

dissimulation. It is *ruse contre ruse* thought I, and the end will justify the means. I kept this scheming pair waiting breakfast for me, for nearly an hour; then entering the breakfast parlour, majestically hoped I had not detained them. Alice replied by introducing me to Dora. I stared, bowed and looked stern.

"Very sorry that a previous engagement prevented my meeting you at the depot last evening, Miss Marston." I said.

"Thank you; I got along very well, I had no difficulty whatever," was the reply.

Conversation turned upon the weather, the fatigues of railway travelling, &c. It was extraordinary how easy and lady-like this young girl of nineteen was in her manners and conversation, how captivating the roguish expression in her childish face. It was moody and taciturn when I entered that room, with a strong determination of leaving it in the same spirit; but I had scarce been there a half hour when I found myself in the midst of an animated discussion concerning the writings of one of the standard poets, and when we had neither of us convinced the other of having "erroneous views, but both had modified our notions" somewhat, two hours had slipped away. I arose, not a little in dread of one of Alice's salient speeches when we should be alone, but I left the house and thus escaped. Once more in communion with my own thoughts, I wondered at and condemned the exuberance of feeling that had taken possession of me and found vent in words, during the morning's repast; and I vowed that I would not again be thrown off my guard, even by one so voluble (and I added) volatile as Miss Dora Marston. Here was I, stern, uncompromising Fred Bengough, arrogant and self-willed, determined upon feeling the position I had assigned myself, and upon making others feel and respect it too—thrown off my guard, and whirled away on a directly opposite track by—well by a namby pamby little school-girl—good looking, I grant you, (she was by no means so plain as I at first thought her,) simply because she was glib with her tongue and possessed a fresh-from-school-girl's knowledge of the matter under discussion.

Bah! Fred Bengough! where is your stoicism now! What a simpleton you have been! Now, sir, when you go home to dinner, sit down quietly, answer your guest's and sister's questions with civility; propound none of your own; when you can retire, do so. By this means you will atone for your conduct of the morning, and raise yourself in your own estimation.

It is very easy giving oneself advice; following it is quite another matter, and I did not follow it on this occasion. I had been through dinner fully an hour before I was exactly aware of having dined at all. This Dora Marston, with her simple ways, her captivating speech and pretty face, was too much for me, I admitted, and I must put myself without her influence at once, or I could not answer to myself for the consequence.

Charley Sparks had a companion out fishing that afternoon—it was I. We were old "chums" and had no secrets from each other, so I told him the whole story. He was indignant, but consented to holding a consultation with me about the matter, which resulted in confirming my previous suspicions that I was a fool, or something approaching one.

"Was I really going to fall in love with and marry that little chit, when it was so evident that her whole energies were called into play and directed at me, for the sole purpose of making me fall in love and marry?"

"Could I, self-reliant, sensible Fred Bengough, that I was, could I stand calmly by and see the yoke prepared and fashioned to suit my bending neck, and stoop while the sly little artificers were taking my measure and ensuring a good fit?" I could not, and told Charley so. Fred Bengough, you are a fool sir. Now go and have tea with Charley—then home, and if those good-for-nothing little witches attack you again, listen as quietly as you can for to-night, then to-morrow morning shoulder your gun and start on a hunting excursion with your best friend, and mind you don't return until Dora Marston goes home, no matter if she does think you rude, and

Alice *does* say so; do it and save yourself future trouble.

I did it—that is part of it. I had tea with Charley, passed four hours (from eight till twelve p.m.) as quietly as I could, in the parlor with the girls, went to bed, slept a little towards morning, ate a two hour's breakfast, took my gun, excused myself to the girls, who thought me rude, and said so—Alice being spokeswoman—and was on the point of leaving, when Alice slipped out to the stable, where I was harnessing Dick—for her usual farewell kiss, and in receiving it naively remarked in a whisper—that I needn't go on Dora's account as that young lady was engaged, and expected to be married at Christmas.

By the time I had got around to Mrs. Whitney's, Charley had given up the notion of hunting. I gave him my sister's bit of news *verbatim*, and I gave up the notion of hunting also. We went for a drive instead. I was congratulated, and we renewed our old promise of not marrying without being fully assured of getting wives who loved us, not our property.

