

FASHION AND PRECEDENCE.

Follies to Whose Decrees Weak Humanity Humbly Bows.

The Old Man on the Mountain Moralizes, and Adorns His Moral with a True Tale.

Among the highest mountains none is higher than that old mountain called "Imagination." Its summit pierces through the lower skies; to ascend its highest peak but few aspire, and even then are dazzled with the contemplation.

Of the vast scenes unfolded to their eyes, there was more than the old man said; from where one overlooks the ample night from whence old Jupiter his thunderbolts once hurled.

And this was what the old man saw: She sat upon a brilliant throne, the perfect incorporation of youth, and beauty, and loveliness, and grace, and elegance, and imperiousness, and delicious lavishness, and of all the adjectives which express the adorable.

Those who knew her not presumed that she was the goddess of coquetry, which was a very good guess, and not a bad appellation; but the old man on the mountain peak knew that she was the Empress of the world.

Her subjects were queens and princesses and duchesses and baronesses and mistresses' wives and daughters, and tradesmen's wives and daughters, and farmers' wives and daughters—in short, every female inhabitant of the earth, and if her way was not absolute over men, it came very near being so, for she ruled in the liveliest manner to furnish the means to pay for what was forced on the wives and daughters, for never a female existed who dared to object to anything which was offered by their empress, Miss Kyrene Fashion, and they had dared they would have been banished at once to the island called unwomanly.

As for the men, the old man on the mountain peak whispered: "Men are too ignorant to be against anything which she estimates as being in the interest of the welfare of her subjects—if she had considered the health of the women, and estimated the pocketbooks of the men, and offered only such things as were appropriate to both." But the old man comprehended that this would be the same as to give the old man had been made different, it would have been better, and the old man was too much an optimist to say that.

As for Kyrene, she seemed utterly regardless of anything but her own pleasure. She appeared to have absorbed all of the selfishness of the world, but never was potent against anything but utter devotion. If ever a feminine kick was made at any of her edicts, it was so slight that it did not display the toe of a shoe, or disturb the fold of a feminine dress.

As for the men, the old man on the mountain peak whispered: "Men are too ignorant to be against anything which she estimates as being in the interest of the welfare of her subjects—if she had considered the health of the women, and estimated the pocketbooks of the men, and offered only such things as were appropriate to both." But the old man comprehended that this would be the same as to give the old man had been made different, it would have been better, and the old man was too much an optimist to say that.

Very moderate language, Phoebus appeared to Kyrene like his predecessor with another surname (Apollo), and Kyrene, sitting in the province of Spain (Bastie) and adorned with the island of Cuba (gon of the Antilles), and perfumed with a city of Rhenish Prussia (Cologne), and he dragged her train through the wild forest appeared to Phoebus like a silver-plated locomotive.

Such beauty and power combined was to him as for the first time he felt the charm of novelty. There was no one to introduce these two, but Kyrene knew the female prerogative, and said: "I am Kyrene Fashion, the Empress of the world. I rule all womankind (and mankind, too, she whispered to herself). Who have I the honor of addressing?"

Phoebus answered in his most majestic suavity of manner: "I am Phoebus, President, the Emperor of the world, I rule all mankind (and womankind, too)," he whispered, too low for Kyrene to hear.

"I have heard of you," said Kyrene, "and I am delighted to meet you. You must be weary," she added; "some home with me and I will give you some lunch."

Phoebus accepted the invitation gratefully, for he was hungry, and he desired particularly to see more of Kyrene. She gave him for lunch the country of the Sultan in Europe and Asia (Turkey), and some islands in the Pacific Ocean (Sandwich); and for beverage, an ancient French and Spanish dynasty (Old Bourbon), and an island in the North Atlantic (Madiera). It was a simple repast, but Phoebus enjoyed it immensely, for everything was *en fait, en regle*, and fit for a dainty.

