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OLIVE'S STEP-MOTHER.

BY HARRIET ESTHER WARNER.

'Married! My papa married? I have a step-mother? Surely, aunt, you are mistaken!' And the speaker, a dark-eyed, handsome girl, looked surprised and incredulous.

'But it is quite true, for I have just received a letter from your papa, and he wrote that he had married a dainty darling from the New England States, and he sends his love to his precious Olla, and wants her to welcome her new mamma and love her for his sake. I hope you will be happy together,' added the aunt, kindly; and she meant what she said, for she had been friend, mother and counsellor to Olive Desmond for five years, and although Olive was only a distant relative she loved her as though she had been her own daughter.

'O aunt! Papa married!'

There was a touch of woe in Olive's voice as she repeated the words.

'Yes, your papa is really married. Surely you are not annoyed or angry, Olive?'

'Annoyed or angry?' repeated Olive, her black eyes growing blacker, and her scarlet cheeks more scarlet than ever. 'Oh, auntie, I am shocked and hurt beyond expression! The idea of papa's marrying and bringing a step-mother to take my angel mamma's place in our old home and—'

But Olive was interrupted by the entrance of a gay young fellow of about twenty years of age, the handsome step-son of her aunt, Gertrude Vaughan. He was a little wild, perhaps, as his only occupation now was the cultivation of a stunted mustache. But he was a good natured fellow, and full of fun.

'Why, Olla, practicing for the boards?' were his first words as he saw indignant Olive. 'By jove! you do the grand tragedy well!'

'Don't talk nonsense, Frank! This is a serious matter—at least to Olive It is,' said his step-mother.

'Whew! well, just wait till I get my handkerchief. Now I'm ready to weep. Tell me the worst I'm prepared for it.'

And Gertrude told him of Olive's father's marriage, and of Olive's angry sorrow at the thought of having a step-mother.

'Well ain't that enough to make any one angry?' asked Frank. 'Words can't do the subject justice. Look at me, my beloved cousin, and shudder! Am I not a surviving specimen of the tyrannical rule of a step-mother? I would shed tears for you, Olive, but I have used up all I had to spare on my sorrowful self.'

'Now you are just laughing at me,' said Olive half crying.

'Laughing! No, indeed! There isn't even the faintest shadow of a smile about me. This serious affair and my sincere pity for you has given me gravity enough to last a lifetime, and plenty to spare to set up four deacons with the article.'

Olive was disgusted, and she left the room with all the dignity she could command. Frank gave his step-mother a hasty kiss, and muttered something about leaving the matter to him; he knew 'how to manage Olla;' and followed his cousin into the garden.

'I say, Olla,' began Frank, as he flung himself on the grass beside her. 'Why don't you get married too, and be even with the governor?'

'The idea!' pouted Olive. 'I wouldn't get married for anything! And besides, there is no one to marry me, even if I wanted to get married.'

'Well, now, I call that treating a fellow rather coolly. Here I've been your devoted slave and admirer for the last two months, only to be snubbed this way. But 'sich is life' and I suppose I'll have to stand it.'

'Why, I never thought of you Frank,' answered Olive.

'You didn't? Well, now, that's queer. And then I suppose you haven't the assurance to propose to a fellow, so I'll offer myself. Now, my beloved cousin, I lay my heart, hand and fortune at your feet, and throw myself into the bargain. Say that magical word, and your humble servant will consider that he has been transported to the seventh heaven.'

'What a simpleton you are, Frank!' said Olive. 'The idea of our getting married! I am going to marry some great and distinguished man.'

'Just my ticket,' was the nonchalant rejoinder. 'I am, or was going to marry some beautiful and accomplished lady, but, being very philanthropic in my disposition, I concluded to sacrifice myself. Yet if you won't have me, I guess I will achieve my early ambition.'

'If conceit was of money value I think you could pay the national debt, Frank,' said Olive with a smile.

'Don't be personal,' replied Frank, 'but shake hands and make up and talk about step-mothers. What are you going to do about the matter? Receive them with open arms and be happy, or pout and let them coax you?'

'Neither!' said Olive the angry gleam flashing in her black eyes again. 'I am going away where they won't see me.'

'And let concealment like a worm—'

'Do be serious just for one minute!' interrupted Olive, completely exasperated with his bantering tone. 'What would you do if you were in my place, Frank?'

'I might relate to you my experience.'

'Don't!' interrupted Olive. 'We've listened to that often enough already. And just remember that Aunt Gertie is an ideal step-mother, and not like other step-mothers.'

'Well,' said Frank, with borrowed gravity, 'the first thing in consideration is the terrible fact that your father's wife is now a step-mother. That is a crime of itself. When a lovely and amiable woman becomes a step-mother, she is immediately transformed into all that is evil. But then this woman a week ago was not a step-mother, and maybe the hoofs and horns have not sprouted yet. So I think you had better receive your father's wife. I'll be around to protect you in case of an emergency.'

The tears began to moisten Olive's dark eyes.

