

moderate means and in the gaslight effects of prosperity. And I have seen that you are but human. Your will is not as strong as you think. Your tendencies are towards the fleshpots of Egypt, your nature cries out for an indulgence of its taste for excitement, luxury, pleasure. But deprived of these things, the necessity of bearing the loss becomes a strong power for good and brings out in you your latent nobility. I am testing you most severely by asking you to exchange the position of leader of the beau monde in this city for that of a housekeeper. I am presumptuous, maybe. But you can take your choice. I will not have as my wife Miss Fairgrieve as she is, but only as she was." "Take her, love," whispered his Flower garden girl, "she is waiting."

And the question was settled thus, Audrey thought.

Through Cecil's and Nyle's machinations, however, it was settled differently, in reality.

"It can still be kept a secret," Nyle said, "if you will not mind."

"Mind?" Cecil answered. "It's nothing to me. I hope though it will come out all right. It must come out some day you know."

"Yes, but it need not for some time."

"What's this must come out some time," Audrey interrupted just here, coming up to them. They were all spending an evening at his house, Grace proving to be a charming hostess, while the cosiness of the little home was very congenial to their growing tastes for domestic comfort and pleasures.

"Nyle is wondering whether you will apply for a divorce or commit suicide when you have lived a week with a poor ignorant little housekeeper like her," Cecil glibly answered.

"I think Nyle's anxieties over her success in that line are unwarranted. Who ever saw a maiden brought up in the country unable to cook. If it were you now, I shouldn't be so surprised. You can't make a cake now, can you?"

"Indeed, she can," his sister interrupted. "She made the cake we had for tea to-night, also the scones and the omelet."

Gay looked very proud and pleased and Nyle cast a glance at her cousin that would have been envious if it had not been so comically helpless.

"Never mind, you'll learn," consoled Cecil taking the pretty hands in hers.

"She knows now!" asserted Audrey, taking the hands away, into his own.

"No, I don't, Audrey!" Nyle denied, as they left the others and turned apart. "I am afraid Aunt Bronson did not teach me as much as you think."

"Well, don't worry! I am not marrying you for the way you can cook a beefsteak or sweep a floor."

"What are you marrying me for, Audrey?" looking into his eyes.

"For your dear self."

That's the invariable reason a man gives as we propose to demonstrate before we get through, marriage is never so much a failure as when a woman has no other accomplishments than to please her husband's eye and heart by sweet looks and winning manner. Combined with these attractions, the ability to set a good table and keep a house in

apple pie order, is indispensable, let engaged young people indifferently disregard this as they may. Nyle knew this. She was very much in love, but she recognized the truth of the afore mentioned arguments enough to steal many an hour out of her busy days for the practice of cuisine lessons under the eye of Grace De Vere. Cecil, the heiress, often made a third in these kitchen soirees, and the other two found her advice invaluable, Grace wondering at the fact but Nyle taking it without other remarks than ones of gladness.

"Cecil and I are exceptions to the general rule," she often said, however with a bright little wink at her cousin. "In novels it's the beggar maid that outdoes the rich girl in household accomplishments, but we reverse the case and prove that truth is stranger than fiction."

Merry happy days those were before the weddings. Days that for pure unalloyed happiness were hardly to be equalled in the after days even. Grace was not to live with her brother and sister-in-law after the wedding. That was agreed upon in a unanimous silence. It was not discussed pro and con by every one, but simply accepted by all.

Each of them knew that a young married couple are happiest left entirely to themselves and Grace announced her intention of going home to live if—

"Ay, if!" Audrey remarked, briefly.

Grace did not answer in words. A sigh told that she knew there was an "if" in the way. But she set about removing the "if," at once. The disappointment that followed upon her efforts fell upon Audrey and his bride also. Meanwhile the wedding preparations were hurried on, the two brides having unblushingly decided that they would be married on the 30th of September instead of October the 6th as first proposed. The bridegrooms were nothing loth to consent and so it came about the heiress of the Esmond estates retained her fortune by acceding to the provisions of the will that left it to her.

The questions that Nyle expected her husband to ask about the part she had played for the last few months were asked—with reproachful comments.

"I knew you despised me for this bit of usurpation," she answered him. "But Audrey, I robbed no one of anything. The money I used came regularly from Cecil's bankers."

"I knew that! I was sure of it! I could not have gone on loving you if I had thought you were doing more than amuse yourself. But, dearest, the real Nyle Fairgrieve—it is very perplexing! When she returns from her seclusion in Europe, there will be a tremendous time of explanations!"

"The multitudes will never need the pacifying you are thinking of. Miss Fairgrieve never intends to return. She is content to find all the society she needs in her husband's home. I will never experience any trouble from my masquerade."

"You are a precious little fraud!" her lover exclaimed. "Fearfully and wonderfully made! But with all your faults I love thee still!"

He had yet to discover, however, the real depth of meaning in the title he had given her. He probably realized the extent of her "preciousness," but the future was to unveil the "little fraud" in colors he had not dreamed of. Well, on with the—tale!

[TO BE CONTINUED].