

# STELLA; OR, AT CROSS PURPOSES

CHAPTER X. (CONTINUED.)

STELLA LOSES HER TEMPER AGAIN.

"Mrs. Finch is my housekeeper and my slave in bondage; she is also my cousin by marriage." It will be understood that this explanation failed to convey to her a very distinct idea of the lady's social standing in the establishment. "You will find her along the second passage to the left, by knocking at the third door to the right."

"As I have never been in the house before, and there seem to be a great many passages, don't you think if you were to ring the bell for the footman and tell him to take me to her, it might be a better plan?"

And Mr. King was so much taken back by the absolute coolness of the suggestion, that he actually took her at her word and did so.

In this fashion Stella was shown into the smaller of the great drawing-rooms which ran along the whole of the garden side of the house, and where Mrs. Finch was accustomed to spend her solitary evenings after the master of the house had retired to his study.

As a rule, when Norman was at home, he sat here with her; but this evening he had not followed her after dinner, but had retired to his own room. Thus Stella was left to introduce herself to the only lady of the establishment.

"My grandfather sent me to you. May I have something to eat, and will you show me my room?" she said, rather hesitatingly, for it was natural that she should be less at her ease with this lady, whose existence she had never even heard of till now, than with the grandfather whom she had been long schooling herself to meet.

Mrs. Finch was not disposed to be very friendly with this girl, who had come, as she well knew, to be a rival to her own daughter; nevertheless, she was too wise to show the want of cordiality which she felt. To smile upon everybody was Mrs. Finch's maxim, and she received Stella with a certain amount of effusion.

"You poor dear, you must be tired out with your journey; of course I will order you something to eat, and come with me, dear Miss King, and I will show you your room. I had a fire lighted for you, though don't mention it, please, as Mr. King is so particular, and we all have to humor his little ways, you know. Ah! well, old gentlemen are all alike, you know."

"I don't think I know many old gentlemen," said Stella, coldly, for at the first words she felt instinctively how insincere was the woman before her.

"No? Ah! you will soon learn to like your dear grandfather very sure, my dear," answered Mrs. Finch, hastily.

"I like him now," answered Stella, rather to her hearer's surprise.

She had no desire to discuss her grandfather's character with anybody, and she felt that it was very bad taste in this Mrs. Finch to attempt to draw her into such a discussion.

"Come up-stairs and take off your things, Miss King," said that lady, with a trifle more of respect in her tone, dropping at once the subject that seemed distasteful to the strange young lady.

When they reached the bedroom that had been prepared for her, Stella asked her conductress one question:

"Is my Cousin Norman at home?"

"Yes, I dare say you will see him when you come down-stairs!" and Mrs. Finch lit the candles upon her dressing-table and left her alone.

But it was not until the next morning that Stella encountered her cousin upon the staircase upon her way down from her bedroom.

Norman colored like a girl; Stella drew herself up to her full height.

"How do you do, Stella?" said the young man, holding out his hand somewhat awkwardly.

Stella could not refuse to take it.

"I hope you are rested after your journey."

"Quite, thank you."

"You will not, I hope, find us very dull company at Wrexham."

"I do not mind being dull," answered Stella, quietly.

And Norman felt so utterly nonplussed in his little efforts at conversation that he showed her the way into the breakfast-room without making any further attempt to be agreeable.

Poor Stella! her pride was a real punishment to her. She could not forget that, to her, dreadful leaf of her past life, now more than a year ago, when Norman Allingham had dared to kiss her because he thought her a common girl, and had told her to her face the next morning that she was a virago for being angry about it.

All through the first breakfast at Wrexham the sense of shame that was upon her was almost more dreadful than she could bear. All through her grandfather's occasional questions and Mrs. Finch's little gush of amiable chatter she seemed to feel her cousin's eyes upon her, and to fancy what he must be thinking about. Every detail of that foolish escapade came back to her, painted by her disgust and dismay at herself in strong and exaggerated colors. How Norman must scorn and despise her; and what a bad opinion he must have of her!

His thoughts, had she known it, were of a very different nature.

