

FORTUNES IN FACES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED," "THE BUSINESS OF LIFE," ETC.



JOSEPHINE DE LA PAGERIE.

"MY face is my fortune, sir, she said." Taking this as our text, we propose to discourse about women who by reason of the gift of beauty which they possessed were able to marry into an exalted position, and become directly or indirectly great social influences. As we have no sympathy with mere worldly marriages, we shall select for mention only those who won their husbands without, as far as it is known, designing to do so.

Many cases of the kind might be mentioned in the histories of ancient Rome and Greece, and the instances recorded in the Old Testament are even more familiar. Coming down to our own history, we remember how the beauty of Dame Elizabeth Grey (born Woodville), the widow of Sir John Grey, made her queen to Edward IV. It could hardly be called good fortune, perhaps, when the lovely face of Jane Seymour, daughter of Sir John Seymour, raised her to the throne beside that professional widower, Henry VIII. Still, there were many women, no doubt, who envied her the dangerous elevation. Not very fortunate either, really, though she seemed to be, was Josephine de la Pagerie, the Martinique girl, when her beauty—she was called "the pretty Creole"—caused her to become wife of the so-called great Napoleon and Empress of the French. We shall only just mention the Empress Eugénie, as she is still living. Her rise and pathetic fall are quite modern history.

Several English princes have wished to marry subjects with whose beauty they were captivated, but they have been prevented from doing so by the law which requires the sovereign's consent to all royal marriages. The beauty of the widow of a certain

Thomas Fitzherbert, Esquire, won the heart of George IV. when he was Prince of Wales, and in 1787 he married her. She was as good as she was beautiful, and she obtained a great hold over her wayward and inconstant husband. Unfortunately, the royal marriage law stepped in, and destroyed the only chance George IV. had of domestic happiness and respectability. English society, however, refused to endorse the verdict of the law; and she was treated to the end of her days with the utmost respect by all ranks of society.

One old countryman said to another: "If everyone had been of my mind, everyone would have wanted to marry my old woman." His friend answered: "If everyone had been of my mind, no one would have wanted to marry her." So it is that each eye forms its own idea of beauty. This, no doubt, was the reason why John, Duke of Argyll, who, next to Marlborough, was the most distinguished soldier whom England welcomed back on the conclusion of the peace of Utrecht in 1715—this is why a laurel-crowned, accomplished, and generally fascinating duke married Jane Warburton, one of Queen Anne's maids of honour, who was only the daughter of a Cheshire squire, and was not generally considered to have personal charms. Plain truth and honesty were the principal features of her character, and when these are in a woman's character they make her face



THE EX-EMPRESS EUGÉNIE.

After the painting by F. Winterhalter.



MRS. FITZHERBERT.

(After the painting by R. Cosway, R.A.)

attractive to one who, like the Duke of Argyll, could appreciate a good woman.

From the day when King Cophetua wedded the "beggar-maid," cases have from time to time occurred of men of high position marrying girls who were not born in the purple, and whose faces were their only fortunes. In 1791 Henry Cecil, presumptive heir to the titles and estates of an old uncle, found a wife, not in Belgravia, but in Bolas, a country village of Shropshire, nestling amongst green lanes and fruitful apple-chards. A storm of thunder and rain coming on, he had taken shelter in a cottage, and as the rain got worse and worse, begged that he might be allowed to stay till morning, even if he had only a chair "to rest upon in the lower room." This request was grudgingly granted by Thomas Hoggins, the owner of the house, because, in answer to inquiries as to why he was wandering about, Cecil spoke vaguely and unsatisfactorily, and at last said he was an "undertaker," taking refuge in the vagueness of the term. Tennyson, whose ballad is founded on this story, makes "The Lord of Burleigh" call himself not an "undertaker" but a "landscape painter," which, perhaps, is a more poetical business. Next morning the stranger made the acquaintance of Sarah, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hoggins, a rustic beauty of seventeen. It was a case of love at first sight, and the fields where Sarah milked the cows became Elysian fields to Mr. Jones—for so Cecil styled himself. To make a long story short, in three months' time Henry Jones (he still concealed his real name and rank) and Sarah Hoggins were married and lived on in the village—it is said in the old folks' house. When he had been married two

years, "Jones" read in a paper news of the death of his uncle, the old earl. Knowing that his presence would now be wanted at "Burghley House by Stamford Town," he told his wife that he was called on business into Lincolnshire, and that he wished her to accompany him. They set out without delay, she sitting, as was the fashion of the day, on a pillion behind him. They passed the seats of various gentlemen and noblemen on the road, but at last they came to a particularly fine mansion and park. Sarah gazed in admiration, and quietly remarked—

"What a magnificent house!"

"How should you like, my dear Sally, to be mistress of such a place?" was her lord's reply.

"Very much indeed, if we were rich enough to live in it."

"I am glad that you like it; the place is yours. I am Earl of Exeter, and you are my countess."

"And a gentle consort made he,
And her gentle mind was such
That she grew a noble lady,
And the people lov'd her much."

