ST. TAMMANY FARMER.

Covington, January 11, 1879.

TWO FAIR DECEIVERS.

What do men talk about when they sit at the window smoking on summer evenings? Do you suppose it is of love? Indeed, I suspect it is of money, or of something that either makes money or spends it.

Cleve Sullivan has been spending four years in Europe, and he has just been telling his friend John Selden how he spent it. John has spent his in New York—he is inclined to think just as profitably. Both stories end in the same way.

"I have not $1000 left, John."

"Nor I, Cleve."

"I thought your cousin died two years ago; surely, you haven't spent all the old gentleman's money?"

"I only got $20,000, and owed half of it."

"Only $20,000! What did he do with the rest of it?"

"Gave it to his wife. He married a beauty about a year after you went away, and left her his whole fortune."

"And the widow—where is she?"

"Living at his country seat. I have never seen her. She was one of the St. Maurs, of Maryland."

"A good family, and all beauties. Why don't you marry the widow?"

"I never thought of such a thing."

"You can't think of anything better. Write her a little note at once. Say that you and I will soon be in the neighborhood—then beg leave to call and pay respects," etc.

John demurred a good deal to the plan, but Cleve mastered, the note was written, and Cleve himself put it in the postoffice.

That was on Monday night. On Wednesday morning the widow Clare found it with a dozen others on her breakfast table. She was quite aware that John Selden had regarded himself for many years as his cousin's heir, and that her marriage with the late Thomas Clare had seriously altered his prospects. John would scarcely have liked the half-contemptuous smile which terminated her thoughts on the matter.

"Clementine, if you could spare a moment from your fashion paper, I want to consult you, dear, about a visitor."

Clementine raised her blue eyes, dropped her paper, and said, "Who is it, Fan?"

"It is John Selden. If Mr. Clare had not married me, he would have inherited the Clare estate. I think he is coming now to see if it is worth asking for, encumbered by his cousin's widow."

"What selfishness! Write and tell him that you are just leaving for the Sandwich Islands, or some other inconvenient place."

"No. I have a better plan than that. I will take that pretty cottage at Ryebank for the summer and Mr. Selden and his friend shall visit us there. No one knows us in the place, and I will take none of the servants with me."

"Well?"

"Then, Clementine, you are to be the widow Clare, and I your poor friend and companion."

"Good! 'The Fair Deceivers!' An excellent comedy. How I shall snub you, Fan! And for once, I shall have the pleasure of outdressing you. But has not Mr. Selden seen you?"

"No. I was married in Maryland, went immediately to Europe, and came back a widow two years ago. I wonder who this friend is that he proposes to bring with him?"

"Oh, men always think in pairs, Fan. I dare say they wrote the letter together. What is his name?"

"Mr. Cleve Sullivan. Do you know him, Clementine?"

"No. I am quite sure that I never saw Mr. Cleve Sullivan. I don't fall in love with the name, do you? But pray accept the offer for both gentlemen, Fan, and write this morning, dear."

The plan so hastily sketched was thoroughly discussed and carried out. The cottage at Ryebank was taken. The new widow Clare had engaged a maid in New York, and fell into her part with charming ease and a pretty assumption of authority; and the real widow realized effectively the idea of a cultivated but dependent companion.

Fan and Clementine were quite ready for their first call, the latter in a rich exquisite morning costume, the former in a simple dress of spotted lawn. Clementine went through the introductions with a consummate ease of manner, and in half an hour they were a pleasant party. John's "cousinship" afforded an excellent basis for informal companionship, and Clementine gave it full prominence. In a few days it was "Cousin John, do this," and "Cousin John, come here," until the relationship became tiresome. One night when he and Cleve sat down to smoke their final cigar, he was irritable enough to give his objections the form of speech.

"Cleve, to tell you the honest truth, I do not like Mrs. Clare."

"I think she is a very lovely woman, John."

"I say nothing against her beauty, Cleve; I don't like her, and I do not care to occupy the place that beautiful Miss Marat fills. The way Cousin Clare snubs a woman to whom she is every way inferior, makes me angry enough, I assure you."