Norman made up his mind once more that Stella's eyes were the very loveliest that he had ever seen, and that her beauty was so great that a wiser man than he was might be forgiven for trying to make his peace with her. Perhaps her temper was not as bad as he had imagined. Perhaps her recent sorrow had softened and improved her. Possibly a few kind and gentle words would efface her past displeasure to him. In short, Norman told himself, impetuously, what was the use of waiting for the other sister, whom he had never seen, when there was this deliciously fascinating Stella, with her blue eyes, and her tempting rosy lips, and her pretty, graceful figure.

If only she would smile upon him, Norman, just as she is smiling now at one of the old man's crabbed, half-angry speeches! How charming she would be if she would only send her blue eyes flashing round to his side of the table! There, she actually is looking this way!

But no; Stella meets the young man's eager gaze with a cold and unresponsive sternness, which provokes and attracts, even whilst it repels him.

But, after breakfast is over, he watches his opportunity, and finds her alone, standing listlessly by one of the long French windows.

"Are you not going to be friends with me, cousin Stella?"

She looks up startled. Her cousin is standing close to her, looking down at her wistfully.

"I am quite willing to be friends," she begins, coldly.

"Only that you have never forgiven me," he objects. "Is my crime to be always unpardonable! Are you always so vindictive to other people as you are to me?"

"I cannot tell you that, for no one but you has ever insulted me," she answers, flushing hotly.

He bites his lip, and controls himself with an effort.

"You must not use such ugly words, Stella. Gentlemen do not like to be told they have insulted any one."

"People never do like to hear the truth about themselves when it is not pleasant," she says, scornfully. "No, I will live at peace with you, and I will speak to you politely when necessity obliges me to speak to you at all; but it will be better that you and I should exchange as few words as possible. And, as to our being on intimate cousinly terms, pray do not think of such a thing, for I can never forget your past conduct, and I can never forgive it!"

She looks very lovely as she utters this speech. Her cheeks are flushed, her eyes flash proudly, her lips tremble a little with her own agitation.

Norman, looking at her face, forgets the bitterness of her words, and thinking only of her great beauty, says a very foolish thing.

"You look so lovely when you are angry, that I have a great mind to repeat my offence, and take you in my arms and kiss you again!"

Stella turns upon him white with passion.

"How dare you!" she cries, furiously—"how dare you say such a thing to me! Oh! I wish my hard fate had never driven me to take refuge in a house where I am condemned to meet you."

"I will rid you of my society, Miss King," answers Norman, who has turned very pale.

He makes a low bow and goes suddenly from the room.

He marches straight up into his own, and packs up his portmanteau, then seeks his grandfather's study.

"I am going up to town, sir," he tells him. "I shall go by the twelve o'clock train, I think."

"That is a very sudden resolve," answers the old man, looking up from his writing-table, where he is busy revising the weekly account-books which Mrs. Finch has just brought to him for payment. "What is the reason of it, pray?"

"I can't stand that girl's temper," said his grandson, looking down rather sulkily, and pushing away a footstool with his foot.

"Do you mean Stella? What is the matter with her temper?"

"It is dreadfully bad, sir," answers the young man with a short laugh.

"I have not discovered it," replies Mr. King, gravely. "I think her a very nice, clever girl."

Norman is somewhat surprised at this favorable verdict, for the old man is not given to taking sudden fancies.

"It is rather rude to go away just as she has arrived," he continues.

"Oh! I thought it was the other sister I was to be attentive to; there is surely no occasion to stay here for this one."

"Oh! very well; do as you like, of course."

Mr. King is evidently not very well pleased; but for all that Norman Allingham goes up to town by the mid-day train, and after he has gone Stella King, at the very bottom of her heart, is a little bit sorry that she has driven him away.

## CHAPTER XI.

MAUD'S COMMUNICATION.

"It was a most improper and indecorous proceeding, Miss Finch."

"I am very, very sorry, Lady Dyson."

"Well, I beg it may never be repeated. I don't wish to say any more about it now, but pray remember that young women in your position should be very careful indeed in their conduct with regard to the gentlemen of the house they are living in. If it had been one of the servants, for instance, instead of myself, who had found you alone in an out house with Sir Edgar, whilst your pupils were running about, Heaven knows where, and in lesson-hours, too, it would have been enough to have made a scandal."

