

Literature, &c.

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THE MARRIED LIFE OF A GOOD
FELLOW.

A STORY WITH A MORAL.

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CHAPTER I.

FRIENDS.

HENRY PRICE was what the world, or a certain part of it, call by the rather ambiguous designation of a 'good fellow.' He held a good hand at whist, and a good cue, was a capital whip, and carried at his tongue's end the pedigree of all the blood horses on the course. He was a fair theatrical critic, and passed for a better—was prompt and dashing in his business operations, and rough, frank and cheerful in his ordinary demeanor. He was a universal favorite with all the fashionable 'huzzar boys,' young men about town, and the admiration of all the fashionable young women. But Henry in this rough exterior did not put his best side out. There was 'more of him' than his rattle-headed male friends suspected, and more penetration in his glance than the superficial misses, who spread their toils for him in vain, suspected. He tired of the heartlessness of fashionable bachelorism—saw the ruinous folly of fashionable extravagance, and resolved to get married, and abjuring the follies miscalled pleasures, to be domestic and happy, the comforter and comforted of a good, little, unpretending and modest woman of a wife. It is easier to get entangled with 'good fellows' than to get clear of them. Harry performed the first part of his resolution, and made a good commencement at the rest. It was a great pity that it was only a commencement—but we must not anticipate our story.

Fanny Price was the gentlest of the gentle; her husband—for some of his eccentric bachelor affectations had become habits, not readily to be shaken off—was the rudest of the rude. Fanny was rather inclined to be silent and thoughtful—Harry was reckless and noisy. Her taste in dress was the modest and simply becoming—he affected the flashy and exaggerated. She seemed a graceful child—he was rough as a satyr. It is strange that such apparent contradictions often meet, but when they do, and are let alone, one is an excellent corrective of the other. Fanny was already gaining in becoming confidence, and Harry in becoming modesty—she was losing a little of her over-precision, and he gaining a touch more of humanity in his appearance, when his 'good fellow' friends took the alarm. He had disappeared from the billiard room. He had disappeared from the no more game suppers. He absolutely did not know the next entries for the Beacon course, and had positively declined to officiate as a 'gentleman of the audience' to throw a wreath of bouquets upon the stage to the honor of a fashionable dancer. His wife was spoiling him, and his wife—defend us from such!—were resolved to prevent it.

The good fellows lauded him as the perfection of all that was good in spirit or chivalric in nature. His rudeness was with them open frankness, and his uncouthness was manly behavior. He passed current among the male world as an extraordinary, heroic, substantial and noble fellow; and the women were taught to give in their adhesion to this opinion or to let it pass without contradiction. The praise of poor Fanny's opposite in every point, of course involved something very like censure of Fanny herself; and she was deemed a delicate milkmaid—a pretty torment, who was altogether unfit for her noble husband, and rather a clog upon his enterprises and a bar to his happiness. The commiseration which poor Fanny really deserved Harry received, while his gentle and retiring wife was regarded with a species of humane contempt. She was pretty and kind, people said—what a pity that she was so useless! What a sad thing it was for Harry Price that he was so unequally yoked with a mere delicate trifler of a woman, without ambition and without a character; a person who could never aid him in the world, but would serve only to make his children, by her effeminate example and instructions, as useless and insignificant in the world as herself.

It was a great mystery to those who know Harry's character and his household affairs well enough to be apprised of the circumstance—it was a great mystery to such that, despite of his apparent rudeness and uncouth behaviour, Harry dearly loved his wife! She had, it was perceived, notwithstanding the affected (and perhaps real) contempt for petticoat government which he once expressed, an immense influence over him. She could lead the lion with a silken thread. A few knew that this thread was love, and wondered at Harry's weakness. Others, and these the great majority, said she was an artful minx with all her silliness, and that she studied and labored to keep her husband as useless and impotent as she was herself—and that she succeeded too well in all her endeavors. She managed somehow or other to monopolize all his leisure, poor fellow, and to maintain herself at most a continual spy upon his actions and damper upon his hilarity.

