

IDA PFEFFER.

IN a well-to-do, but eminently commonplace, German burgher family a baby girl was born, and they baptised her in an eminently common-place way by the name of Ida. The mother was as stout, matter-of-fact a German *hausfrau* as ever ate *sauerkraut*, and she brought up the infant in a thoroughly practical, ordinary manner, until she was able to run alone. Then the unusual and the abnormal began to step into little Ida's story.

The father was a man of a very original mind ; he had peculiar ideas about most things, and most especially he had peculiar ideas about female education. How he came to choose his very prosaic mate, appears to us to be, in truth, a matter of surprise, as we look at the strangely-assorted pair ; except that the happiest marriages are sometimes the result of strongly-marked contrasts, and this husband and wife, certainly a strong contrast in character and opinion, yet proved to be a very happy and harmonious couple.

When their first little daughter was born, the father at once made up his mind that he would carry out with her all his extraordinary notions with regard to the education of women ; and the mother, though her opinions were most diametrically opposite on the subject, yet nevertheless put the girl, as soon as she could prattle, completely into his hands.

Now the system of education which Ida's father proposed to carry out with regard to her was simply this : he was resolved that she was to be brought up precisely as if she were a boy. The little girl was dressed as a boy, and was taught to join in all boys' games. She engaged in all sorts of out-of-door exercises and sports, and became expert in running and leaping. She was taught Greek and Latin, instead of music and dancing and other feminine accomplishments ; a needle was never so much as put between her fingers.

Thus things went on with little Ida till she was about ten years old, when the course of her young life was entirely changed.

The father died rather suddenly, and Ida was immediately, of course, thrown under the sole care of her mother.

No doubt the troubles of the poor lady, when left a widow, were a good deal increased by the fact that she had this anomalous being, this boy-girl, upon her hands. However, she made short work of the problem which her husband had left her ; she solved it at once in her own matter-of-fact way. She popped Ida into petticoats before the girl could look around, and set her to sweep the house, and learn to cook and to sew, according to the fashion of all German maidens of her rank and age.

But the good lady soon found to her cost that she could not cut the Gordian knot in this summary way as she had intended. It was all

very well to bid Ida to do this or that in a proper housewifely manner, but it was quite another thing to get her to do it. She had been coerced into petticoats it was true, but she still persisted in being a boy to all intents and purposes. She was forced by her mother to do all sorts of domestic offices, but never were such offices performed in a like way before. Pitchers were broken, puddings were spoiled, rents were left in luckless garments, as the recusant damsel went hither and thither in the house performing her unwilling duties; and had not her mother possessed a very large fund of firm resolution, she would have given the attempt up in thorough desperation of making her daughter into a young lady.

If the good *frau* set the girl down to study a cookery-book, she found her, when she returned to the room, deep in a volume of travels; if she beheld her on a summer afternoon sewing her sampler in the garden, and her maternal eyes rejoiced in the sight, she was sure, did she look away for a few minutes, to perceive, to her dismay, that the *fraulein* had vanished, and after some search, to see her seated on the topmost branch of a tall tree; if she left the girl trundling her mop diligently, as she fondly thought, in the front hall, she would find the pail left in the lurch, while the young lady rushed after a passing post-chaise, and indulged in all sorts of airy speculations about its inmates. In short, never was unfortunate middle-aged matron so hardly bested through the pranks of a maiden.

The civil war in the household between the mother and daughter continued some five or six years, and still the refractory damsel was unsubdued. She chose to be a boy, in spite of long skirts and braided hair. She declared stoutly that she would be one, and a boy in all her tastes, in all her aspirations, in all her habits, she remained.

Then the mother hit upon a new expedient to subjugate the unruly *fraulein*, who, notwithstanding her protestations that she was a boy, and nothing but a boy, had become a very pretty girl, with a step as light and swift as a breeze, with a form as flexible as a young willow, with eyes all alight with fancy, and mirth, and romance; she resolved that she would engage a tutor for Ida, and try the effect upon her of instruction imparted by a man.

The plan succeeded even beyond the good lady's expectation.

All at once the girl became docile, meek, womanly, and domestic. No need now to chide her for housewifely duties undone. She was the very ideal at last of the household fairy of the family, who glided from room to room working noiseless spells of order. The mother looked on with approval and delight, and congratulated herself on the result of her scheme.

