

A FAIR FACE IN A YELLOW CHARIOT.

It was quite with the air of the grand seigneur that he presented himself next day at Kensington square. To his surprise he was not well received.

There had been a scene between Keziah and her aunt directly the former re-entered the house on the previous evening. The girl, without attempting to withhold one iota of information, had given her aunt a full account of what had occurred—the coachman's misconduct. The danger only averted by the timely intervention of a strange gentleman, who had kindly escorted her home.

"His name was Lord Featherstone."

"That wretch!" instantly cried Miss Parker, an old maid, prim and precise in her appearance and in all her ways, yet not disinclined to listen to at least half the scandalous gossip in circulation through the world.

"Do you know him, Aunt Parker?"

"Who does not? He is a notoriously wicked man."

"I thought him very nice," Keziah spoke defiantly and very firmly in defence of her new friend.

"Of course you did. He can be most agreeable. I have heard that of him over and over again. That's the danger of him."

"He was so kind and obliging. He told me who everybody was in the Park."

"Can it be possible that you were so mad as to go into the Park with him in the afternoon, when it was crowded, when hundreds must have seen you together?"

"Of course we came through the Park together; it was the shortest way home. I cannot see any great harm in that."

"It's not likely; you are so young and unexperienced; you can see no harm in anything. But he knew the mischief he was doing only too well. The wretch, the wretch!"

Mild Miss Parker would have been glad to see wild horses tear him limb from limb. "However," after a pause, "you must promise faithfully that you will never speak to him again."

"He said he would call to inquire how I was," Keziah said, in a low voice, which might easily have meant that she hoped he would not be told peremptorily to go away.

"I will see him if he comes," Aunt Parker finally replied. "It is not fitting he should pursue his acquaintance with you, begun as it was under such questionable auspices."

And in this decision Keziah was forced to acquiesce.

When therefore, after some delay and demur, Lord Featherstone was admitted to Aunt Parker, her manner was perfectly arctic. She sat bolt upright, with a stony look in her eyes and only frigid monosyllables on her lips.

"I called," said his lordship with much aplomb, "to see Miss Leigh."

"Yes?" Aunt Parker asked, much as though Lord Featherstone was the bootmaker's man, or had come to take orders for a sewing-machine.

"My name is Lord Featherstone."

"Is it?" He might have been in the habit of assuming a dozen aliases every twenty-four hours, so utterly indifferent and incredulous was Aunt Parker's tone.

"It was my good fortune to be able to do Miss Leigh a slight service yesterday," he went on, still unabashed.

"A service?" Miss Parker waxed indignant at once. "I call it an injury—a shameful mischief, unkind act; for which Lord Featherstone, although I apprehend it is not much in his line should blush for very shame."

"Really madam?" he hardly knew whether to be annoyed or amused—"I think you have been misinformed. Probably but for me Miss Leigh's neck would have been broken."

"I know that, I know that, and I almost wish it had, sooner than she should have so far forgotten herself." Miss Parker looked up suddenly and sharply, saying with much emphasis, "O Lord Featherstone, ask yourself—you are, or ought to be, a gentleman, at least you know the world by heart—was it right of you to take such an advantage? Did you think what incalculable harm this foolish, thoughtless mistake—which is certain to be magnified by malicious tongues—may work against an innocent, guileless child?"

"I know I was greatly to blame. I ought to have known better. But it was Miss Leigh's own wish to go through the Park, and I gave way."

"How noble of you to shift the burden on to her shoulders! But we will not, if you please try to apportion the blame. The mischief is done, and there is no more to be said, except to ask you to make us the only reparation in your power."

"And this is—?" he looked at her in surprise. She did not surely mean to forestall him, and demand that which he came to offer of his own accord?

"To leave the house, and spare us henceforth the high honor of your acquaintance."

"That I promise if you still insist after you have heard what I am going to say. I came to make reparation full and complete, but not in the way you suppose. I came to make Miss Leigh—and if she and you as her guardian will deign to accept of it—an offer of my hand."

Little Miss Parker's face was an amusing study. Her lower lip dropped, her eyes opened till they looked like the round marbles on a solitaire-board.

