

## FORTUNE'S CHANGES.

[WITH AN ENGRAVING.]

A young and handsome couple had just returned from the altar where their destinies were irrevocably united. They were about to start for the country, and they had bidden a temporary farewell to the friends who were present at the ceremony. For a short time, while the equipage was preparing, they found themselves alone.

The newly wedded husband took one of his bride's hands in his own. "Allow me, my dear Marie," said he, "thus to hold your hand, for dread lest you should quit me. I dread lest all this be an illusion. It seems to me that I am the hero of one of those fairy tales which amused my boyhood, and in which, in the hour of happiness, some malignant fairy steps in to throw the victim into grief and despair!"

"Re-assure yourself, my dear Frederick," said the lady. "I was yesterday the widow of Sir James Melton, and today I am Madame de la Tour, your wife, your own Marie." Banish from your mind the idea of the fairy. This is not a fiction, but a history."

Frederick de la Tour had some reason to suppose that his fortunes were the work of a fairy's wand; for in the course of two short months, by a seemingly inexplicable stroke of fortune, he had been raised to happiness and to wealth beyond his desires. A friendless orphan, twenty-five years old, he had been the holder of a clerkship, which brought him a scanty livelihood, when, one day, as he passed along the Rue St. Honore, a rich equipage stopped suddenly before him, and a young and elegant woman called from it to him. "Monsieur, Monsieur," said she. At the same time, on a given signal, the footman leaped down, opened the carriage door, and invited Frederick to enter. He did so, though with some hesitation and surprise, and the carriage started off at full speed. "I have received your note, sir," said the lady to M. de la Tour, in a very soft and sweet voice; "and spite of your refusal, I hope yet to see you to-morrow evening at my party."

"To see me, madame!" cried Frederick.

"Yes, sir, you— Ah! a thousand pardons!" continued she, with an air of confusion; "I see my mistake. Forgive me, sir; you are so like a particular friend of mine! What can you think of me? Yet the resemblance is so striking that it would have deceived any one."

Of course Frederick replied politely to these

apologies. Just as they were terminated, the carriage stopped at the door of a splendid mansion, and the young man could do no less than offer his arm to Lady Melton, as the fair stranger announced herself to be. Her extreme beauty charmed M. de la Tour, and he congratulated himself upon this happy accident, which had gained him such an acquaintance. Lady Melton treated him with civilities, and he received and accepted an invitation for the party spoken of. Invitations to other parties followed; and, in brief, the young man soon found himself an established visitant at the house of Lady Melton. She, a rich and youthful widow, was encircled by many admirers; one by one, however, disappeared, giving way to the poor clerk, who seemed to engross the lady's thoughts. Finally, almost by her own asking, they were betrothed. Frederick used to look sometimes at the little glass which hung in his humble lodging, and wonder to what circumstance he owed his happy fortune. He was not ill-looking, certainly, but he had not vanity to think his appearance magnificent; and his plain and scanty wardrobe prevented him from giving the credit to his tailor. He used to conclude his meditations by the reflection that assuredly the lady was fulfilling some unavoidable award of destiny. As for his own feelings, the lady was lovely, young, rich, and noted for her sensibility and virtue. Could he hesitate?

"My dear Frederick," said the lady, smilingly, "sit down beside me, and let me say something to you."

The young husband obeyed, but still did not quit her hand. She began—

"Once on a time—"

Frederick started, and half seriously exclaimed, "Heavens! it is a fairy tale!" "Listen to me, foolish boy!" resumed the lady: "There was once a young girl, the daughter of parents well born, and at one time rich, but who had declined sadly in circumstances. Until her fifteenth year, the family lived in Lyons, depending entirely for subsistence upon the labor of her father. Some better hopes sprang up, and induced them to come to Paris; but it is difficult to stop in the descent down the path of misfortune. For three years the father struggled against poverty, but at last died in an hospital."

The mother soon followed, and the young girl