When six weeks had passed away and Dora had left us, there was a blank in my heart, which I dared not acknowledge, even to myself, although I afterwards became convinced of it. Alice hinted at it, jested about it, but I strenuously denied it. Time sped onward, and the first of September arrived—Alice's wedding-day. Tom Marston came, bringing his sister and her affianced, who was to be groomsman with Dora as bridesmaid. I also was to officiate as groomsman; Jessie Baldwin was told off to go through the ceremony with me. I can't say that I liked the arrangements, but nevertheless submitted to them. After the ceremony, during which Alice gave vent to an unusual quantity of tears; and we were all back to our cosy little dining-room, I remembered a letter I had carried in my pocket all day; a letter from Aunt Bancroft, of Toronto—"the Duchess," we used to call her on account of her aristocratic manners. When Alice had made known her engagement to me, I had written our Aunt concerning it; this was the reply—numerous polysyllabic words of congratulation for her, a lecture and advice for me. I had better marry at once, and if I had not as yet made a selection among the beauties of my neighbourhood (and she thought I was wise if I had not done so, country girls being her abhorrence,) I had better visit her. She would introduce me to a young lady who would make a man of my position an excellent wife—none of your silly school girls, but a genuine lady, full of accomplishments—nevertheless, one who could make herself "useful as well as ornamental." One who wouldn't care a rupee for my wealth, having enough of her own; but if I chose to be represented as a "poor relative," it should be done accordingly. (In my letter to the Duchess, I had revealed something of my scheme for choosing a wife.) I never had a particular regard for my aristocratic relative, and thought I should not fancy any young lady whom she might select for the honour of becoming Mrs. B—; in fact I should not like any one's advice but my own, yet I resolved on visiting her. Here was Alice going away to-morrow to be gone for weeks—to be gone almost forever as far as I was concerned. Charley Sparks had already left for the country on a visit to some friends, and I should be literally alone. Yes, I should go and see the Duchess and her charmer, forthwith, for a little diversion—and perhaps to keep from—thinking. Alice read her aunt's letter and cried over it.

"Fred, my dear brother," she exclaimed, "go, and if you can find one who can make you as happy as I am this day, marry her by all means."

"Now Alice, don't be a child," I said "you know I shall never marry, and that this heightened effusion of our aunt's is simply in reply to a jest of mine, when I wrote her. She is so highly aristocratic that she can't stoop to a joke, and has taken my letter thoroughly in earnest, answering accordingly. I'll show her that I'm a confirmed old bachelor—see if I don't."

The next morning, Alice and her companions left me. In her whispered and tearful farewell, she bade me, "not think of Dora, for it couldn't be."

What 'couldn't be,' I did not ask, but I knew full well, and replied that she might make herself perfectly easy on that score; I was not troubled in the least about it. All of which my heart condemned my tongue for uttering.

Aunt Bancroft lived a few minutes walk from the city, out on Yonge street. A very pleasant house was her's, with a beautiful garden attached, and a pretty wire fence dividing it from her neighbour, Mr. Jackson's premises. Mr. Jackson was a widower with an only child, Flora. She was aunt Bancroft's *beau ideal* of beauty, grace, virtue. From the moment of my arrival the name of Flora Jackson was continuously sounded in my ears—her beauty praised—her virtues extolled—until I plainly stated to my aunt that if she had any desire of bringing the fair object of her praise to my particular notice, she had taken the least effectual way of accomplishing that object. She was piqued at this, I thought, far from that moment till my departure she scarcely mentioned Flora's name in my hearing. It was two days after my arrival before I saw Miss Jackson, and then only to catch a glimpse of her, in her father's garden. To all appearances she was equal to the representations I had had of her—a beautiful girl. Mr. Jackson often ran in of an evening to chat with the Duchess. I was introduced to him and invited to his house, an invitation I soon accepted. The next afternoon I called there, was introduced to Flora and passed a happy hour in her society. I was particularly well pleased with her, although the form of Dora Marston would thrust itself before my mental vision, to the detriment of her who stood before me in the flesh.

Still aunt Bancroft's assertions in regard to the beauty before me, could not be doubted—she had rather under than over-praised her, I thought.

I called on the Jacksons very often after that; indeed I am not sure but I passed more time under their roof than under that of the Duchess. Hints were thrown out on several occasions, which led me to believe that my good aunt had acted her part well, and that the true state of my pecuniary affairs was not known to my newly acquired friends. Six weeks passed rapidly away, and I thought myself deeply in love with Flora.

Alice had written me that she was at home, —at her new house in the west, and wished me to spend a few weeks there. Toronto had become endeared to me. I thought it hard to leave it,—harder to leave the Duchess (who had been kind as a mother during my stay,) hardest of all to leave Flora, but I resolved to do it. I was encroaching upon my aunt's good nature, by so prolonging my stay, I argued; and if ever I intended proposing to Flora, I could do so as well now as a year hence. I was to leave the city by the Wednesday evening train—it was Wednesday morning. Mr. Jackson was in the city, whither he went every morning, returning at sundown. I called upon his daughter, after an early dinner. I announced my intention of leaving. She regretted it, as our few weeks acquaintance had been very pleasant weeks for her, she said. They had been very happy weeks for me, I said. I have not much recollection of what followed, I only know that I proposed, was referred to "papa" whom I probably would not again see before my departure. I might write him, Flora said. I objected to writing, but would try and see him that evening. In the meantime, I had an explanation to make, one that was due both to my future wife and myself. I was poor, almost penniless, dependent upon my own exertion for a livelihood. If she became Mrs. Bengough, she would be deprived of many luxuries now usual to her, nevertheless, it would be the sole object and aim of my life to make her comfortable and happy. She bowed her beautiful head, gave me her hand, which I eagerly kissed, but made no reply. Emboldened by the favour shown me, I pressed for a reply. She would see papa immediately upon his return, and write me by one of the servants, who would deliver it before I left the city, she said. Fervently kissing her blushing cheeks, I left her.

I was to leave the Union Station, at eight o'clock, p.m. Six o'clock found me looking over the daily papers in the reading-room of the "Queen's." I had been there but a short time,