

pendent, and she longed to be so once more. And thus in order to be independent she sold herself into slavery, or rather bought herself into it. For instead of being paid for her loss of freedom, she gave her money away along with it. She was silly enough to consult a fortune-teller as to what her future fate would be. The cunning woman found out that Mary Ashman, besides good clothes and other things worth money, was possessed of a comfortable little sum in the Savings Bank. She had an idle, good-for-nothing son, who was supposed to be a basket-maker, but generally made his living in much less reputable ways. If he got a wife with some money it would be a help to him, and the woman could work for if she could not reclaim him. Indeed, the old mother did not trouble herself much about his doings so long as he managed to keep out of reach of the law.

So she not only predicted to Mary that a dark-haired, dark-eyed man would marry her, and make her a lady in time, but she foretold the very place where she would meet him, as she went to church next Sunday. Naturally she took steps to insure the fulfilment of her own prediction. Joe did not care about being bothered with a wife, he said, though the money would come in handy. He condescended to be in waiting, however, and was sufficiently taken by Mary's pretty face to be willing to follow out his mother's scheme.

As for Mary, no reasoning, no advice would hold her back. She would not tell her mistress why she insisted that it was a fate that she must be married; because she did not like to confess her dealings with the fortune-teller. She said that she wanted a home of her own, and to have her child with her. A natural enough wish if it had been the true reason, only one that should surely have made her anxious as to the character of the man whom she meant to put in the place of her boy's father.

Joe had grumbled a good deal when he heard about the child, and told his mother that he would not be bothered with a brat. She had not known of his existence before, and felt that it was rather a drawback; but once having made a plan, she liked to stick to it. The child was five years old, big enough not to be a hindrance to his mother, she said. They had better have him with them, he could eat up the scraps, and of course it was no good to go on paying money for his keep. And so it was settled, and Mary became Joe's wife.

It was "marry in haste" and repent in haste too. She very soon found out what she had done. Instead of easy work and kind treatment, she had hard work and bad treatment. Her money was taken from her, her clothes were pawned. The independence that she had so dearly purchased, proved to be a very fleeting vision.

(To be continued.)

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