"Lord Featherstone, you!"

"I trust you will not consider me ineligible; that you have no objection to me personally beyond a natural annoyance at this silly escapade."

"It is so sudden, so unexpected—so—so—" Poor Miss Parker was too much bewildered to find words, a thousand thoughts agitated her. This was a splendid offer, a princely offer. Matchmaker by instinct, as is every woman in the world, she could not fail to perceive what dazzling prospects it opened up for her niece. But, then, could any happiness follow from such a hastily concluded match? The latter and better thoughts prevailed.

"Lord Featherstone, it is out of the question or at least you must wait. Say a month or two, or till the end of the season."

"The engagement ought to be announced immediately to benefit Miss Leigh."

"And that is your real reason for proposing? Lord Featherstone, I retract my harsh words; you shall not outdo us in generosity. We cannot accept your offer, although we appreciate the spirit in which it is made."

"I assure you, Miss Parker, I esteem Miss Leigh most highly. I like her immensely. I am most anxious to marry her."

The bare possibility that he might be refused—the of all men in the world—gave a stronger insistence to his words.

Miss Parker shook her head.

"No good could come of such a marriage; you hardly know each other. You say you like her, perhaps so; but can you tell whether she likes you?"

"At least let me ask her. Do not deny me that? I will abide by her answer."

There was no resisting such pleading as this.

"I may prepare her for what she is to expect?" asked Aunt Parker, as she moved towards the door.

"No, no; please, do not. Let me speak my own way."

He did not distrust the old lady, but she might inductinate Keziah with her views, and prejudice her against him. It was becoming a point of honour with him to succeed, and he thought he could. He was no novice in these matters; ere now he had often held the victory in an issue more difficult than this in his grasp, and all he wanted now was a fair field and no favor.

"Aunt Parker said I was never to speak to you again," Kiss said, as she came into the room, with an air of extreme astonishment; "and now she sends me to you of her own accord! What does it mean?"

"It means that I have something very particular to say to you."

"You are no worse for your drive I hope?"

"Is that all? Yes; I am ever so much worse—in temper. You should have heard Aunt Parker go on! Did anybody scold you?"

"I escaped any very serious rebuke—except from my conscience."

"Dear me, Lord Featherstone, you make me feel as though I were in church. Was it so very wicked then, to help me in my distress? I thought it was most good of you."

This simple but italicized earnestness was very taking.

"No; but people are very censorious. They will talk. They are coupling our names together already."

"Does that annoy you?" Her air was candour itself. "Do you mind—very much?"

"Well, perhaps, not very, very much. It can do me no harm."

"I am glad of that."

"But it may you, and it ought to be stopped."

"Of course; but how?"

"There is only one way that I can see. Let us have only one name between us. I cannot very well take yours. Will you take mine?"

"Why—why—" A light seemed to break in on her all at once. "Oh, what a funny man you are! That's just the same as an offer of marriage. You can't mean that, surely? It would be too—quite too—absurd."

"I don't see the absurdity," said his lordship rather gruffly. "Were well meant overtures ever so shamefully scorned?"

"O, but I do!" Keziah's little foot was playing with the fringe of the hearthrug. "I do. That is, if you are in earnest, which of course you're not."

"I am in earnest. Why should you think I'm not?"

"You don't know me; you can't care for me. You never spoke to me till yesterday. You are only making fun, and it isn't fair. I wish you'd leave me alone."

Her eyes were full already.

"I am to go away, then? That is your answer?" She hid her face in her hands and would not speak. "You will be sorry for this perhaps, some day." She shook her head most vigorously. "Keziah Leigh, you are the only woman ever I asked to be my wife. I shall never ask another. Good-bye, and God bless you!"

And Lord Featherstone, with a strange feeling of dejection and disappointment, left the room. He could not have believed that within this short space of time he could have been so irresistibly drawn towards any girl. Now he was grieving over his failure as though he were still in his teens.

Presently Aunt Parker came in and found Keziah sobbing fit to break her heart.

"I don't want him! I don't want him! He can go away if he likes—to the other end of the world."