"My mother was with us," pleaded Lily, tearfully.

"Yes, and I am willing to allow that that was some mitigation of your fault; but you had no business to go out walking with Sir Roger at all. However, I will say no more about it now, as I see you are sorry; but I hope you will remember that if Sir Edgar is kind enough to notice you, and to talk to you occasionally, it will be wise and modest of you to be extremely reserved in your manner to him. Gentlemen are often very thoughtless, but it is your place to recollect always the very great difference there is between his position and yours. You may go now, Miss Finch."

Still trembling almost as much as at the first awful summons into her employer's presence, which she had received half an hour ago, the little governess went swiftly and noiselessly out of Lady Dyson's boudoir, and sought the retirement of her own bedroom.

She sat down on the end of her little white bed and wept bitterly. Oh! how miserable she was! Lady Dyson had not been harsh or cruel to her, she had indeed found fault with her in words that were well chosen, and even kind; but oh! how dreadful to be found fault with at all on such a topic! More than ever did Lily Finch realize the immeasurable gulf that lay between herself and the man she loved.

Nothing she felt would ever bridge over this yawning chasm. No miracle that could be worked would ever serve to transform that cold and haughty patrician dame into her own mother-in-law. To recollect the superiority of class over class, to bear in mind her own littleness, to be good in the

position of life in which Heaven had placed her; but not to dare to lift her eyes above it—that had been the gist of Lady Dyson's exhortation. And Lily had understood her perfectly. Oh! how vain and futile were all her foolish dreams of happiness; how hopeless those wild visions of joy which sometimes, in the dead of the night, would make her heart beat tremulously when she remembered his words and his looks, and which made her now and again believe, despite her reason and her common-sense, that all would end happily for her some day.

Poor Lily cried till her pretty eyes were red and swollen, and her cheeks as pale as the white curtains of her bed.

"Oh! how I wish I could go away and forget him," she cried aloud in her misery.

But she knew she could not go away, because her mother and Mr. King had placed her at Barfield, and would never allow her to leave it. Neither, at the very bottom of her heart, did she desire to go.

Meanwhile, down-stairs, in Lady Dyson's boudoir, the subject of Miss Finch's delinquencies was not yet done with. Not more than ten minutes after the governess's silent and tearful exit, the door opened softly, and Maud Dyson crept into the room.

"Mamma, may I speak to you?"

"Yes, my dear, what is it?"

"It is something I think I ought to tell you, mamma—something I think it right you should know," said Maud, mysteriously. She stood behind her mother's chair, fidgeting her feet about upon the hearth-rug.

Lady Dyson was an eminently practical woman; she prided herself upon being utterly free from nonsense herself and upon detecting it in other people. She glanced sharply at her young daughter.

"Keep your feet still, Maud, and for goodness sake don't carry your arms akimbo. I never saw anything so unlady-like in my life. Well, what is it you have got to say to me? Make haste, because I am very busy with my letters this morning, and have not much time to give to you."

Thus adjured, Maud, feeling that her dignity was compromised by her mother's unfeeling allusions to her feet and her arms, blurted out her intelligence with an abruptness that had the effect of well-nigh startling Lady Dyson out of her presence of mind.

"Mamma, I came into the school-room yesterday, and saw Edgar kissing Miss Finch."

For half a minute Lady Dyson was so struck dumb with astonishment that she did not know what to say; but with a rapid and comprehensive train of thought her resolution was taken almost immediately.

"Maud, you are a very silly little girl," she said, severely.

"It is quite true, mamma; I thought you would have been pleased with me for telling you," cried Maud, in an aggrieved tone.

"I am quite sure it is not true, and I am not at all pleased with you for telling me such a ridiculous story."

"But, mamma—"

"Please hold your tongue, Maud. I suppose you fancied you saw your brother and Miss Finch standing close together; they were probably looking over photographs. Gentlemen don't kiss anybody but their mothers and sisters," explained Lady Dyson, drawing somewhat upon her fancy for the boldness of the statement, by which it is needless to say that Maud was not in the very least misled. "You could not possibly have seen such a thing, therefore I beg that you will never speak of this silly fancy to anybody. Now run away, my dear, I am too busy to talk to you any longer."