For some little time the mother dreamed on tranquilly a bright, peaceful dream concerning her wondrously-transformed daughter. Then there was for her a rude awakening. As she walked one day down the most sequestered side of the large garden, she caught sight of a very unexpected vision—a vision which caused the hair under

her highly-respectable cap to stand on end with horror ; it was Ida in the arms of her tutor.

Here was the key to the mystery regarding the alteration in the girl. Love was the enchanter, who, with his magic wand, had touched the maiden and changed her in a moment. The tutor's ideal of a woman had been a sweet, modest, gracious, domestic being. The girl had loved him from the very outset of their intercourse, and at once she had moulded herself into his mode. What wonder that his heart had caught fire from the radiant eyes of his fair pupil, and they became affianced lovers almost before they knew it.

The mother, however, had very different views for her daughter's future. The tutor was poor, and his birth was obscure ; she at once forbade him the house, and commanded Ida never to speak to him again.

Then came a time of terrible anguish for the girl, whose strong nature could do nothing by halves, and she had emphatically given away her whole heart.

There is not space here to enter into the whole history of the conflict between the mother and daughter. The end of the story only concerns us. Ida at last consented to give up her lover, but at the same time she made a vow that she would accept the first suitor that came to woo her. He came quickly in the person of a doctor of law called Pfeffer, a man twice her age, and as dry as one of his own law-books. He could have been no congenial mate for a bright, impulsive, quick-witted girl, but Ida was true to her vow, and at once accepted and married him. What was in the mother's heart, when she beheld her finished work, there is no record to say.

The marriage was in every way unfortunate. Several children were born to the pair, but the affection between them did not increase ; there was no real sympathy for each other in either heart or mind. Dr. Pfeffer might have been proud of the physical attractions of his young wife, perhaps, at first, but the charm of novelty soon wore away. He was very extravagant, and moreover managed his worldly affairs extremely ill ; he got into debt, and money grew more and more scarce in the family.

The time came at length when Madame Pfeffer literally did not know how to pay for the barest necessities of life for herself and her children ; her husband left her, and behaved in a way at once cowardly and heartless.

Ida Pfeffer's conduct at this trying period was brave and noble in the extreme. She did not accuse her husband ; she maintained a dignified silence about him ; no breath of slander ever touched her reputation ; she was a devoted mother, and even went without food herself, if only her children might be fed. She looked up to God, and was tranquilly cheerful even in her sorest need.

As years went on things grew gradually brighter for Ida Pfeffer. Her husband died and she was free from a heavy chain. Her brother was able to help her with a little money; her children grew up and were all gaining their own livelihood. Then there woke within her the longing for distant travel, which for years she had repressed, and she determined to satisfy it.

Then followed that series of wonderful journeys which have signalised her name.

Comparatively without money, without any of the appliances and aids to travel, in an age when female travellers were extremely rare even in Europe, she took long voyages alone, she penetrated alone into then almost unknown lands, she dwelt alone amid savage tribes. We see her in a dense South American forest, led by an Indian guide who suddenly turns upon her, and nothing but a miracle saves her through the intervention of a passing traveller. We see her wrapping herself in her cloak and calmly lying down to sleep on the deck of a vessel in a terrible storm; we see her surrounded by a crowd of cannibals, and averting death by a well-timed joke. Approaching age and infirmities did not damp her course or her thirst for adventure. Her children implored her to rest under their loving care; the Government of her country, which for some years had recognised her as one of the most remarkable women of the age, even forbade her to leave her native land; but it was all in vain: she stole away and again engaged in some dangerous distant journey.

At length the last earthly wandering came for Ida Pfeffer. According to her usual plan of concealing her projected travels, she slipped away one day from her family and took ship for Madagascar, which island at that time was in a very disturbed state. A queen reigned there who was peculiarly hostile to Europeans. She seized Madame Pfeffer, together with a few more travellers, and put them into close confinement. For some time they lingered in an unhealthy prison, with the fear of death hanging over their heads; but they were at last liberated, and Ida Pfeffer and her companions enjoyed once more freedom and safety.

These blessings, however, came too late for the courageous old traveller. Her health had been shattered by the hardships and suspense of that rigorous confinement in that trying climate. She journeyed back to her native land and died peacefully in the arms of her son. She has left for herself a fair chapter in the history of woman.

ALICE KING.