When Harry's bachelor friends and his less obedient married ones were so lucky as to surprise him out of the care of his keeper, they welcomed him with a noise and clamor of the true reason of which he was partially aware. They regarded him as an escaped school-boy, or a transiently manumitted prisoner, whom it

was their duty to cheer and encourage by giving him that enjoyment of which he was unfortunately debarred by his disastrous marriage connection. They pressed upon him all sorts of equivocal and forbidden pleasures, and pushed him into frolics of dissipation and acts of unlicensed and worse than unprofitable diversion which gave him no enjoyment, whatever delight he might counterfeit and whatever appearance of pleasure he might assume. They shamed him into doing violence to his inclinations, and into submitting to their evil directions and following their bad examples, by artful general sneers at milk sops, and laughter at the effeminate twattle of woman's counsel. They knew better how to lead into temptation than to be so impolitic as to make any particular application of their invidious, but laughed at the whole gentle sex and all 'innocent men,' as if each of them were exposed to the same restraining influences that Harry felt in his heart that he was. He was thus the more readily induced to set his former determination aside and to resolve manfully to put upon string bonds of defiance, as his friends did.

The gentle wife could not avoid perceiving that some bad influence was at work upon her husband, and that he preferred or seemed to prefer other attractions over those of his home. She could not tell to what precisely to attribute this, and carefully and rigidly examined her own thoughts and conduct to discover if she had been deficient in duty or in attention—if she had failed in any measure to keep up the respect and love which she was sure he had once felt for her, but which she saw or fancied she saw, with poignant regret, he felt no more. Oh, painful, terribly painful, is such a discovery to a young wife's heart when it is forced upon her! To find that the support upon which she had counted to lean through life is grudgingly permitted to her—to suspect that the mutual love and esteem upon which the happiness of the married state is based, is becoming diminished—to have the conviction brought home by her husband's demeanor—nay, perhaps, by his distinct declaration, that the scanty companionship which he once sought and courted he now merely tolerates and endures—this is a state of unhappiness which is worse than poverty and misery shared and alleviated by affection. It leaves life to the wife a blank, and taking away all the earthly reward of her performance of her duty, at length makes that duty, once a pleasure, a burden. But hope, a deeper principle in the weaker than in the stronger sex, sustains many an unhappy wife in the patient performance of her vows to her husband, who has utterly forgotten his.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH YEARS ROLL ON.

Fanny had, in the care of her household affairs, some solace in her abandonment. We say abandonment, for such is the state of the wife, often when the world knows nothing of it, for the reason that the husband with tolerable punctuality repairs to his home for his food and rest, as he would to any other boarding house. When she who should be the partner of all his joys and his cares becomes to him a person of less respect than a landlady would be; and the confidence he should bestow upon her is wholly withdrawn, except so far as he rudely visits the consequences of his misfortunes upon her, without permitting her to participate in his hopes, to know his plans or to share his success, in any other way than in the incidental effect upon his demeanor towards her: when his pleasures are not only such as she cannot participate in, but are subjects upon which he absolutely resents her expression of interest and curiosity—what is such a state as this better than abandonment?

It is worse. The utterly and avowedly deserted wife has only the past to lament, and the bitterness of her thoughts is relieved by the kindness and sympathy of friends, who endeavor to alleviate her present distress and guard against her future sorrow. She resigns the faithless runaway, and strives to dismiss him from her thoughts, and to seek comfort in other ties and associations. But the poor woman who lives in the continual dread of a domestic tyrant, who has no sympathy with her thoughts and no regard for her kindness, who catches her only pleasure from the unintentional reflection of his selfish happiness, and the complacency which he exhibits in his unthankful enjoyment; who feels in his absence the affectionate and unavoidable pain of a wife unjustly despised and neglected for other companions, and for enjoyments in which she has no participation, not even by report; and who suffers in his presence the slavish despotism of love unrequited, and the fear that some unintentional offence, or unwitting neglect of her's may still farther estrange him, is not such a state as this—of love unrequited, conscious of no fault, yet doubting the excellence of her own domestic virtues—and her own claims upon her tyrant's favor—worse than desertion? Is it not worse than widowhood? Oh, let us say no more of the Moslem while in a christian land such a state of domestic misery may exist, and the wrong-doer be the favorite of society, while his wife is considered the bar to his happiness, and all the world cries 'what a pity that such a good fellow should be so unequally yoked!'