"Have you been very ill-used my sweet? What did he say to you?"

"He asked me to marry him," she said with difficulty between her sobs.

"Was that such a terrible insult then?"

"He was only making fun. I don't like such fun. And I don't want to see him again, never, never, not as long as I live!"

"Kiss, you are right to consult your own feelings in this. But Lord Featherstone was in earnest, I think, and his intentions do him infinite credit."

Then she told her niece what had passed.

"Still, if you don't care for him, it is best as it is. Dry your tears, Kiss, and think no more about it."

"But I think I do care for him," she said, and began to cry again.

Lady Carstairs became very much exercised in spirit as the days passed, and yet nothing positive was known of Lord Featherstone's intentions towards Miss Keziah Leigh.

She made many futile efforts to meet him, then she called and sounded the ladies in Kensington square with whom she was moderately intimate. They put back her cross-examination mildly but effectually. But at last she met Featherstone face to face, and attacked him at once.

"Your high-flown sense of honour did not bear practical test, then?"

"How so, Lady Carstairs?" his coolness was provoking.

"Why rush off to Central Africa, except to escape scandal?"

"Am I going to Central Africa? Perhaps I am. Why not?"

"Can it be possible that she has refused you?"

"Who could refuse me, Lady Carstairs?"

"No; but do tell me I am dying to know."

"You must find some one else to save your life, then."

"But, Lord Featherstone we shall see you once more before you start? You will come and dine with us? Just to say good-bye."

"I will dine with you with pleasure, but not necessarily to say good-bye."

He could not well escape from an invitation so cordially expressed, and the night was fixed. But he little thought what malice worked beneath.

The party was a large one, and he, as was often the case, was very late. But he entered gaily, as if he had come a little too soon, shook hands with the hostess, bowed here and there, nodded to one friend and smiled at another, then, last of all and to his intense surprise his eyes rested on Kiss Leigh.

Lady Carstairs had done it on purpose of course; that was self-evident. Unkind, unfeeling, ungenerous woman. For himself he did not care, but it was cruel on the timid birdling, so new and strange to the world. But fast as this conviction came upon him, yet faster came the resolve that Lady Carstairs should make nothing by the move. A thoroughly well-bred man is never taken aback, and Featherstone rose to the occasion. Without a moment's delay, before the faintest flush was hung out like a signal of distress upon Keziah's cheek, he had gone up to her, shaken hands, and spoken a few commonplace phrases which meant nothing, and yet set her quite at ease.

"Miss Leigh and I are very old friends," he said. "How do you do, Miss Parker? How is the coachman? Have you heard, Sir John, the Prince, is expected next week? There will be great doings."

That little Kiss was grateful to him for his self-possession, was evident from the satisfaction which beamed in her eyes. O those tell-tale eyes!

Now Lady Carstairs brought up her reserves and fired another broadside.

"It is so good of you, Lord Featherstone, to come to us; when you have so few nights left."

"When do you go, Featherstone? and where?"

"Haven't you heard? To Central Africa."

Lady Carstairs answered for him.

Can this be true? Keziah's eyes asked him in mute but eloquent language, which sent a thrill through his heart.

"Where this story originated I cannot make out," said Featherstone slowly. "I am not going to Central Africa. On the contrary, I have the very strongest reasons for staying at home."

"And those reasons?"

"Are best known to Miss Leigh and myself."

THE GLEANER.

It is computed that 60,000 bicycles are in use in Great Britain and Ireland.

The prorogation of Parliament is expected to take place on Friday the 10th of August.

For three whole days in one week, lately, there was not a single birth in Naples, out of a population of 500,000 souls.

"HER MAJESTY'S Archbishops and Bishops" will henceforth be "the correct card," as they were thus designated on the dinner card at the Mansion House the other day.

A BRONZE statue of Robert Raikes, the founder of the Sunday school system, is about to be erected by national subscription in his native

town of Gloucester. The movement is promoted by the Sunday School Union.

P. T. BARNUM says: "I am forty-six, and my wife is the same. That is, I am sixty-six, and she is twenty-six; but as she says I am the younger of the two, we have agreed to average it and call it forty-six apiece."