But after her young daughter was gone, Lady Dyson laid down her pen, and sat for some time plunged in meditation. She pondered very deeply indeed upon what Maud had just told her. Of course she knew it must be perfectly true, for the child was not likely to have invented such a thing, and a girl of fourteen is quite as well able to judge whether two people are kissing each other or not, as though she were forty.

Lady Dyson had no doubt whatever as to the truth of what she had just heard; but she had not chosen to allow it to Maud, because she did not want to send Miss Finch away, and of course, as long as Lily was Maud's governess, it was necessary to uphold her authority to her pupils.

It would be very inconvenient in many ways to send Lily away. She was a good, industrious little thing, and did her work very well; and Lady Dyson knew how difficult a business it was to find a governess who would teach almost everything to four children for thirty pounds a year. It was long since she had had a governess who suited her so well as Lily did. Before her arrival everything had been chaos and confusion in the school-room arrangements. Once she had three different young ladies in the house in six months, and then there had been an interregnum, and for one melancholy month in her life Lady Dyson had to teach her own children herself, an occupation that she decidedly disapproved of. But ever since Lily's arrival everything had gone on smoothly and quietly, and she had had no trouble at all from the school-room.

Moreover, Lily was related to Mr. King, and it was he who had recommended her to Lady Dyson, and it would be very unpleasant indeed to risk a quarrel with her neighbors at Wrexham, to say nothing of Mrs. Finch, who would be down upon her like an infuriated wild cat were her daughter to be sent away for such a cause. No, altogether she did not at all see her way to dismissing Lily.

Nevertheless, Lady Dyson felt that if her son had actually gone to the length of kissing Lily Finch, it was quite time that his attentions to the pretty governess should be put a stop to.

She felt very glad that Maud's communication had been made after her lecture to Miss Finch upon the comparatively mild misdemeanor of her being found alone with her son and the turnip machine, for she had said quite enough already to her upon the subject, and she knew that it was not Lily who must now be spoken to.

To speak to Sir Edgar, however, was a more difficult matter, and one which Lady Dyson well knew might only bring about that very dreadful contingency which she was most anxious to avoid.

On the whole, Lady Dyson decided that it would be safer not to speak to her son about Lily.

That evening, however, as the mother and son lingered at the table together after the

servants had left the dining-room, Lady Dyson said something to him about a little plot that had been in her head all day.

"Edgar, my dear, I am thinking of asking Lady Honoria Rosett to stay here for a little while—shall you mind?"

"Not in the least, mother," answered her son, as he cracked his walnuts. "Lady Honoria is a very handsome girl, and I have a weakness for handsome women. Ask her by all means."

This was hopeful. Lady Dyson waited a few minutes, and then she said, rather timidly:

"My dear boy, have you ever thought about marrying?"

Sir Edgar looked up over the wine decanters at his mother, and laughed.

"Very often, mother dear," he answered, lightly.

"But I mean seriously, Edgar, and with regard to any particular person?"

"Very seriously, mother mine, and with regard to—oh, half a dozen particular persons at the very least!"

Lady Dyson smiled. It was plain that Sir Edgar could not be meditating anything very desperate with regard to Lily Finch.

"I think, my dear, that Lady Honoria would make a very charming wife."

"I am quite sure she would, mother."

"She has beauty, rank, and fortune," continued Lady Dyson.

"Certainly she has; no one can deny her any of the three," assented her son. "Shall I peel you another walnut?"

"No more, thanks. Then I may understand that if she comes here you will think about her, Edgar?"

"I suppose if she is staying in the house my thoughts will inevitably be fixed upon her, more or less."

This was rather less satisfactory.

"I mean, my dear, that you will take it into consideration whether she would not be the most suitable wife you could possibly select."

Sir Edgar looked down into his sherry-glass, and sipped it thoughtfully.

"I will take her ladyship's case into my gracious consideration," he said, so gravely that Lady Dyson could hardly be sure whether he was laughing at her or no.