While they were partaking of their lunch, the old man on the mountain peak, with his head above the lower peak, looked up and saw a beautiful little girl, smiling and waving a coil of silken cord in her hand, so fine that human eyes could not see it, but the old man saw it, and he could see many things which others would never look for. Even the girl was invisible to mortal eyes. The old man knew that she was the young daughter of the god of Heaven and Earth, and he saw, by the twinkle in her eyes, that she was out on a lark; so he watched her.

She came down the mountain, and Kyrene and Phoebus were taking their lunch, and before either of them knew that she was there she had stood the end of the mountain, and then she stood back with the middle of the coil in her little hand, and laughed sweetly. "You may have heard her whisper for he had long ears, 'Won't I make you two humbugs hop presently!'"

When they had eaten nearly everything, the old man on the mountain peak said: "I believe I could sit here and eat you, just to be with you," and Kyrene laughed and said, "Well, if you are hungry, you may have a little cake at the southern extremity of Africa (Good Hope), and take it home with you."

Phoebus thought he owned the whole world, and he was willing to have it given to him over again by Kyrene, so he said, "Thank you; I shall be much pleased to take it with me." (Of course, the old man on the mountain peak did not note all of their conversation, only such remarks as he thought applicable to his purpose.)

see the box opened, with his eyes shining in anticipation of Kyrene's happiness. She unlocked the box, threw back the lid, and there, exposed to her gaze, was a long lead.

Kyrene's eyes opened wide with astonishment. "What is this?" asked she. Phoebus answered, in a reverent tone: "It is a precedent, and the costliest dress ever worn by woman. I should have liked to have brought you a pre-emptive precedent, but the outside world could pierce these old stone walls to intrude and I had promised you the costliest."

Kyrene's eyes were blazing with anger. Very beautiful she looked in her rage, as she asked, in accents of supreme scorn: "Is this the beautiful wedding trousseau you were so anxious to provide for the Empress of the World? She who has hunted the realms of fancy for the elegant and the exquisite, and spent her time dressing in the most delicate and comfortable of textures? Oh! you old humbug! I hate you, and I will never marry you as long as you live!"

Phoebus shrank back amazed, but he also felt relieved from the apprehension which had oppressed him so long. Precedent! He was a rule, for here was the rule, and he never does run smooth." Phoebus now spoke in a deprecating tone, and with a lowly bow, said: "My dear Kyrene, you are displeased, I brought you the costliest dress ever worn by woman, as I said, very humbly and very angrily at me. I thought that you cared for precedent, as I care for Fashion. Think, for a moment, what that gift has cost the world, and what it has done for you. It has been expended in dress up to this time, and then, again, if there had been no dresses to wear, where would you have been? Could Fashion exist without some kind of dress? Can you comprehend that your existence and mine are both founded on precedent? Let us bury our differences and be united and we will continue to rule the world, as we have ruled it."

Kyrene began to understand his reverence for the past, and she was also ashamed of her own conduct, which she knew was not in accordance with good taste, and if there was anything she was proud of in herself it was good taste. "I called you an old humbug, I am sorry,"

Never mind that, said Phoebus, smiling. "If you marry me you will be a humbug, too."

And may I always select my own dresses hereafter? asked Kyrene. "Certainly," replied Phoebus, "I shall never desire to select a lady's dress again."

Just then the little girl jerked the two together, and they fell into each other's arms. The old man on the mountain peak could not see whether it was their noses which hit each other, or something else, but he saw that they were laughing and smiling.

Old Hymen was sent for, and he tied them together with one of his Gordian knots. The little girl stooped down and kissed the forehead of each, and then she stood up, and she passed the old man on the mountain peak, on her way home, she smiled sweetly and said: "That is the way to get on in the world, and if you are a beautiful pair of humbugs, and I hope they will be happy."

"FOR ISOBEL." Lost in dreamy meditation, with the golden glory of the slowly setting sun warm around her and sinking like a great ball of fire to rest behind the distant hills, Isobel, a stillness of death pervails in the large, white room for what she had done, and there, exposed to her gaze, was a long lead.

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