'You haven't one bit of feeling for me, Frank!' said she, piteously.

'Now you would not say that, Olla, if you could see the frantic struggle that is going on under my left vest pocket; but seriously, little coz, the wise thing to do is to see your father's wife and give her a fair trial; take her on trial, at least, and when everything is lovely you can thank me for being your wise counsellor in your hour of trouble.'

'You are a heathen, Frank, and I'm going away to-morrow.' And away walked Olive, looking very indignant and feeling very miserable.

She was as good as her word, and next day she went on a visit to friends in New England, to be gone an indefinite length of time. It was all to no purpose that her aunt expostulated, coaxed, argued, and even scolded, for Olive was very wilful and determined when she chose to be.

But Olive must not be blamed too harshly. It seemed a terrible fact that her father had married at all, and to marry without her knowledge or consent was too awful to be endured; so she determined to punish him by not seeing his wife. Olive had sometimes thought that it would be nice to have some one to love her in her mamma's place—some one who would turn their grand, servant-ruled mansion back into the groove that mamma had kept it in.

Yet Olive did not pause to think, but acted on the rash impulse of wounded feeling; and when Mr. and Mrs. Desmond came they found that their daughter had fled as from a plague.

A month after Olive Desmond had taken her sudden departure she was sitting on the porch of a New England farm house, trying very hard to be miserable, and she succeeded admirably.

'Oh, dear!' she sighed. 'I wish I had stayed at Aunt Gertie's and seen papa's wife, anyhow. She couldn't have hurt me, and I might have learned to like her just a little.'

Olive was about ready to indulge in a good cry, when a servant brought her a letter. The letter was from Frank Vaughan, and he wrote that she might 'return now, as the coast was clear, and no sign of the enemy at present,' and that he would be 'body guard and prevent bloodshed in case of a sudden attack,' and he really hoped she would come back, as he was most 'confoundedly lonely.'

Olive was only too glad of an invitation to return, and in a few days she was reinstated at her Aunt Gertrude Vaughan's. Two or three days passed, and one afternoon Olive was seated in a favorite nook in the garden, trying to think which was the wisest course to pursue with regard to her step-mother, when her meditations were interrupted by Frank rushing up to her and whispering, mysteriously,—

'She's come!'

'Who has come?' asked Olive.

'Haven't you heard? Didn't mother tell you that her niece was coming to visit her?' querried Frank.

'Oh!' said Olive looking relieved.

'Well she has come, and of course you will think she is dreadful. But consider yourself a martyr, and try and make the best of it.'

Contrary to Frank's prediction, Olive was wonderfully pleased with this niece of Aunt Gertrude's. She had never heard of her before, but she was too much interested in the Edith of the present to inquire about the Edith of the past. To Olive, Edith Harvey seemed like a living portrait of those rarely beautiful women one seldom sees outside a picture frame. She was rather tall, slender and graceful, with a pink and lily complexion, and a aureola of golden hair that waved naturally. Even her name was a favorite name with Olive, and it seemed to suit Edith Harvey exactly. It was wonderful how their friendship progressed. The quiet winning disposition of Edith, and the loving, impetuous nature of Olive, seemed to find an affinity in each other.

One, two, three and four weeks crept by before the agitated question of step-mother was fully settled. Olive was going home to see her; that she decided herself, because Edith thought she had better go, and to Olive, Edith Harvey's opinion was paramount to all others.

Olive prevailed upon Edith to go with her to see her new mamma, and Frank went too, as he didn't consider it safe for female loveliness and innocence to travel unprotected. When the two arrived at the Desmond mansion, they were told by a servant that Mr. and Mrs. Desmond were out, but would be in presently.

Olive assigned Edith to a guest chamber, and told her to look as pretty as possible, and together they would eclipse Mrs. Desmond.

'You should try and love Mrs. Desmond instead of trying to eclipse her.'

'Oh, you don't know her!' said Olive, with a stiffled sob. 'Now, if she was only like you, Edie, it would be different. But we can't help it now.' And Olive shut her lips resolutely as she left the room.

Olive dressed herself elaborately, preparatory to meeting Mrs. Desmond. Her trailing robe was of garnet velvet, and garnet jewels glittered on her hair, around her throat and arms, and tiny stars of garnet swung in her ears.

When Olive went down to the parlor, it was with the haughty air of a queen prepared to overwhelm an offending subject. But her assumed hauteur deserted her when she entered the parlor. For whom should she see but Edith Harvey, looking rarely lovely, clad in blue silk, with pearl ornaments, and standing very close to Papa Desmond and Papa Desmond's arm was actually around her slender waist.

Olive was speechless with astonment, and before she could recover herself Mr. Desmond explained matters by saying.—

'Olla, my darling, this is my wife Edith, my love, this is my daughter, Olive.'

'Really and truly?' gasped Olive.

'Yes, really and truly,' said Papa Desmond, with a smile.

'It seems too good to be true,' said Olive, kissing Edith and calling her mother.