Ten minutes later, running lightly up-stairs to fetch his cigar-case, the baronet encountered Lily upon the staircase. She turned away at his approach, and would have fled, but he stood before her, and stopped her.

"I am in capital spirits to-night, Miss Finch," he said, laughing.

"I am very glad, Sir Edgar," said poor Lily, rather sadly.

"What do you think about?"

"I cannot guess."

"Lady Dyson has been recommending me a wife. She has beauty, rank, and fortune. She is an Earl's daughter, Lily. Don't you think I had better marry her?"

"Of course you will do as you like, Sir Edgar," she said, gently.

"Of course I shall, L. y," replied the baronet, and straightway gave Miss Finch a kiss.

But, of course, Lady Dyson never heard of the sequel to her successful conversation concerning Lady Honoria Rosett.

## CHAPTER XII.

STELLA'S ANXIETIES.

It was dreadfully dull at Wrexham after Norman had gone away. As the weary days succeeded each other, one after the other, with interminable slowness, Stella told herself that any amount of quarrelling with her handsome cousin would have been better than the utter blank of her present existence.

The great, gloomy house appeared in its desolate emptiness to be larger and drearier than ever. There was an old man shut up reading from morning till night at one end of it, and a middle-aged woman perpetually doing accounts at the other. What was a girl of nineteen to do with herself between two such uncongenial companions?

Stella's time hung heavily upon her hands; her light footsteps echoed weirdly along the silent corridors and up the deserted flights of the wide stone staircase. At meal times she met her grandfather, and the little war of words that generally took place between them on those occasions made the sole amusement of her life.

At other times she sat silently in Mrs. Finch's sitting-room with her needle work, or wandered disconsolately and aimlessly about the park and gardens.

It was on one of these occasions that Stella suddenly encountered a little, light-colored village cart, drawn by a fat gray pony, trotting merrily up through the park towards the house.

There was a pretty, soft-eyed young lady driving, a quiet little girl by her side, and two noisy, laughing boys in the front seat. There was a black retriever rushing on in front, and two little nondescript, broken-haired terriers scampering behind. Altogether it was such a vision of youth and brightness and animal spirits as poor Stella had not been blessed with since her arrival in England. She was so astonished and delighted at this spectacle of happiness and life (which, however, was nothing more wonderful than the young Dysons and their governess driving over from Barfield with a note to Mr. King from Lady Dyson), that she stopped short by the side of the road and gazed at these happy looking young people with their pony and their dogs, as though she had never seen anything so charming and so delightful in her life before.

Some instinctive sympathy of sex and youth made Lily pull up the gray pony when she reached that lovely girl, who stood looking enviously at her by the wayside, and turn to her with a timid smile. The two girls had never met before; but of course they had heard of each other.

"Are you not Miss King?" said Lily, timidly.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The death of Capt. Webb in his attempt to swim the whirlpool at Niagara leaves Capt. Boynton alone in his noble work of foolhardiness. There are a number of things that have not yet been attempted by the indomitable Boynton. When he has rolled over Niagara's brink in a rubber ball, let him swim down the Croton aqueduct, go through the New York water-works and be squirted out the nozzle of a fire engine into a burning building. If he survives that ordeal he can drop us a postal card, and we will suggest something a little more trying on the nerves.—*Detroit Chaff.*

## Japanese Workmen.

The special marks of Japanese art are to be found in the complete devotion of the workmen to their work and in the singular love of birds and beasts displayed by all. Both these features Dr. Dresser traces to the influence of religion. Shintoism, which made the altar or hearth an object of the deepest reverence and affection, led to infinite patience and ingenuity in its ornamentation; Buddhism, by insisting on the sacredness of animal life, implanted in the Japanese that tenderness of feeling for all animals which makes butterflies alight on the hands of children, and frees even beasts of chase from all fear of man.

