

Oregon City Enterprise.

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THE ENTERPRISE.

LOCAL DEMOCRATIC NEWSPAPER FOR THE Farmer, Business Man, & Family Circle.

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY. A. NOLTNER, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

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Mr. Dayton's Housekeeper.

"Wanted—A housekeeper. No one but an elderly person, competent, and of the highest respectability, need apply. Call between the hours of three and four, Thursday, April 6th, at No. 1, Michigan Avenue."

Kate Franklin read this in the paper which lay on the counter in the little grocery, while waiting to have an ounce or two of tea done up, and a roll of baker's bread.

She repeated the number of the house over to herself as she received the change from the grocer.

She prepared the tea after she returned to the little bare attic, and ate it with a relish she had not known for some time. She forgot how unsatisfied her appetite still was in her busy thought.

A stranger, in a strange place successively she had tried to find a situation as teacher, copyist, in a store, sewing, she had failed in the first three, and was starving in the last.

She would apply for the place, but she would need references. Only one person she knew in the whole great city of sufficient influence—Mrs. Davenport, the rich, haughty, spoiled, who had ill-treated her gentle mother while she lived, and had hated Kate herself.

Perhaps, Kate thought, she would permit her to refer to her, because glad to have her descend to menial employment.

Kate was competent for the situation, for during her mother's long illness, and during her father's absence, she had entire charge of their large family and splendid house.

But an "elderly woman." Now Kate was not an elderly woman, being only twenty; but she remembered, with a sort of pleasure, that private theatricals, she had imitated the voice and assumed the character of an old woman with great success. She knew how to stain the skin to give an old and wrinkled appearance, and she had in the bottom of a box, some false gray hair, which she used on one of these occasions. She did not need to look so very old—only to present a mature and matronly appearance.

Mr. Edward Dayton waited at home, after his dinner, to see the respondents to his advertisement. He was a handsome man, not yet thirty, with a gay, frank, good-natured countenance.

He leaned back in his easy chair in a nonchalant way, with his feet on another chair.

"There ought to be a Mrs. Dayton to manage these housekeeping matters. Well, there's time enough."

Two applicants were seen and dismissed in Mr. Dayton's gentlemanly way.

A third was ushered in. Mr. Dayton instinctively laid aside his cigar and turned to his visitor.

The lady-likeness and propriety of her manner pleased him at once. "Fallen fortunes," he commented to himself.

She answered his question readily but in a few words.

"A silent woman—a good thing," was his inward remark.

"I think you will suit me, Mrs. —, what may I understand your name?"

"Franklin."

"Mrs. Franklin, you will be required to go out of town, about seven miles, to my country-house, Oak Grove—in the town of Embury, on the Grand Central Railroad. The salary I propose to pay is six hundred dollars per annum. Do my terms suit you?"

She answered quietly that they did.

"Then it is all settled. By the way, I suppose you have references, though that is a mere matter of form."

The name of Davenport was given. "Davenport? Robert Davenport? I know them. All right. If convenient, you will please go to-morrow, Mrs. Franklin, or if you would prefer, the next day. I shall not come till the middle of next week, and will probably bring a friend or two with me. Have the chambers in the center and wings prepared if you please. The housekeeper there now will not leave until Saturday. She will show you round."

"Is Mrs. — is your wife there, or to go soon?"

He laughed.

"Is Mrs. Edward Dayton? No, she is not there, and I do not know of her going at present." Aiding more seriously, "I have not the pleasure, Mrs. Franklin, of having a wife," with a slight stress on "pleasure."

A vivid color came into the brown cheek of the housekeeper, and her manner showed evident embarrassment.

"I thought—I believe—I cannot," and stopped.

He did not notice it. His mind had already turned to other things. He rose.

"It is all settled, I believe. By the way, his eye falling on the rusty black dress, "you may like an advance, as an evidence of the bargain. It is quite customary I believe to do so."

The housekeeper's hand closed on the fifteen dollars that he gave her and the words she would have said were left unuttered. She moved to the door. He opened it for her courteously.

ed. Every room that she had touched showed a magical change.

Her predecessor had been one of the kind who believed in the sunlight never entering a room, for fear of fading the carpets.

Mr. Dayton felt the change without knowing the reason of it. He looked around with a satisfied air.

It was not possible to find any fault with the variety and quality of food placed before him, nor the manner of its being served up, and the table appointments were perfect; and Dayton congratulated himself upon having secured such a jewel of a housekeeper.

Two weeks passed, and a holiday came. Mr. Dayton had gone to town the day previous to remain the rest of the week. The housekeeper had given permission to the servants to go also. She felt a welcome relief to have the house and the day to herself. She locked the doors carefully after the last servant. She would have no dinner, only a lunch. She had almost forgotten her real character in that which she had assumed; but to-day she could be herself without fear of intrusion or discovery. She laid aside her cap and tresses, washed the stain from her skin, arranged her luxuriant hair in becoming curls, and donned a pretty figure muslin which fitted well the slight, graceful figure. This done, she entered the parlor and stood before the mirror, an attractive figure as one would often see.

"Truly, I have forgotten my own looks! I am Kate Franklin, after all, laughed she.

Removed from the long restraint, her spirits rebounded. She felt gay, light-hearted, and like committing any foolishness. "Miss Franklin," she said in the mimicking, affected tones of an exquisite, "it would be inexpressible pleasure to hear the music of that long-silent voice."

