

BEAUTY AND THE BARBER.

safe, paying business. In all her flirtations, and they were numerous, Miss Howson always took care for the contingency of the flirtation ending matrimonially, and, therefore, she seldom flirted with any but "eligible" parties. In the present case she had renewed an old flirtation with Johnson, on his return from England, but she had no intention of marrying him, and could better afford to break with him than with Morton, who was a great friend of her father's, and whom she really liked, altho' not able to persuade herself that she loved him enough to promise to become his wife when he asked the momentous question which she sometimes thought she could see trembling on his lips. The fact was Miss Howson fancied herself in love with some one else, and counted on Morton's help to gain her father's consent to her marriage, which she knew he would oppose; she, therefore, was anxious to keep on good terms with Morton, at least for the present, and Mr Johnson was doomed to be snubbed accordingly.

"You have made a mistake, Mr. Johnson," she said, "and labor under some misunderstanding. I made no engagement to go to the concert with you, for auntie and I promised long ago to go with Charlie. I said I hoped to meet you there, but I never led you to believe that I could go with you." She turned to Morton and said, "Sit down five minutes, Charlie, and I will get ready to go with you; pay excuse me, Mr. Johnson, we shall be late unless I hurry," and bowing slightly to that astonished gentleman she left the room.

Miss Moxton had retired some time before to don a very stiff looking bonnet and a wonderfully plain shawl, and the two gentlemen left together looked at each other for a moment, very much like two dogs who meet in the street and seem to be undecided whether to fight or not.

Johnson was more annoyed than he cared to show; he really liked Annie Howson, and had settled it in his own mind that he would marry her sometime when he had got tired of his bachelor life, and he did not at all relish the quiet way in which Mr. Morton seemed prepared to contest the prize with him. Of course, he knew that he had no positive engagement with Miss Howson about the concert, but he took the liberty of doubting Miss Howson's word, and did not believe that Morton had any engagement either, and Mr. Johnson chafed at what he considered a preference shown to his rival.

Morton walked to the piano and began softly practising the duet he was to have tried with Annie. Johnson stood by the centre-table turning over the leaves of a photograph album without looking at it; he was undecided whether it was best for him to go or remain until Annie returned, when the door opened and Julia Howson entered the room.

"Good evening Mr. Morton," she said with a merry smile crossing to Charlie and putting her arm familiarly on his shoulder, "I am ever so much obliged to you for those beautiful chessmen and board, they are just lovely; Annie says I am only wasting my time learning chess; what do you think, will I ever make a good player?"

"If you take time and have patience to learn, you might," replied Charlie, "but I am afraid you are too great a mackerel ever to em late Morphy or Staunton."

The girl pulled his ears playfully, she looked on Charlie as a big brother who humored and petted her, and she was rather proud of it. Noticing Johnson for the first time she spoke to him, and asked him carelessly if he was going to the concert.

Mr. Johnson looked a little annoyed, but recovering himself he said with a smile; "I haven't got anyone to go with me, you know, and my ma don't allow me to go to places of public amusement alone. If you would promise to take care of me, and your aunt doesn't object, appealing to Miss Moxton, who had just re-entered the room, "I should like to go. I have secured a couple of good seats, you know, and as the fellow says in the play 'the carriage waits.'"

Miss Julia was nothing loth to accept the offer, and after some persuasion Miss Moxton gave her consent, and the party started for the concert, Charlie, Miss Moxton and Annie in one carriage, Mr. Johnson and Julia in another.

(To be continued.)

I HAD just finished putting up my shutters; it was getting rather late—nearly ten o'clock, for I'd had a hard day's work of it, and no wonder; for it was the night of the Lord-Lieutenant's ball. We think a good deal of the Lord-Lieutenant down in Yorkshire; and when we get up a bit in the world, and get asked to his lordship's ball, we think a deal of ourselves; and, my word, some folks are a bit proud! Yes; that very day I had dressed the Miss Millikins' hair for the ball—pretty early, mind you, for I wouldn't put my old customers out of the way for any of your upstart people, seeing as I've dyed the hair of all the first families in Lydford, and my father before me, whereof no man knoweth to the contrary, as the lawyers say. Now, Millikin has drawn me many a gill of ale in the days when he kept the tap up Newsman's Yard, and has borrowed many a sixpence off me, too—not but what he was welcome to them, as I told his lordship, when he came to ask me for my vote for the Town Council. But that's neither here nor there. It isn't Millikin and such-like as I'd take the trouble to tell a story about. It were past nine, as I've told you, and I were putting up the shutters pretty smart, not being a thing I often do myself; but it so happened that night; and in another minute I should have been off to the White Horse, to meet one or two good fellows, who were in the habit of having a glass or two together of a night; but, as I was screwing up the bar of the shutters, what should I see drawing up to my door but a splendid carriage and two beautiful horses, all of a lather with sweat! Well, that put me about a bit, to think what a carriage should be doing at my door at this time of night; but I hadn't long to wonder, for a grave, tall, solemn-looking chap comes up to my door, and calls out, "Is Creecher here?"