Thus Fanny Price lived on for many years till the trusting romance of her own heart was withered. As she played the hypocrite in public—or that is too strong a word—as she acknowledged with gratitude and real pleasure, the attentions which common politeness of her husband before witnesses; and as she affectionately concealed his faults, avoided allusion to his defects, and even praised to others such excellences of character as he possessed—in brief, as she (as women will) boasted of her husband, while her heart was aching, so she

fancied all did. She learned to suspect behind every wife's happy smile the creaker of secret sorrow and to believe that her's was the common and inevitable lot of woman. She lived for her family, silently and laboriously, doing good to her ungrateful husband and devoting her whole life to the education of her children in the fear and love of God, and in respect and veneration for their father. The latter was no easy task, as many a patient wife can testify. Precept is powerless indeed when unsupported by example, and painfully is a woman's heart wrung when, in answer to her cautions against fault and folly, or even sin, the little pupil exclaims—'why father does it?'—or when inculcating a positive duty, she is met by inquiry from the little observant scholar, 'If it is right why does not father do it?' What shall the mother do? Which must she sacrifice—the Father in Heaven, or the father on earth? Nothing but woman's tact can at all reconcile the difficulties of such a trial—nothing but woman's patience can persevere till even a child is taught to love the father and respect him despite his faults! and how very many fathers thus impose upon their wives a task so fearful, and chide them if they do not succeed in educating their children correctly, despite their own bad examples.

And latterly a new cause of anxiety had been added to her misery. She saw in the unsteady hand, and in the increasing grossness of the mind and person of her husband, that he was falling into courses which must result in his ruin; and although she labored as directly as she dared to arrest him in his downward course, the only result of her efforts was the heart-sickening discovery that what influence she might have once possessed was now entirely lost she was no more ashamed of his folly and wickedness before the purity of his wife and children, and introduced visitors to his house and topics into his conversation which made his gentle wife's heart ache on account of their evil example and influence. He spoke lightly of faults and crimes which Fanny had taught her children to regard with horror; and, at last, lost even the external redeeming characteristics of the gentlemanly tone.

'Can these things be?' asked Fanny of herself one night, as she sat alone in her sitting room, having just attended to the devotions of her children and puzzled herself in answering their troublesome questions about duty and their father, with 'your parents do not always do as they ought, though we strive to do our duty. You must imitate us in what we do right, not in what we do wrong.'

'Who punishes you when you do wrong?' asked Fanny the second child, a girl six years of age.

'God punishes us.'

'And will God punish father for drinking too much wine and saying wicked words, if he don't do so any more?'

It was too much for the mother, and she turned the little one off, but heard their voices in debate as they went up stairs. 'Can these things be?' she said, as she reviewed her married life, opening but a few years before with the promise of so much happiness. It was the anniversary of her wedding. The faded and worn-racked furniture about her, unrequited by a man who cared nothing for his household, was eloquent of bitter memories and suggestive of painful reflections. The children were often, as they had been to-night, the innocent causes of new pain to her; and she deeply felt how dreadful a thing it is to have a bad example continually before your offspring, against which you cannot warn them without impressing upon them the fact that their father, whom you would gladly teach them to respect and honor, is unworthy of such sentiments, even from his children.

The father entered at, for him, this unusually early hour. She looked up in some anxiety, and as he bade her good night in a kind tone, her face lighted up with the smile of former days.

'It is our wedding day, Fanny, and I thought you might like to have me at tea with you. I seldom drink tea you know, but you women like it, and I fancied my presence to-night would improve the flavor.'

Oh, silly, fond Fanny! Indefinite years of returning happiness danced before her imagination, as she rang up the maid and moved about in preparation for a trifle which was to her an event. And he had really then not forgotten her! He remembered as well as she the anniversary. And she might—who knew?—even win him back to home and peace. He watched her, perhaps with a sentiment of affection and regard, of patronage at least, as her graceful though careworn face and figure passed and repassed before him in glad employment. And when she had seated herself at the head of the quiet board, and he took his place opposite, he wondered an instant, if he had not been wrong after all in slighting a quiet and happy home like this for the noisy and guilty mirth of the haunts of folly.

Fanny was in elysium and when the tea was removed and her husband actually bestowed himself comfortably in his former favorite chair, as though prepared to spend the whole evening at home, she really scarcely knew how to trust her senses. It was like the return of an old friend or the renewal of an old friendship. Harry had not wasted so many words on her in as many years as he now spoke in a few hours; and by the provision of a few little delicacies, fruit and other refreshments, at a later period in the evening, she made the man feel comfortable—but a little—and a twinge of conscience visited him with the thought—a little like a stranger and a visitor in his own house.

