

## Literature, &amp;c.

From the London Metropolitan.  
ACTING UPON SUSPICION.

A STORY.  
By Mrs. Abby.

'I have often thought that I could make a very amusing volume upon the serious and comic consequences of acting upon suspicion.'—*Memoirs of Charles Matthews.*

Mr STANFIELD, of Elbury Hall, married his first cousin. Many objections have been made to such matches, but, in Mr Stanfield's case, the result was marvellously satisfactory. Mrs Stanfield was very like her husband in person, more so in mind, and most of all in temper and habits. Her twenty thousand pounds in the funds made an agreeable addition to his two thousand a year landed property; they neither of them liked London; they neither of them required, or fancied they required, watering places; and they lived on their own acres, happy in themselves, and respected by others. Their house was not above half a mile from the populous and gossiping town of Westford, but even Miss Sowerby, the most scandal-loving and fault-seeking spinster of the place, could say nothing of the Stanfields than that 'they were imposed upon by their servants, duped by the poor and had a great deal too much good-nature to be burdened with much good sense.'

Mr and Mrs Stanfield had been married more than ten years before they had any prospect of a family, and quite in keeping with their usual character, although they had been very happy without a child, they prepared themselves to be still more happy with one.

The child was a daughter, and named Amelia. Miss Sowerby predicted it would die within a year, the apothecary of the village confided to a few chosen patients his opinion that it might live three years, and the father and mother deemed it such a prodigy, that they feared it would never live at all. However, at ten years of age, Amelia Stanfield was alive, and likely to live, although far from being healthy, and having very moderate claims to beauty. Intellect is sometimes thought to descend on the side of the mother, and sometimes on that of the father. In Amelia Stanfield's case, the point might be easily settled;—she had no right to the inheritance on either side, and, accordingly, she was the possessor of it.

It was considered that a governess would be very useful in developing the dormant intellectual organs of the young heiress, and here again Mrs Stanfield enjoyed wonderful good fortune. She took no pains about the business, and yet it was as thoroughly well done as if she had called in a committee of the conductresses of a dozen finishing schools to manage it for her.

Mrs. Stanfield did not advertise in the 'Times,' or even read the advertisements in it; she simply wrote a few lines to an old-fashioned acquaintance in Soho Square, saying that she wished to obtain a gentlewoman of competent attainments, good temper, sound principles, to undertake the education of her little girl, and the very next post informed her that Mrs Rivers awaited her pleasure. Mrs Rivers proved to be a young widow of five and twenty, who had married for love, and been rewarded by ill treatment and poverty. She was now obliged to exercise her talents for her subsistence; and as, although clever and well read, she could not sing like a *prima donna*, or draw like a Royal Academy artist, she felt inclined to accept a hundred a year, the care of a very backward, common place child, and a home with kind hearted, well meaning people, who literally fulfilled their promise of considering her as one of their own family.

A year passed on with great tranquillity.—Amelia's progress in knowledge, although slow, was sure. She was an affectionate child, and became truly attached to her governess. Mr and Mrs Stanfield respected and admired her; and although Miss Sowerby repeatedly made known her opinion that Mrs Rivers was far too handsome for a governess, the accusation fell harmless to the ground, for Mrs Rivers was propriety itself in manner and demeanor, and Mr Stanfield—whether from habit, taste, or principle, I do not pretend to say—considered that the whole regions of fancy and reality did not supply so delightful a person as his own wife.

This year of peace was closed by a melancholy event. Mrs Stanfield, after a short and severe illness, died, and her husband lamented her as deeply and truly as if she had been (what indeed

he always thought her) a marvel of attraction and excellence.

Miss Mitford says, 'There is no running away from a great grief,' and the observation is very true; but change of scene, although it may not cure our affliction, certainly diminishes its intensity. So thought the friends of Mr Stanfield. They persuaded him to travel; and although it was useless to mention France and Italy to so home keeping a personage, a tour through Wales and Scotland was of essential service to him.—He was accompanied by Mrs Rivers and his daughter. They staid a few weeks at each of the principal places they visited, and returned to Elbury Hall just a year after the death of its mistress.

The popularity of Mrs Rivers now drew to a close. Mr Stanfield was a rich widower; his spirits had recovered the death of his wife; he was tolerable well looking, not much turned of fifty, and deserved the epithets liberally showered upon him of 'so amiable, such a temper, such a heart,' &c. much better than the generality of persons do on whom they are bestowed. Many a lady, old and young, spinster and widow, felt herself inclined to become the second Mrs Stanfield; and happy would they have been to have any pretext for asserting that Mr Stanfield's servants wanted a mistress, that his daughter wanted a mistress, and that he himself wanted a companion. But alas! Mrs Rivers filled each and all of these characters, and filled them so admirably well, that it was very difficult to suggest any improvement in her discharge of the duties annexed to them.