"That's me," says I. "Oh, then," says he, "jump in," pointing with his finger to me to get up the steps of the carriage, where there was a tall flunky holding the door open for me. Well, that capped me still more. I've heard of things like that in story-books, and there's something very like it in the "Rabian Nights," where they seem to think a deal more of us barber chaps than they do in this country. But, then, this is a land of freedom. Well, as I were saying, this other chap kept motioning of me to get into the carriage; but, says I, "Master, where are you bound?"

"Oh, never you mind," says he; "you'll be well paid. Look sharp."

"But I'd like to beautify myself a bit," says I, "and I mun tell the missis."

With that he took up my hat, that was lying on the counter, and bangs it on my head, and pushes me into the carriage, and away we went before you could say "Jack Robinson." And away we went. Eh, but we did go rarely! It were a dark night, and frosty; and we soon got out of the lights of the town, and still the horses galloped on; and I could see the stars twinkling overhead; and then it grew colder all of a sudden, and the windows of the carriage were covered with ice in a minute, and I could see nought but the inside, where I were sitting with the strange man. And he said never a word. But still we galloped on; and, after a good bit, I heard the murmur and dash of a river hard by above the clatter of the hoofs, and we crossed a bridge, I think, for we went up and down for a minute, as if we had been in a swing. And then the sounds of hoofs died away altogether, as if the horses were galloping over gravel or soft turf; and presently the carriage stopped all of a sudden. A footman stood at the door; the silent man jumped out. "Stay there!" he cried as he went, with a gesture of authority—"stay there!" And there I stayed, for I were cowed-like with being carried off like that, and didn't know if my soul were my own. "What'll the old woman say, though?" I thought to myself. The carriage moved on a bit, and stopped again. "Now, then, my lad!" says the footman, opening the door.

But I weren't going to be ordered about by such cattle as he. Says I, "I'm on tily master's business, and, if thou doesn't speak respectful, I'll smite thee in the ear-hole." It's well to stand on your dignity with those chaps, you see.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," says the man more respectful; "but will you step into the house-keeper's room?"

And with that I fell off the high horse I'd been riding; for, to tell you the truth, I were thinking for a while I were perhaps rightful son of a lord as had been stolen in his youth, and that they were taking me home to the halls of my fathers, and happen were going to marry me to the daughter of the usurper, to make all square. But, says I, "I'll stick to the old woman." Not but what the flash is treacherous, and happen I'd have changed my mind when I'd seen the young one. But, however, all that was knocked on the head when I heard the flunky tell me to go up to the house-keeper's room. It were only a dressing job, after all!

Well, before I'd got well inside the door, an old chap dressed in black catches hold of me by the elbow. "Creecher?" says he; "Creecher?" "Yes, I'm Creecher," says I. "What's your pleasure?"

"Oh, you've come this way directly." And away we went along passages, and upstairs, and downstairs; and presently we came to a broad corridor beautifully carpeted, and the old man tapped at a door, and a young woman open it, and says she, "Is he here?" and the man says, "Yes." "Come in," she said;

"my lady will speak to you directly." And I went into a little room as was beautifully furnished with easy-chairs and sofas, and all the luxuries of the season.

"Well, my dear," says I to the maid, "and so your missis is going to the ball? But it'll be well nigh time to go home before she gets there."

"Hush!" she says, putting her finger to her lips; and then I began to think it was a death job as I had got on hand. I've had such jobs afore now when the corpse has been young, and with beautiful hair. Ah, and many a time my finger has itched; for, says I to myself, "It's a pity such a sight of beautiful hair should go down to the worms when it might be going on enjoying itself atop of some other young woman's head"—ah, and I could tell you a tale or two about that. But it wasn't a job of that kind I found, as I heard somebody moving in the next room, and such a soft little moan as it went to my heart to hear it—ay, lad. And then somebody came out—a tall, splendid lady, dressed in black satin, as haughty as a queen.