Whatever be its origin, the evolution of the Japanese workman to his work, and his intense appreciation of all that is beautiful and of much that is grand in the sensible world, are alike unquestionable; and throughout its history generally the circumstances of the country have greatly favoured the growth of these dispositions. If the principle of division of labour, which is nowadays supposed to be the very foundation of Western civilization, is not unknown among them, the Japanese workman has always been disposed to carry his work himself through every one of its stages, whether his task be that of working in metal or lacquer, of preparing woven fabrics, or of pottery in any of its branches. Each workman thus looks on his work, while it is going on, as on a child that he loves. It is his creation in the same sense in which a poet or a painter is the creation of a poet or a painter; and the feelings which it excites in him are not less strong. He is striving after beauty in every shape, not after money; and he has his recompense in a way which must cause some surprise to Englishmen. In Japan the merchant, Dr. Dresser assures us, has no status whatever, though he be as rich as Croesus. Money alone, he adds, buys no position, and a prince will spend hours in conversation with a skilled workman, while the richest merchant would be beneath his notice. Some of the greatest of Japanese potters and lacquer-workers may be said to know nothing of money, the wife or child taking charge of the work when it leaves the hand of the master, who takes no thought for anything else. The establishment of feudalism under the Daimios in no way affected the conditions needed for the growth of the highest art in Japan. The palace of the baron became to the workman what the monastery had been thus far. He became one of the chief's retainers, clothed, fed, and lodged by him, the return expected from him being the production of the best work in his power; and with this golden leisure and freedom from care his power was increased tenfold. Thus has been developed not merely a patience altogether marvellous in the most minute and complete finishing of every detail—not merely a mechanical excellence seldom equalled and never surpassed—but a power of delineating life, especially the life of birds and beasts, which placed the Japanese in the front rank of the artists of any age or country. It is strange to see in drawings which exhibit great defects of general perspective, portraits of animals which actually live on the canvas or the paper. The metal-caster will not hesitate to cast a crowd of birds in their flight, the birds composing it being almost separate one from the other, and yet forming one continuous casting.

No adequate conception of Japanese art can be formed by those who are not acquainted with its colouring. The brightest and the strongest hues, red, blue, green, white, and gold, are employed in all their intensity. The greater part of the space to be covered is broken up by patterns interlacing each other often with astonishing intricacy; but some broad mass of leading colour is always interposed unbroken at definite intervals to impart solidity to the whole. It would not be too much to say that the magnificence of the Sainte Chapelle of St. Louis is but poor in comparison with the splendour of some of the greatest Japanese temples; and for majestic and solemn impressiveness, so far as we refer to colour, the advantage would rest altogether with the latter. We have to imagine the elaborate panelled vault of the ceiling soaring a hundred feet above us, while the overhanging roof, extending nearly to the railings of the balcony surrounding the shrine, softens the intensity of the sunlight, the light which ultimately reaches the ceiling being all reflected from a floor of black lacquer which has received the highest polish.

The art of Japan is, indeed, a subject which will well repay all the care with which we may study it. There is probably no reason for thinking that the study will make any Englishman blindly idolize it. It has wonderful merits. It ought to teach us some important and very useful lessons; but the forms which it employs, beautiful though they may be, fall short of the exquisitely dignified, grace, and loveliness which mark the work of the Teutonic races while Teutonic art was still a living tradition, and which remains to us as a rich inheritance, until patient and honest work makes it a living tradition once more.

In mediæval times, when the work of an artisan became part and parcel of his religion, we had the same conscientious care devoted to the unseemly portion as to the most prominent. All our great cathedrals and monasteries have examples of this thoroughness of work. The conditions of an artisan's life in Japan at the present day would appear to be parallel to that which prevailed in England in the feudal times, but the race of conscientious workmen has not died out in this country yet.—*The Furniture Dealers' and Cabinet Makers' Guide.*

## Womanish Reasons.

"You would laugh to hear the excuses women make for the imperfections of their feet. I measured a nice lady the other day who had a bunion of several years' standing. 'Oh,' she exclaimed, as I was about to begin. 'I am afraid you will have to make my shoe a little larger there. I hit my foot against the doorstep this morning and there is quite a swelling.' A lady told me this morning that something bit her while bathing and she supposed the poisoned water there had got into her foot. We don't pay any attention but go on measuring.—*Shoemaker.*

"Stop kissing me," cried a pretty girl to her bashful beau. "I ain't kissing you," said he. "Well, ain't you going to?" she asked. He ran away like a frightened deer.