

THE FAVORITE

AN ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL OF AMUSING AND USEFUL READING

No. 17

1874

Vol. III.

APRIL 25.

16 PAGES

5

CENTS

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"WHAT IS HER SURPRISE, ON REACHING THE SPOT, TO FIND THAT IT IS NOT AT HER DISPOSAL."

"NO INTENTIONS."

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT.

Author of "Love's Conflict," "Veronique," etc.

CHAPTER V.

It is on a glorious July afternoon that Colonel Mordaunt brings his wife to Fen Court. There is no railway station within ten miles of Priestly, but an open carriage meets them on arrival at the nearest town, and as they roll homewards through long country lanes, bordered with hedges in which the bramble flower and the woodbine have joined issue to pull the wild roses and the purple nightshade to the ground, Irene experiences a sense of silent calm which makes her believe that she has at last breasted successfully the billows of life, and emerged thence with the greatest good this world affords us in her hand—contentment! They have had a long and tedious journey from Weymouth; the sun has been inconveniently warm, and the railway carriages filled with dust, and even

good-natured people might be excused from of day; but Irene and Colonel Mordaunt seem admirably fitted to get on together. She is all gentle acquiescence to anything he may propose feeling a little peevish or impatient by the close (gratitude and indifference being the principal ingredients in submission), and he is devoted to his young wife, and has spent his time hitherto in anticipating her wishes, but in a manner so unobtrusive as to have rendered even the honeymoon agreeable to her. For, whatever may be the general opinion to the contrary, the honeymoon is not always the happiest part of married life; indeed there are few instances of it in which both husband and wife are not secretly pleased when it is drawing to a close. Brides who are worshipped as divinities during the first week are apt to become *exigeantes* during the last three, and bride-grooms are sometimes forced to confess the melancholy truth that "the full soul loatheth the honey-comb." I have known a seven-days' wife cry all the afternoon because her husband went to sleep on the sofa; and a freshly-made Benedict plead law, sickness, business, anything, in order to procure a run up to town during the fatal moon, and a few hours' cessation from the continuous tax laid on his patience, gallantry, and temper. Many a married life that has ended in misery might have flowed on evenly enough had it not been for the injury done to a woman's character during that month of blandishments and folly. It requires a strong mind to accept at their true worth all the nonsense a man talks and all the foolish actions of which he is guilty during those first rapturous moments of possession—and women, as a rule, are not strong-minded. All the hyperbole of passion, which until then they have only heard in furtive lovers' whispers, is now poured out boldly at their feet, and the geese imagine it to be a specimen or a promise of what their future life shall be. A fortnight sees the ardor cooled; in a month it has evaporated, and thenceforth

they are judged, not as goddesses, but women. How few stand the test and can step down gracefully from the pedestal on which they have been unnaturally exalted to the level of their husbands' hearts, let the lives of our married acquaintances answer for us. But whether it would prevent the final issue or not, it is nevertheless true that the happiness of many a man and woman would not come so quickly to a close, were the latter treated with a little more discretion during the honeymoon. As husbands intend to go on so should they begin. A woman is a suspicious animal; her experience is small, her views are narrow, her range of sight limited; and more men have been whined and teased and irritated out of their love than stormed out of it. There is no more miserable mistake in life than to attempt to warm up a fading *réchauffé* are never worth much, but this style of *réchauffé* pays the worst of all. If wives would be reasonable, they will take all that is offered them; but never stoop to extract an unwilling avowal of affection, which will burn none the brighter for being dragged to the light of day. A little happy indifference is the best possible medicine for a drooping love; and the injunction to "leave them alone and they'll come home," holds as good with men as with the flock of Bo-peep. Irene Mordaunt bids fair to keep her husband's devotion in a healthy condition by this means. Her manner towards him is as sweet and gentle as it can be, but it naturally possesses no ardor; and this want of passion on her part is just sufficient to keep his middle-aged flame burning very brightly, without giving him any anxiety on account of hers. He would have preferred, like other men, to make a fool of himself during the honeymoon (and the adage that "there is no fool like an old fool" holds truer in love than any other feeling) but something in Irene's quiet and sensible manner has forbidden it, and compelled him to treat her as if they had been married for several