"It would be a pity to deprive you of it, then," she answered, in her natural voice, "and myself also," she added, and going to the piano, she opened it and played a few pieces with exquisite taste and skill, and then she sang a song after song, in a sweet clear, cultivated voice. She closed at first the brilliant and triumphant, then the sad and plaintive succeeded. There were tears in her eyes when she rose. But to-day her moods were capricious.

"Mrs. Franklin, who is playing on the piano?" she asked, in excellent imitation of Mr. Dayton's voice.

"It is only I, sir dusting the keys. They need dusting so often," she replied in Mrs. Franklin's mature tones; then she sang a song with her pocket-handkerchief.

"Ah me," she said. "Now what other foolish thing shall I do to prove myself that I am not an elderly housekeeper, but a young girl, who by virtue of her age, should be gay; by right of birth, wealthy, and then she sang a song after song, in a sweet clear, cultivated voice, and visited. He is public, good, and quite handsome," she said, with a sigh. "She will be happy. How gracefully she danced at the party the other evening, when the old housekeeper was permitted to look on. She looks good and amiable, too. Mr. D. danced with her three times. I wonder if I have forgotten how to dance?" and humming an air, she floated gracefully about the room.

She stopped, breathless, her cheeks brilliant from the exercise, her splendid hair disarranged.

"I believe I feel like stiff, old Mrs. Franklin, with whom dancing doesn't agree."

"One more song by that heavenly voice, Miss Franklin, and I shall go away dreaming that I have heard angels sing," in the ludicrously affected voice she had before imitated.

"Ah!" she laughed, yet a little sadly, "the compliments poor old housekeeper Franklin receives I hope will not quite spoil her, and turn her silly old head."

She sat down again at the piano, and sang "Home, Sweet Home;" then she played one of Beethoven's grandest, most solemn pieces.

She rose and closed the piano. The carnival is ended. Kate Franklin disappears from the scene, and Madam Franklin enters.

Neither Mr. Dayton nor the servants would have suspected, from the placid and dignified deportment of the housekeeper when they returned at evening, of what strange freaks she had been guilty.

The housekeeper, as usual, when Mr. Dayton was alone, sat at the table. It had commenced to rain violently, and the weather had grown suddenly cold.

Mr. Dayton, as he had done occasionally, invited her to the library, where a cheerful fire burned in the grate. He read the letters and the papers which he had brought with him from town, while she knitted.

An hour or more passed in silence; indeed, the housekeeper seldom spoke except when asked a question. At length Mr. Dayton looked up at her, and said, abruptly:

"You are sure to be a lonely life, Madam. If it is not a painful subject, may I ask how long since you lost your husband?"

Two hands suspended their employment, two eyes looked up at him with an alarmed expression. In his serious, sympathetic countenance there was nothing to frighten or embarrass, but the red glow deepened on her brown cheek.

"It is a painful subject," she said at last, faltering. "If you please excuse me."

One morning he was speaking of the great loss to children in being deprived of their parents.

"I never knew a mother," he said. She died before my earliest recollection. I believe that, man as I am, if I had a mother, I should go to her with all my griefs as a little child would.

would. I have sometimes thought of asking you to act as mother in the quiet evenings, when I have longed to confide in some one. My mother would have been about your age, I think.

Again there was a vivid color in the cheek of the housekeeper, such as is rarely seen in the aged, but it was accompanied by a quiver of the mouth, and ended in a cough, but both mouth and cheek were quickly covered with a handkerchief, and quite a violent fit of coughing succeeded.

Mr. Dayton, however did not seem to notice, though he had given her one curious glance, instantly withdrawn, and he continued:

"For instance, respecting matrimony, whose advice of so much value as a mother's? Who so quick to see through character, and make a good selection? Had you a son; whom about here would you select for a daughter-in-law, Mrs. Franklin?"

"I am not acquainted with any of the young ladies, Mr. Dayton," she answered faintly, after a pause, during which he seemed to wait for an answer.

"True, but you have seen them all and are, I should judge, a good discernor of character, from observation. Whom would you select from those you have seen?" he persisted.

"I have heard the Misses Grandison highly spoken of. Their appearance would seem to prove the truth. I doubt not that you agree with me," she returned quietly.

It was now his turn to color, which he did slightly.

"I agree with you," he answered emphatically.

It was late in September. Mr. Dayton and the housekeeper were both in the parlor. He had been unusually grave all day. It seemed as if the housekeeper, in his manner was changed toward her.

"I have a few questions to ask, if you will permit me, Mrs. Franklin?" She felt instinctive alarm at his tone.

"I have been told," he said, "that Miss Kate Franklin, a young lady, has been disguising herself off upon me for several months as an elderly lady. Is there any truth in the story?" looking searchingly at her.

"She started to her feet, then trembling and blushing, she murmured, "Yes, it is true," she murmured, falteringly.

"I confess I fail to see for what object. My heart you could hardly expect to gain in that character."

"Your heart!" she repeated scornfully. "I had no such landible ambition. I have never seen or heard of you. I will I saw your advertisement. Would you like to know for what purpose I took upon me a disguise so repugnant? You shall. To save myself from starvation. I had eaten but one meal a day for weeks when I applied to you, and was suffering with hunger, cold, and misery. You were kind enough to give me a meal, and I had no prospect for more, for I had been refused further sewing. But why should I find fault? Her pride rising, she said, "I will I saw your advertisement. Would you like to know for what purpose I took upon me a disguise so repugnant? You shall. To save myself from starvation. I had eaten but one meal a day for weeks when I applied to you, and was suffering with hunger, cold, and misery. You were kind enough to give me a meal, and I had no prospect for more, for I had been refused further sewing. But why should I find fault? 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