"Don't fall in love with the wrong woman, John."

"Your advice comes too late. I am in love. There is no use for us to deceive each other. You seem to like the widow—why not marry her? I am willing you should."

"Thank you, John; I have made some advances that way, and they were favorably received, I think."

"You are so handsome, a fellow has no chance against you. But we shall hardly quarrel, if you do not interfere between lovely little Clement and myself."

"I could not afford to smile on her, John, she is too poor. Nothing added to nothing will not make a decent living."

"I am going to ask her to be my wife, and if she does me the honor to say "yes," I will make a decent living out of my profession."

From this time forth John devoted himself to his supposed cousin's companion, while Cleve and the widow were always together. It was noticeable that while the ladies became more confidential with their lovers, they had less to say to each other, and it became evident to the real widow that the play must soon end for the present, or the denouement would come prematurely. Circumstances favored her determination. One night Clementine, with a radiant face, came into her friend's room and said: "Fan, I have something to tell you. Cleve has asked me to marry him."

"Now, Clement, you have told him all; I know you have."

"Not a word, Fan; he still believes me the widow Clare."

"Did you accept him?"

"Conditionally. I am to give him a final answer when we go to the city in October. You are going to New York this winter, are you not?"

"Yes. Our little play progresses finely. Jonn Selden asked me to be his to-night."

"I told you men think and act in pairs."

"John is a noble fellow. I pretended to think his cousin had ill-used him, and he defended him until I was ashamed of myself; he absolutely said, Clement, that you were a sufficient excuse for Mr. Clare's will. Then he blamed his own past idleness, and promised, if I would only try to bear 'the slings and arrows of your outrageous temper, Clement,' for two years longer, he would make a home for me in which I could be happy. Yes, Clement, I would marry John Selden, if we had not five dollars between us."

"I wish Cleve had been more explicit about his money affairs. However, there is time enough yet. When they leave to-morrow, what shall we do?"

"We will remain here another month; Levine will have the house ready for me by that time. I have written to him about refurnishing the parlors."

So next day the lovers parted, with many promises of constant letters and future happy days together. The interval was long and dull enough; but it passed, and one morning both gentlemen received notes of invitation to the widow Clare's mansion, in —— street.

Scarcely had they entered the drawing room when the ladies appeared, the true widow Clare wearing a magnificent dress of white crepe lisse and satin, her arms and throat and pretty head flashing with diamonds. Her companion had assumed the role of simplicity, and Cleve was disappointed with the first glance at her plain white gauze dress.

John saw nothing but the bright face of the girl he loved, and taking both her hands, he whispered, "My dearest and best and loveliest Clement."

Her smile answered him first. Then she said: "Pardon me, Mr. Selden, but we have been in masquerade all summer, and now we must unmask before real life begins. My name is not Clementine Marat, but Fanny Clare. 'Cousin John, I hope you are not disappointed." Then she put her hand into John's, and they wandered off into the conservatory to finish their explanation.

Mr. Cleve Sullivan found himself at that moment in the most trying circumstance of his life. The real Clementine Marat stood looking down at a flower on the carpet, and evidently expected him to assume the tender attitude he had been accustomed to bear toward her. He was a man of quick decision. This plain blonde girl, without fortune, was not the girl he could marry. She had deceived him, too—he had a sudden and severe spell of morality; "his confidence was broken; he thought it was very poor sport to play with a man's most sacred feelings; he had been deeply disappointed and grieved," etc.

"Have you done, sir," at length she asked, lifting to his face a pair of blue eyes scintillating with scorn and anger. "I promised you my final answer to your suit when we met in New York. You have spared me the trouble. Good evening, sir."

Clementine showed to no one her disappointment, and she probably soon recovered from it. Her life was full of many other plans and hopes, and she could well afford to let a selfish lover pass out of it. She remained with her friend until after her marriage with John Selden, and then Cleve saw her name among the list of passengers sailing on one particular day for Europe. As John and his bride left on the same steamer, Cleve supposed, of course, she had gone in their company.