The poet has beautifully described the drooping of a flower removed from its native air into a higher level, but the "Peasant Countess" died, as a matter of fact, at the birth of her third child. Her picture in the billiard-room at Burleigh House represents the face which made her fortune as very beautiful; but an old woman and man belonging to Bolas, who were interrogated about the matter a few years ago, were not as enthusiastic as might have been expected. "She



H.R.H. THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER.

(From an engraving by Henry Bryer.)



THE LADIES WALDEGRAVE.

(After the painting by Sir J. Reynolds, P.R.A.)

might have been well-looking," was all that the old woman would admit, while the old man said nothing more than that he believed Sarah Hoggins was a "straight lass."

A somewhat similar romance was in the Ashbrook family. William, the third baron and second Viscount Ashbrook, when a gentleman-commoner of Magdalen College, Oxford, was struck with the beauty of a peasant-girl named Betty Ridge, whose father used to punt a ferry-boat across the Isis at Northmoor, near Oxford. The water-nymph was neither old enough nor sufficiently educated to become his wife, though she could read and write pretty well, as is proved by her signature, "Betty Ridge," in the marriage register book of the parish. Under these circumstances Mr. Flower, as he then was, placed the lovely ferry-girl under the tuition of a lady a few miles off, where he visited her from time to time, and marked with the enthusiasm of a romantic lover her progress in polite accomplishments. In three years the blushing daughter of the ferryman became Mrs. Flower, and ultimately Viscountess Ashbrook. She died early in the present century at a good old age, honoured and loved by all her husband's family. On a wall in one of the rooms at Castle Durrow may be seen a portrait commemorating the charms which gained for her promotion. The grandchild of the peasant girl was married to George, fifth Duke of Marlborough.

Maria Walpole, the niece of Horace Walpole, was conspicuous for her beauty in a circle of celebrated beauties. When very young, she became the wife of

the Earl of Waldegrave, and had three daughters, who were little less lovely than herself. The earl was an excellent husband, and when he died the sorrow of his widow was great. After some time, however, her loss was compensated—from a worldly point of view—by marriage with the Duke of Gloucester, a prince of the blood royal.

Everyone sympathised with the sorrow of our young Princess May when the Duke of Clarence died just as she was receiving congratulations upon her prospectively happy union with him. We felt for the amiable, benevolent princess herself, but the saddest thought in connection with her bereavement was that it was a representative one. Thousands of other English maidens have lost their lovers almost on the eve of marriage. This was the sad fortune of Lady Horatio Waldegrave, one of the three beautiful daughters of the Duchess of Gloucester, of whom we have been speaking. The Duke of Ancaster, to whom she was shortly going to be married, suddenly died. The event, which was much talked of in the "society" of the day, and which makes us think of the Princess May, is thus spoken of by Horace Walpole, the grand-uncle of the bride-widow. "You will be charmed," he wrote, "I flatter myself, with poor Horatio, who is not at all well, but has behaved with a gentleness, sweetness, and modesty that are lovely. She has had no romantic conduct, concealed all she could, and discovered nothing she felt but by her looks. She is now more pleasing, though she looks ill, by her silent softness, than before by her

youthful vivacity. Maria, almost as much wounded and to be pitied, carries off another kind of misfortune with a noble spirit." Horatio afterwards married Lord Hugh Seymour. "The Three Ladies Waldegrave" is perhaps the most celebrated of the pictures painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

In more recent times there was another Lady Waldegrave whose face made her fortune, the daughter of Braham, the singer. She first married the seventh Earl Waldegrave and afterwards Mr. Chichester Fortescue, who became Lord Carlingford. She was celebrated as one of the leaders of society in London.

After Lady Waldegrave, the most celebrated of the beauties who sat for portraits to Sir Joshua Reynolds, was Kitty Fisher. She was his model not only for "Venus," his "Danæ," and his "Cleopatra Dissolving the Pearl," but also for the arms, throats, and busts of the aristocratic sitters, whose portraits the artist was commissioned to paint. This Catharine Fisher, or "Fissher," who was said to have turned half the noblemen of England into fishermen, was the daughter of a German stay-maker. The lady did not captivate merely by her outward form, for she was accomplished, and the "life and soul of the company" wherein she moved. Whether she deserved it or not (we do not think that she did), she did not escape the tongue of scandal; but, perhaps, it was impossible in those days for so celebrated a beauty to do this. However this may be, Miss Fisher in 1766 settled down decorously in marriage with Mr. Norris, "a young gentleman of good Kentish family," his father the member for Rye. There could not have been much harm in the all-subduing Kitty, or else that stern moralist, Dr. Johnson, would not have regretted, as he did, that he happened to be out when she was brought by a friend to call upon him.

The singular loveliness of Bessie Surtees, of Newcastle, won the heart of a barrister called John Scott, and the young people ran away and were married. At first it did not look as if this were a case of a face making a fortune, for on the third day after their union their funds were exhausted; they had not a home to go to, and they did not know whether their friends would ever speak to them again. If, however, the early married life of Mrs. Scott was a struggle, she was rewarded when she saw her husband take his seat upon the wool-sack, and become Lord Eldon. The heart of another young barrister was captivated when Christina Fullerton looked at him "through eyes whose glances were as gentle as the music of her lute." The young barrister was Henry Erskine, who became Lord Advocate of Scotland.