The very servants noted the phenomena of a whole evening spent at home, and were asto-

nished and pleased. The children asked what kept mamma so long down stairs and stared open wide their sleepy eyes when they were told it was father. An aspect of cheerfulness seemed to have come over the whole household. The faded carpet, in Fanny's imagination resumed its pristine brightness, and the whole room, which at twilight had appeared so dull and gloomy, was now cheerful with pleasant associations, for as her own dear husband sat with her—the husband of her early love and choice—it seemed to her like a new and happier bridal chastened into sobriety by experience, and giving new and better hopes of the future, inasmuch as it held out no extravagant hopes.

Henry heard with apparent interest long accounts of the children's little lives and progress in their studies and pursuits, and even encouraged the garrulity of a mother upon a subject so near her heart by a multitude of questions—a thing unheard of in their household, for he had before barely tolerated their presence a few moments at a time, and checked conversation respecting them with hardly courteous abruptness. Was there ever such a change in a man's demeanor? Would it be permanent and continual? or was it to be but a gleam of sunshine amid her misery to mock Fanny with the contrast in her usually unhappy hours? She would not let these questions abate her happiness, but thanked heaven fervently for the joy she felt, and went to her rest with a peace and tranquillity of mind which had for weary years been strangers to her pillow.

CHAPTER III.

THE CRISIS.

When Fanny Price rose, on the morrow, it was many moments before she could persuade herself that the recollection of what had passed the evening before was not a deceitful dream mocking her sorrow. But circumstance after circumstance recalled the conversation she had held with her husband, the longest since her honeymoon, and it seemed to her as if the morning sun never so cheerfully lighted up the breakfast room before. She superintended with more than ordinary care the preparations for the morning repast, and hoped yet scarcely dared to hope, that her husband would come down with the same cheerful temper and smiling face which he wore on the evening previous. How cheaply might husbands make their wives always happy if they would!

And when on her return from the kitchen, after one of the many bustling and busy runs to and fro which she made that morning, she found her husband with the youngest of her three children upon his knees, and the other two, one at each elbow, listening with eyes and ears and open mouths to some diverting story which their father was telling them—now shouting interjections of incredulous surprise—now bursting into shouts of noisy laughter, she verily doubted her senses.

Breakfast passed, as breakfast had not for many a month passed before. Not an article upon the board was complained of by the husband—not a word of fault was found with the noise of the children, although, in the strange liberty in which they found themselves placed by the demeanor of their father, they were more than usually hilarious. Fanny could not think that the breakfast could possibly be entirely to her husband's satisfaction and attempted two or three apologies; but he ruled out excuses so pleasantly, and insisted with such cheerful apparent sincerity that every thing was all right and good enough, that she could scarcely trust her ears.

A still farther pleasure was in reserve for her. Harry actually introduced his business and prospects as a theme for conversation with her—with her! He who had hitherto frowned at the most distant question and suppressed the slightest expression of interest on her part, with the remark that women should attend to their children and households and keep within their proper province—a remark often surlily uttered—he had really himself brought forward the forbidden subject and asked her counsel! How could this change have come over him? Had some good angel whispered to him his duty to his wife, or had some kind friend of her's overpraised to her capacity to think and counsel. Had he tired of the hollow friendship of the world, or was he reminded by his own better nature of what he owed to the partner of his bosom?

As he proceeded any but an affectionate wife would have suspected that the exact and entire truth was intentionally withheld from her; for Fanny knew that her husband must be embarrassed in his business relations. But the worst that her heart, accused him of was, that from regard to his family he cheated himself into the hope and belief that matters were quite as well as he had represented them, and it that was through kindness he was making her the participant in the consoling and propitious circumstances which he found on reviewing his affairs.

'And now my dear,' he continued, as the hour approached when breakfast conferences usually terminate, 'you perceive that in a little time, I shall not have so much care and anxiety harassing me then I shall be able to wear the cheerful face at home which a husband ought.'

'And I shall be so happy, Harry! Oh, if you had only told me all this before, I could have alleviated your anxieties by sharing them, and I should not have been so miserable, with all your business and embarrassments upon my hands, unaided, as I have been in the doubt whether my husband had any affection for me or was utterly estranged.'

'I am very sorry, Fanny, that I have caused so much uneasiness. Now, we understand