'Then you are not angry at the deception we practiced?' asked Mrs. Desmond.

'Angry! No, indeed! I'm overjoyed! But what ever made you think of it?'

'It was Frank who planned it all,' replied Mrs. Desmond.

'Yes, Olla,' said Frank, coming forward, 'I cannot tell a lie. I planned the awful web for you to get entangled in. There—don't try to thank me. Words can't do the subject justice. I know I'm too good for this world, but I'm willing to live a hundred years or so for the good of the rest of mankind—and womankind also.'

'Well, you are just a darling, anyway!' declared Olive.

'Dear me!' soliloquized Frank. 'There is no accounting for the fickleness of the female mind. Not two months ago I was called a heathen for suggesting the present state of affairs. But I'm thankful for the fact that I'm appreciated. They say genius is born to be snubbed, but there has been an exception to the rule in my favor.'

After Olive was satisfied that there was no mistake, and beautiful Edith Harvey was her much hated step-mother, she began to wonder if step-mothers were really such dreadful creatures, after all, and appealed to Frank for his opinion; Frank told her that words were useless when two innocent victims like themselves were proof against that extraordinary evil, a 'step-mother.'

The next day Olive was sitting by a window, looking dreamily out on the landscape.

'What are you doing, Olla?' querried Frank.

'Thinking,' replied Olive.

'Don't do it any more, Olla; great and sudden changes are not beneficial.' Olive's Grecian nose took an elevated position, and Frank continued. 'I've been thinking too, Olla.'

'How strange!' replied Olive, sarcasticly. 'I thought phenomena were not in fashion till eighteen hundred and eighty-one.'

'I've been thinking, Olla,' resumed Frank, 'that in this little affair concerning step-mother's I have proved myself a genius, and genius should be rewarded.'

'Genius seeks its own reward,' quoted Olive.

'Hem! Then I'll take you,' said Frank. 'That is,' he continued, soberly and earnestly, 'if my darling little Olla will have no objections. And don't you think you could love me just a little?'

'I don't want to love you a little,' replied Olive, 'but a great deal.'

And—well, they said a good many more loving and foolish things, and six months later Mr. Desmond gave the bride away, and Frank Vaughan declared himself satisfied with his reward of genius.

The Wife's Claims.

You are a man of business, and have no time to show attention to your wife—few opportunities to converse with her; at least, you make few. She submits to this unsocial state of things because she must, but is she happy? Probably not; no woman likes to be considered a cipher. Your wife ought to be your adviser. She ought to be your best confidential counselor. The self-conceit of man amounts to genius. There are many husbands who would as soon think of taking advice of their children as of their wives. But it is only the fool who is too wise to seek counsel. A woman, you say, knows very little about business; nevertheless, her intuition is often better than a man's judgment. Your wife is your partner. You have earned the money, but she has saved and sacrificed and pinched and worried and worked to accumulate it. She has done her fair share toward making your property what it is, she has a right to be consulted about how it shall be used. A double right has she to have her judgment weighed and measured in all questions relating to the disposition of the family and the training and culture of the children. Talk to your wife on all occasions. When you come home at night, tired with the care of the day, to find her equally fatigued, bring to her the news of the day; bring the latest, freshest thought. In buying your paper, or in subscribing for your monthly magazine, get what suits her needs and meets her tastes. There is more in that patient, quiet, silent wife of yours than you think; do not freeze her very individuality by your practical contempt of women.—*Women's Journal.*

Bachelors in History.

In antiquity it was considered unpatriotic to remain unmarried. Hence bachelors were subject to peculiar disabilities in the Spartan and Roman code. They were obliged to pay extra taxes, and under Augustus they were barred from the inheritance of real estate, except from their nearest relatives. Only one of our Presidents was a bachelor, and he was a failure. Bachelors are not as successful in life as married men. It is said that one of Washington's associated patriots in the revolutionary struggle was a celibate. All had the influence of marriage and social life. Hence the tendency against wedlock which marks the present day is among the worst features in society. Speaking of marriage, it should be a complete union of affections and of intellectual powers. It may be added, that a man's wife should to a certain degree be his business partner. She should know something of his risks and financial difficulties, and in this way the burden of life is often divided. Walter Scott concealed from his wife his connection with the Bannatynes, which caused his ruin. It is one of the best features in General Grant's character, that he takes his wife along and gives her a full share of those dignities and honors which spring from national gratitude.

Brooklyn *Chronicle*: It was their first night aboard the steamer. "At last," he said, tenderly, "we are alone, out upon the deep waters of the dark blue sea, and your heart will always beat for me as it has beat in the past?" "My heart's all right," she answered, languidly, "but my stomach feels awful."

"How in the world," asked a lady of a neighbor, "can I prevent my boy from stealing sugar out of the sugar-bowl?" "I know how you can stop his stealing sugar out of the sugar-bowl," was the reply. "How?" "By simply putting the sugar in the milk-pitcher."

Have a care of whom you talk, to whom, and what, and where.