Beauty has succeeded in winning many other barristers who became famous. Miss Towry, who married Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, was so beautiful that she was not only followed at balls and assemblies, but strangers used to collect in Bloomsbury Square to gaze at her as she watered the flowers in her balcony.

Georgiana, wife of the fifth Duke of Devonshire,

was known as the "Queen of the Whigs." Her mother was one whose face brought to her very good fortune. She was the daughter of a Mr. Poyntz, who was for some time travelling tutor to the third Duke of Devonshire. Falling in love with her, the son and heir of Earl Spencer only waited one day after he came of age until he married her. Although the wedding was private, the entry into London was anything but that. The cavalcade of horses and carriages was so great that the people of the villages it passed through ran out brandishing pitchforks and spades, and shouting: "The invasion is coming!" When the bride first appeared at Court she wore diamonds worth £100,000 that had belonged to Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. She was carried in a sedan-chair lined with white satin, preceded by a negro page, and followed by footmen in splendid liveries. The happiness of the couple, however, rested on a more solid foundation than satin and diamonds. They were charitable and generous, and so genuinely in love with each other that the bride of 1755 was able in 1776 to write to David Garrick: "It will to-morrow be one-and-twenty years since Lord Spencer married me, and I verily believe we have neither of us repented of our lot from that time to this."

"May the luck of the Gunnings attend you!" was the blessing of an Irish beggar man in Dublin; and the ejaculation passed into a proverb. The "luck of the Gunnings" had reference to the extraordinary social career of Maria and Elizabeth, daughters of J. Gunning, Esq., County Roscommon, Ireland. They were "countessed and double-duchessed," Maria



COUNTESS SPENCER, AND LADY GEORGINA SPENCER.

(After the painting by Sir J. Reynolds.)



MARIA, COUNTESS OF COVENTRY.
(After the painting by C. Read.)

marrying the Earl of Coventry, and Elizabeth taking for her first husband the Duke of Hamilton, and for her second the Duke of Argyle.

The father of these girls died, leaving his widow and daughters unprovided for. So poor were they that when the two beauties were presented at the Vice-regal Court in Dublin it was in clothes which their mother had borrowed for the occasion from a friend, the manager of the Theatre Royal. In 1750 the acute mother brought "the dear girls" to London, where they soon became the rage. Horace Walpole and Miss Berry speak of them. They were the chief topic of conversation in coffee-rooms and drawing-rooms. Politics were only a bad second in public estimation, for before them even ranked Miss Jeffries and Miss Blandy, two murderesses, who were hanged at Newgate the same year. "The general attention," says Sir Joshua Reynolds, "is divided between the two young ladies who were married and the two young ladies who were hanged."

Elizabeth Gunning took for her second husband the Duke of Argyle. This lady was sent to bring over Princess Charlotte. When approaching St. James's Palace, the princess began to cry. The experienced duchess smiled.

"Yes," said the princess angrily, "you may laugh, Duchess, you have been married twice; but to me it is no joke."

She died at the age of sixty-six. Although fond of money and of power, she used the former charitably, and she did not abuse the latter. Walpole is our great authority for the strange *furor* that was excited by these two sisters. He tells us how even the noble mob in the drawing-room clambered upon chairs and tables to look at them; how their doors were mobbed by crowds eager to see them get into their chairs, and places taken early at the theatres when they were

expected; how seven hundred people sat up all night, in and about a Yorkshire inn, to see the Duchess of Hamilton get into her post-chaise in the morning; while a shoemaker made money by showing the shoe he was making for the Countess of Coventry.

Miss Anne Eaton, who married the artist Leech, may be said not only to have made her own fortune by her pretty face, but that of her husband, for it became his model, as may be seen in most of the *Punch* drawings. To share fame with a celebrated man is not always good fortune, but Leech was the best of husbands and fathers. His tender anxiety for his wife and children was almost distressing at times to those about him.

One of the three daughters of Mr. Thomas Sheridan, son of the famous Sheridan, was called the "Queen of Beauty," because she presided in that character at the famous "Eglinton Tournament" in 1839. Nine years before this her beautiful face had won the heart and hand of Lord Seymour, later St. Maur. Helen, another of "The Three Graces," as Sheridan's granddaughters were called, married, when only eighteen, Mr. Price Blackwood, who, in 1839, succeeded to the title of Dufferin.

In conclusion, we would remind those who have been gifted with beauty that this talent is not given merely in order that they may make their own fortunes, but in order that they may use the influence which it enables them to exercise to diminish in some degree the misfortunes of others. Nor must we forget that there cannot be a high order of even physical beauty where indications of mental and moral efficiency are absent. Talleyrand once said of a lovely woman that "beauty was her least charm." A good-humoured face is in itself pretty; a pleasant smile half redeems unattractive features.



ELIZABETH, DUCHESS OF HAMILTON AND BRANDON, AND
DUCHESS OF ARGYLE.

(After the painting by C. Read.)