"Creecher," she says, "are you Creecher? Don't speak, but listen to what I tell you. A lady has had an accident—has been severely burned. Remedies have been applied—plasters, what not. Her hair—"

"I understand, my lady; you want me to take it off. I'll do it in a jiffy, if you'll lend me one of his lordship's razors, for I was that hurried when I came away, I left mine behind me. I've got my scissors and comb, my lady," says I, pulling them out; "because, as good luck would have it, I'd just out a chap's hair as was going to fight next—"

"Silence!" she says, "Creecher!" looking at me quite disgusted; and, beckoning the girl, she says, "Take the fire-shovel, and throw them things away." But I wasn't going to lose a good set of tools, so I claps 'em into my pocket, and buttons up my coat, and, says I, "Now your ladyship?" And she says, "Amélie, throw something over the wretch." And with that Amélie brought a white gown with sleeves as smelt as beautiful as a nosegay, and she wraps me up in it; and I caught a glimpse of myself in the glass, and, thinks I, "You might take me for person when he's agate at the Seven Commandments."

"Now," she says, "Creecher hold your tongue, and listen to me. Whatever happens, she must not lose her hair; you understand, it must be saved at all hazards. Now, come and do your duty."

Eh, but it were pitiful to see the poor lassie, half sitting, half lying, in a thing atween a easy-chair and couch. All her face was covered over but her eyes, and they seemed to burn. Such sad, pitiful eyes I never saw before nor since. She'd had beautiful long hair, that came down to her knees a'most; but, eh, it were in a tangle, all knotted, and twisted, and ravelled together with messes and poultices, and all kinds of things they'd put on her head. No, there wasn't a thread of it anywhere that wasn't bound up and twisted. Well, I looked at it, and I shook my head.

"My lady," says I, "it would take me twelve hours' hard work, without stopping, to unwind all that hair."

"Well, then," she says to me, "Why don't you begin?"

"But," says I, "your ladyship, do you know what twelve hours is, sitting up with a man pulling away at your tangled hairs? Why, my lady, I says, "I don't think as I could stand the job, as am hale and well; and as for the poor young lady there, wai, bless your heart, it would kill her."

But her ladyship took no notice of me. "Well," she says to the young lassie, "you hear what he says. Are you ready to begin?"

And the lassie gave a little sigh, a heart-breaking little sigh, and she says in a feeble little voice, "Go on."

"But," says I, for I wanted to have an excuse to be off the job, "I wouldn't do it under a hundred pounds."

"Oh," says she, "then you shall have a hundred guineas."

That was a temptation, mind you, to a chap as wasn't much beforehand in the world, and hadn't ever had as much as ten pounds in his pocket at once all his life. But I was sorry I took the job after all.

"I mun have my supper," I says, "first, and think about it."

"Ring, Amélie," she says to the maid, "and order up a tray."

And a bang-up supper I had in the little sitting-room: a chicken and champagne, or what they call a cure-or-so, out of a brown jug; but I didn't think much of that; and I'd sooner call it kill-or-so, if I were giving it a name, for eh! it did make my head sing above a bit, and I only took about a gill of it to see what it were like.

Well, when I'd done my supper, I were taken into the young lady's room, and I began the job. I took it up bit by bit, washed it in spirits of wine, combed it out hair by hair, and so I went on hour by hour. There was nought for it but patience and hard work. She seemed to doze a bit, the poor lass, ever and again; but work as gentle as I would, it must have given her a deal of pain. She'd sigh a little now and then, and give a little soft moan sometimes; but eh, she bore it all, all her weariness and pain, for all she suffering and trouble that were in her eyes—she bore it like an angel from heaven. The old woman sat beside us for an hour, till she got so sleepy she couldn't keep her eyes open; and then she beckons to the maid to come and sit in her place, and she goes off to her comfortable bed, I suppose; and by-and-by the maid goes fast asleep, and everything seemed asleep but me and the lassie. There wasn't a sound but the

wind sighing among the trees outside, and the murmur of the river falling over the weir.

Well, the job went on, and till as it went on the lassie seemed to grow weaker and weaker, and then a big awful fear came into my throat. She were dying under my hands.