Mr. Cushing, of New York, is now completing an ideal statue to be called The Mayflower. It represents a maiden of the New England type in the May-time of life, who has been alarmed while gathering flowers, and has started up to discover the cause.

ABDUL KERIM, the late Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish army, did not treat newspaper correspondents with great courtesy. To a representative of an English paper, who requested a pass recently, he replied—"What do you want here? I mind my own business; go back to your country and mind yours."

SOME of the hotels have bills of fare with the fly-leaf covered with carls of various business houses. Recently when a waiter appeared with "What will you have, sir?" he leisurely remarked, "You may fetch me a new set of teeth, in gutta percha; an improved sewing machine, with patent lock stitch; a box of pills, and a pair of calf skin boots."

THE Exhibition building on the Champ-de-Mars and the Trocadéro are progressing so rapidly that even now one may have an idea of the grandeur of the works when completed. The palace on the Trocadéro heights will loom up commandingly, having a magnificent view all over Paris. It will remain one of the wonders and beauties of the capital.

THE work of removing Cleopatra's Needle from Egypt to London is proceeding rapidly. Two inscriptions have been discovered on the crabs supporting Cleopatra's Needle—one is in Greek, the other in Latin. They fix the date when the obelisk was erected at Alexandria, namely, the eighth year of Augustus Caesar, by Barbarus, prefect of Egypt, Fontius, engineer.

THE tenor Roger has given Paris a new idea. Frenchmen are very particular about their shirt bosoms. A drop of soup or wine which soils the immaculate purity of their front takes away their appetite. Roger has come to their relief. He ties a very small knot in one corner, which he slips in his collar, and voilà l'affaire. Paris is crazy over the discovery. *Figaro* devotes a column to the idea, which has not been surpassed for originality since Columbus made an egg stand erect.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

MRS. ALICE OATES has gone to Paris.

ALBANI bids fair to be the *Senta* of the Italian stage.

BOUCCICAULT'S new comedy is entitled "The Bridal Tour."

LECOQ'S "La Petite Mariée" is meeting with success in Europe.

MISS NEILSON will not be able to visit the United States this season.

EDWIN BOOTH subscribes \$500 to the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford.

GOUNOD has been decorated with the Commander's Cross of the Crown of Italy.

FOUR hundred and fifty-two concerts were given in Paris from October, 1876, to June, 1877.

FROM 1870 to 1876 inclusive, some two hundred and eighty new operas were produced in Italy.

SCRIBE, the French dramatist, is reported to have 3,000,000, out of his translations and original plays.

ALARMING reports have lately been circulated concerning the state of Viextemps' health, but, happily, without foundation.

THE friends of Richard Wagner, in London, are endeavoring to make up the sum of £1,200, to be presented as a testimonial to the master.

It is said by a New York paper that one of the debutantes who appeared at Booth's recently, paid £200 for the privilege of acting *Juliet*.

AMBROISE THOMAS' "Françoise de Rimini" will be put into rehearsal at the Grand Opera, Paris, immediately after the performance of "L'Africaine."

SALVINI is getting better recognition in Berlin than he did in New York. Emperor William has sent him a diamond ring with a complimentary letter through Privy Councillor Bork.

AN exchange says "Max Strakosch will manage Miss Kellogg next season." Before the season is over Miss Kellogg will be managing Max Strakosch. That is the universal outcome of every attempt of a man to manage a woman.

BESIDE the German papers, Bismarck reads the French and English. In the *Figaro*, the letters written by M. Albert Wolff on the "Bayreuth Festival" especially pleased him. The prince is opposed to Richard Wagner's music, and for this reason was delighted with M. Wolff's letters.

WHEN Macready was playing "Macbeth" in the provinces, the actor cast for the part of the Messenger in the last act was absent. So the stage manager sent a supernumerary on to speak the lines set down upon the hill, I looked towards Birnam, and anon methought the wood began to move." Macbeth: "Liar and slave!" Super: "Pon my soul, Mr. Macready, they told me to say it."

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