tend to diminish their happiness in finding 'that their dear, sweet, kind young lady had come home for good.'

Emily was soon visited by her numerous acquaintances, who all expressed their pleasure at seeing her united to one so eminently qualified to make her happy.

Many bright, happy years rolled over: Time did not tend in any degree to lessen the measure of bliss which sprang from a true and devoted affection. But life must have its sorrows, and a few years after their marriage Fitzroy was called to attend the dying hours of his excellent uncle, who full of years and full of honours was departing from earthly scenes. He arrived just in time to sooth his latest moments and receive his last, his fervent blessing. After consigning his remains with all due respect to the tomb of his ancestors, Fitzroy returned to sooth that bosom which he knew would mourn the loss of one so valued and so loved.

On opening the old gentleman's will, it was found that he had bequeathed the bulk of his large property to Fitzroy, thus placing him in circumstances of extreme affluence. Emily rejoiced at her beloved husband's prosperity, but felt that wealth could not increase a happiness like theirs. Mr. Stanhope lived long to witness their bliss, and had the happiness of bestowing a grandfather's blessing upon Fitzroy's heir, who was named after him. But we must say 'farewell' to this amiable family, and bestow a parting glance at Mr. and Mrs. Courtenay.

Who can imagine the disappointment and vexation of Henry, when, on arriving at London, it was announced to him that Mr. L—— had determined never to see either of them again; that he had disinherited his daughter, and settled his personal and landed property upon a distant relation, one whom Henry had always abhorred; that all attempts to alter his resolution would prove fruitless and unavailing, as he was positively determined not to bestow his hardly acquired wealth upon a worthless fortune hunter.

Eliza knew her father too well to hope for any change in his resolutions or sentiments, but she bore the disappointment much more patiently than Henry, who could not refrain from giving loose to bitter invectives both against her and her father; which did not fail to undeceive the bride as to his real motives in marrying her and to degrade him sensibly in her opinion.

The rage of Henry knew no bounds. He had made himself sure of a reconciliation upon their return; had not dreamed of any thing else, but had been bringing before his mind's eye in retrospective gaze all the luxuries of wealth; not the pleasure of sharing it with his wife, for he was one of those selfish beings who live but for their own gratification, nor think for a moment of the hap-