"Nice thing it would have been, for Cleve Sullivan to have married John Selden's wife's maid, or something or other. John always was a lucky fellow. Some fellows are always unlucky in love affairs—I always am."

Half a year afterward he reiterated this statement, with a great deal of unnecessary emphasis. He was just buttoning his gloves preparatory to starting on his afternoon's drive, when an old acquaintance hailed him.

"Oh, it's that fool Belmar," he muttered; "I shall have to offer him a ride. I thought he was in Paris. Hello, Belmar, when did you get back? Have a ride?"

"No, thank you. I promised my wife to ride with her this afternoon."

"Your wife? When were you married?"

"Last month, in Paris."

"And the happy lady was—"

"Why, I thought you knew; every one is talking about my good fortune. Mrs. Belmar is old Paul Marat's only child."

"What?"

"Miss Clementine Marat. She brings me nearly $3,000,000 in real estate and money, and a heart beyond all price."

"How on earth did you meet her?"

"She was traveling with the Seldens. She and Mrs. Selden have been friends since they were girls together."

Cleve gathered up his reins, and nodding to Mr. Belmar, drove at a terrible rate up the avenue. For once, Mr. Cleve Sullivan told Mr. Cleve Sullivan that he had been badly punished, and that he well deserved it.

NOT A MARRYING GIRL.

They were seated together, side by side, on the sofa, in the most approved lover fashion—his arm encircling her taper waist, etc.

"Lizzie," he said, "you must have read my heart ere this; you must know how dearly I love you."

"Yes, Fred; you have certainly been very attentive," said Lizzie.

"But, Lizzie, darling. do you love me? Will you be my wife?"

"Your wife, Fred! Of all things, no! No, indeed, nor any one else's."

"Lizzie, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say, Fred. I've two married sisters."

"Certainly! and Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Skinner have very good husbands, I believe."

"So people say; but I wouldn't like to stand in either May's or Nell's shoes; that's all."

"Lizzie, you astonish me."

"Look here, Fred; I've had other twenty-five sleigh rides this winter thanks to you and my other gentleman friends."

Fred winced a little here, whether at the remembrance of that unpaid livery bill, or the idea of Lizzie's sleighing with her other gentleman friends, I can not positively say.

"How many do you think my sisters have had? Not the sign of one, either of them. Such pretty girls as May and Nellie were, too, and as much attention they used to have."

"Now, Lizzie—"

"I am fond of going to the theatre occasionally, as well as a lecture or concert sometimes, and I shouldn't like it if I proposed attending any such entertainment, to be invariably told that times were hard and my husband couldn't afford it, and then have him sneak off alone."

"Lizzie, Lizzie—"

"And then, if once in a coon's age he did condescend to go with me anywhere in the evening, I wouldn't like to be left to pick my way along the slippery places at the risk of breaking my neck, he walking along unconsciously by my side. I'm of a dependent, clinging nature, and I need the protection of a strong arm."

"Lizzie, this is all nonsense."

"I'm the youngest in our family, and perhaps I have been spoiled. At all events, I know it would break my heart to have my husband vent all the ill-temper which he conceals from the world on my defenseless head."

"But, Lizzie, I promise you—"

"Oh, yes, Fred; I know what you are going to say—that you will be different; but Mary and Nell have told me time and again that no better husband than theirs ever lived; no, Fred, as a lover you are just perfect, and I shall hate awfully to give you up. Still, if you are bent on marrying, there are plenty of girls who have no married sisters, or who are not wise enough to profit by their example, if they have. And don't fret about me, Fred, for I'm no doubt I can find some one to fill your place—"

But before Lizzie had concluded, Fred made for the door, muttering something "unmentionable to ears polite."

"There!" exclaimed Lizzie, as the door closed with a bang. "I knew he was no better than the rest. That's the way John and Alick swear and slam doors, when things don't go just right. He'd make a perfect bear of a husband; but I'm sorry he came to the point so soon, for he was just a splendid beau."