Miss Sowerby was at the head of the love-lorn damsels pretending to the hand of Mr Stanfield. She had heard it said that persons generally become enamoured of those who are most the reverse of themselves in character, and consequently she imagined that Mr Stanfield, whom she always designated as 'mild to a fault,' would inevitably succumb to the fascinations of a shrew. Mr Stanfield, however, showed no symptoms of captivation, and the spinster changed her plan of attack—became soft and sentimental, talked of moonlight and poetry, and actually revived the practice of several of the songs of her youth. All, however, was in vain. She sang in a shrill and high-pitched voice, 'Dinna ask me why I love thee,' and 'I want those eyes to gaze on me;' but Mr Stanfield replied with the request of the first song, and disregarded that of the second, and compelled Mrs Rivers to sing Italian—a piece of absurd affectation; Miss Sowerby observed, since everybody knew he did not understand a word of it.' Miss Sowerby next endeavored to enlist Amelia on her side, but completely failed in her attempt. Children are not only good physiognomists, but are also, I may be allowed the expression, voice-fanciers, and they invariably shrink from a sharp, dogmatical tone. Miss Sowerby, too like most people, who are not naturally fond of children, had only one way in which she could talk to them—that of cross-examining them respecting their studies. Now Amelia had just begun to know enough to feel rather ashamed of not knowing more, and Miss Sowerby's anecdotes of 'little girls younger than herself who played the harp, sketched from nature, and studied German,' had not the effect of amusing or edifying but generally led her to steal to the side of the patient and judicious preceptress, who allowing for her early deficiencies, carefully watched the slowly opening bud of intellect, without attempting to force it open by premature development. Miss Sowerby, therefore, was obliged to relinquish the hope of gaining Amelia as an ally, saying to herself that 'the child was shockingly spoiled, and that no good could be done with her till Mrs Rivers was fairly out of the house.' How to get Mrs Rivers fairly or unfairly out of the house, appeared a difficult matter;—but none knew better than Miss Sowerby the power of scandal to wound and annoy, and she tried its effects in the present instance.

She called on every family in Westford, and expressed her opinion that it was highly incorrect that so remarkably handsome and attractive a young woman as Mrs Rivers should be domesticated in the family of a man in the prime of life, like Mr Stanfield, and that it was really the duty of some kind friend to represent to him the outrage he was committing on the established usages of society. Many of the ladies to whom she addressed herself were single, others had single daughters, sisters, or nieces, and all agreed that 'Mr Stanfield's conduct was perfectly horrible—that it would be a kind but very delicate office

to admonish him—and that nobody was so fit to undertake it as Miss Sowerby.

Miss Sowerby thanked her friends for their favorable opinion of her, professed her readiness on that and every other occasion to do anything, however repugnant to her own feelings, that might conduce to the good of others, and forthwith walked over to Elbury Hall, and requested a private interview with Mr Stanford.

Her host looked horror struck at her communication. The idea of either compromising the fame of the affectionate preceptress of his child, or dismissing her from his house, was equally distressing to him.

'I must have time to think of it,' said he, in a nervous, hurried tone.

But Miss Sowerby did not take the hint to depart. She turned over several volumes on the table, chose Mrs Opie's 'Detraction Displayed,' which she was wont to call a most excellent book, and very much wanted, since there was such an abundance of scandal in the world, and evidently prepared herself for a long study of its contents. Mr Stanfield, meanwhile, walked up and down the room for about ten minutes, much as if he were perambulating the quarter-deck of a ship, and then stopped short and spoke.

Mr Stanfield had but a small share of intellect, but it did for him what a much larger share often fails in doing for its possessor—it always came to his assistance when he most wanted it. He spoke without his usual nervous hesitation, and looked his 'fair foe' full in the face.

'I see the justice of what you say, Miss Sowerby,' he replied. 'I should be very sorry to give any room for censure, and I promise you that the cause of it shall soon cease to exist. I am very much occupied this morning, and beg you will excuse me for leaving you.'

Miss Sowerby excused him very readily;—she had gained her point, and returned to Westford in high spirits, praising Stanfield as 'the most persuasive man in the world, always ready to listen to reason.'

Two days afterwards, the inhabitants of Westford were surprised to hear that Mr Stanfield, Mrs Rivers, and Amelia, had gone to London—but Miss Sowerby easily accounted for it. 'Mr Stanfield was such a good creature, that doubtless he wished to consider the feelings of Mrs Rivers, by dismissing her from London rather than from Elbury Hall, where she had been so long domesticated.'

Mr Stanfield, however, was still more considerate of the feelings of Mrs Rivers than Miss Sowerby had supposed. Before the month was at an end, the newspapers announced the marriage of Mr Stanfield and Mrs Rivers, and the servants at Elbury Hall had received instructions to prepare everything for the reception of the bride and bridegroom.