Conscience says to me: "Joshua!" says she, "you're killing that nice fine young gal, you're killing her for a hundred guineas." "Hold thy tongue," I says, "It's no such thing. It's her mother's doing," says I. "If she be her mother, her breasts are as hard as adamant." But it were no use. Conscience was at me again. "Joshua!" she says, "it's you who are killing the poor lassie. If you were not at job, they could get nobody else to do it. Joshua, throw thy comb and scissors into the fire."

"A'm dommed if I don't, too!" says I, quite sudden-like, and I pitches my things into the fire-place with a clatter as I thought'd wake up the maid, but she slept too sound. "There goes a hundred guineas," says I. But now ye should ha' seen the look as crept o'er the lassie's face when she saw what I were about. Her great eyes softened and filled with tears, and she put out a little white hand out of the wraps, and I took it in mine, and says I: "My dear, do you care so much about your hair that you'd lose the beautiful life God Almighty's given you, and the sweet bright days that may follow?"

"Oh," but she says, "mother!"

"Mother be —!" Eh, I'm feared I said a bad word there. "Do you care?" says I—ay, just like that—"do you care?" says I. And she shook her head. Well, I picked up my scissors again, and in a jiffy all the beautiful hair was lying on the floor; and the poor head was dressed with soft dressing, and I'd waked the maid, and had her missis put to bed, right and tight, and then I gave her a kiss—yes, by — I did. I, Joshua Creecher, kissed the lady Felicia Felixstowe, ay, and I says God bless her, as if I'd been her father. And she called as I was going away, and she says in a little whisper, "I've got no money; take the hair."

The maid let me out by the back staircase, without anybody hearing us; and away I went right over hill and dale, as tired and as happy as a man could be. But I were sorry about the hundred guineas too.

Well, it were about six months after that, a tall, nice-looking young chap came into my shop, and says he, "Creecher," says he, "have you got a nice plait of hair, real golden hair, as you could sell to a lady as is going to Court?"

So says I, "Well, no; for I never meant to sell the hair as the young lady gave me, never."

"Well, but," says he, "you haven't sold it, have you?"

"What business is it of yours?" says I. "My dear," says he, running out to the carriage, "it's gone!"

"Oh, Creecher, how could you!" she says, looking out of the window, a little bit put out, but so sweet, too, bless her pretty face! Ay, it was Lady Felicia herself, as bonny as a fairy.

"Why, your ladyship!" says I. "Well, I'm pleased to see you. Bless you, I've kept your hair for you, my dear, and I've done it all up in the most beautiful way. Come in, my lord," says I.

"Oh, I'm not a lord," says he, "I'm only plain Jack Thompson of the Holt;" and says he, "Creecher, I owe her to you, my boy."

"Why, how's that?" says I. Says he, "The Duke of Dovercourt were wiled to have her, and they say he'd asked Lord Cromer, her father, for her the very night she was burned; but when he heard she'd lost her hair, and was likely to be disfigured, he cried off, else they'd have forced her into it; but then I stepped in and carried her away."

"Ay," says I, "and much joy I wish you, Colonel Thompson," says I, "and hope you'd accept this hair, sir, as a wedding present."

"All right!" he says, "Creecher." But he left a bit of paper on the counter. It was a cheque for a hundred guineas.

So I didn't lose by the job, after all. And the carriage comes for me every fortnight to take me to Holt, to do the hair of the young people there; but they come so fast that I say they'll overmaster me.

NEW FIREPROOF CONSTRUCTION.—The *Building News* publishes the following description of an invention in which iron or steel, hollow earthenware and concrete or cement are the materials employed in combination. The walls, partitions, floors and roofs are constructed of cells of metal in which are placed earthenware pipes, the sides of which are played outward at the base to form a skewback. The pipes and iron flitches are bolted together so as to constitute composite girders. Between each skewback, an earthenware hollow pipe with oval-shaped head and flat soffit, channelled and indented to receive the plaster of ceiling, is placed, with suidicent room left between the composite girders to receive a charge of cement concrete. The upper surface of the floor is levelled and covered with strong cement grout. Holes are left in the soffits of the hollow pipes for ventilation, and the pipes themselves may be utilized to convey warm air through the building. In walls and partitions, the iron and steel lengths are placed in a vertical, in floors, in a horizontal, and in roofs in an angular position. In partitions, wire is used instead of lath to receive the concrete and plaster. The proportions of the concrete are six parts of broken brick, slag and sand, and one of cement, well mixed. The floors are made in one body and not in layers. This method is said to be cheap, to require no skilled labour to construct, to furnish thorough ventilation, and to require little