The bells rang merrily, the wedding party were welcomed by children strewing flowers, the inhabitants of Westford were bountifully supplied with wedding cake, and returned the favour by duly paid morning visits. Some few disinterested people (solely, however, among the gentlemen) said that 'Mr Stanfield had done very well for himself,' and the judgment of the disinterested was, as it generally is, worth listening to. Mrs Rivers had not acted unwisely; she respected Mr Stanfield's excellence of character, and had an affectionate regard for his daughter; she had known the ill of poverty, and was thankful to be preserved from them in future; she resolved to recompense Mr Stanfield for his choice of her by making an excellent wife to himself, and a kind mother to his child, and she gave every indication of meaning to keep her word. Miss Sowerby was so enraged by Mr Stanfield's marriage, and so vexed with herself for having been the unintentional means of bringing it about, that she had almost resolved not to call on the bride and bridegroom, till she thought that she might probably do some mischief by going, and could do none by staying away.

She encountered the housekeeper in the hall, and addressed her in a tone of whining condolence on the subject of her new mistress: but the housekeeper would not submit to be pitied. 'Mrs Stanfield was a lady whom anybody might be happy to serve,' she replied; 'so very liberal in her ideas, and so very mild in her temper.' Miss Sowerby passed on without any rejoinder; she probably thought that satisfactory a report would not be given of herself by her maid of all work, whose complaints of scanty living were about on a par

with those of the inmates of the Westford poor house, and who had given to half the town a lively delineation of the fury of her mistress when she carried to her the tidings of Mr Stanfield's marriage—fury which, like that of Cleopatra on a similar occasion, could only find adequate vent in giving a box of the ear to the innocent messenger, thereby inducing the very natural assertion, 'I that do bring the news, made not the match?' Miss Sowerby was more successful in the drawing room; she made Mrs Stanfield look flushed by talking about dependants and mercenary marriages, and Mr Stanfield look pale by frequent allusion to the first poor dear Mrs Stanfield. A nobleman and his lady, who lived at some distance, were however, fortunately announced and the unaffected courtesy and attention restored the spirits of the bride and bridegroom, and left Miss Sowerby no alternative but that of stepping out from the French window on the lawn to join her 'dear young friend Amelia,' whom she had desecrated watering flowers in the garden.

Miss Sowerby attempted to make her dear young friend very unhappy by enlarging on the miseries in store for her, but Amelia was unaffectedly and warmly glad of her father's marriage. Mr Stanfield, in fact, had married principally for the sake of his daughter. I know this assertion is often made by fathers when introducing to their house and hearth a virago at whose first searching eye-beam the little trembler destined to receive her tender mercies quails in well founded horror of its future doom. The present case, however, was widely different; Mr Stanfield really meant what he said, and really effected the object at which he aimed, and Amelia's answer to Miss Sowerby's remark did credit to her grateful and affectionate disposition.

'I always loved Mrs Rivers dearly,' said she; 'and it would be strange if I were to love her less now that she is papa's wife.'

'It is to be hoped, Amelia,' said Miss Sowerby, clasping her hands and looking up theatrically to the skies, 'that your poor dear mother knows nothing of this terrible business.'

'I am sure if she did,' rejoined Amelia, 'she would be very much pleased, for she often said how earnestly she hoped that Mrs Rivers would never leave me till I grew up.'

'Poor child,' said Miss Sowerby, applying her handkerchief to her eyes, 'you will grow up to no inheritance. I dare say your unprincipled stepmother will have a son to despoil you of your ancestral acres.'

'I do not know what ancestral acres are,' answered Amelia, 'but I should like to have a baby in the house of all things, and papa told me on his wedding day that he had made over to me all mamma's fortune, so I am never likely to be very poor; see, Miss Sowerby, what a beautiful nosegay I have gathered for you!'

The spinster, who always made it a rule never to refuse anything, took from the hands of the child a fragrant bouquet of roses and geraniums in return for the rue and wormwood which she had been unsuccessfully endeavoring to administer to her, and returned home, declaring that the domestic happiness of the Stanfields had too much of display in it to be lasting, and that Amelia was more spoiled, and a greater sunpleton than ever. The domestic happiness, however, of the newly married pair seemed to increase instead of diminishing; in fact, Mr Stanfield had never been so happy at any other period of his existence; the good fortune to which I have alluded as his lot through life, shone brighter instead of growing dimmer, and although he was perfectly satisfied with his first choice, he had still more reason to congratulate himself upon his second. His present lady had all the sweetness and mildness of disposition possessed by the former, adding to it that she wanted, a strong cultivated mind. Mr Stanfield was not clever himself, but he could judge of cleverness in another, just as a person without musical knowledge can judge of the style of a first-rate singer, unable to appreciate every little ornament, but admiring the general effect of it, and feeling that it is different to the performances of ordinary people. The intellect of his wife gave him consequence in society, and was accompanied by so much good feeling, that she never assumed superiority over him on that account, and she was rewarded by his devoted and grateful affection.

My readers will suppose that Mrs Stanfield, thus idolized by her husband must have attained the summit of human