

**A CHARMING
FELLOW; IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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A charming fellow; In three Volumes, Vol. II by Frances Eleanor Trollope

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FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE

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VOLUMES, VOL. II**

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY

FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF

"AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS,"

ETC. ETC.

In Three Volumes.

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A CHARMING FELLOW.

CHAPTER I.

"So you are to come to Switzerland with us next month, Ancram," said Miss Kilfinane. She was seated at the piano in Lady Seely's drawing-room, and Algernon was leaning on the instrument, and idly turning over a portfolio of music.

"Yes; I hope your serene highness has no objection to that arrangement?"

"It would be of no use my objecting, I suppose!"

"Of none whatever. But it would be unpleasant."

"Oh, you would still go then, whether I liked it or not?"

"I'm afraid the temptation to travel about Europe in your company would be too strong for me!"

“How silly you are, Ancram!” said Miss Kilfinane, looking up half shyly, half tenderly. But she met no answering look from Algernon. He had just come upon a song that he wanted to try, and was drawing it out from under a heap of others in the portfolio.

“Look here, Castalia,” he said, “I wish you would play through this accompaniment for me. I can’t manage it.”

It will be seen that Algernon had become familiar enough with Miss Kilfinane to call her by her Christian-name. And, moreover, he addressed her in a little tone of authority, as being quite sure she would do what he asked her.

“This?” she said, taking the song from his hand. “Why do you want to sing this dull thing? I think Glück is so dreary! And, besides, it isn’t your style at all.”

“Isn’t it? What is my style, I wonder?”

“Oh light, lively things are your style.”

At the bottom of his mind, perhaps, Algernon thought so too. But it is often very unpleasant to hear our own secret convictions uttered by other people; and he did not like to be told that he could not sing anything more solid than a French chansonette.

“Lady Harriet particularly wishes me to try this thing of Glück’s at her house next Saturday,” he said.

Miss Kilfinane threw down the song pettishly. "Oh, Lady Harriet," she exclaimed. "I might have known it was her suggestion! She is so full of nonsense about her classical composers. I think she makes a fool of you, Ancram. I know it will be a failure if you attempt that song."

"Thank you very much, Miss Kilfinane! And now, having spoken your mind on the subject, will you kindly play the accompaniment?"

Algernon picked up the piece of music, smoothed it with his hand, placed it on the desk of the piano, and made a little mocking bow to Castalia. His serenity and good humour seemed to irritate her. "I'm sick of Lady Harriet!" she said, querulously, and with a shrug of the shoulders. The action and the words were so plainly indicative of ill temper, that Lady Seely, who waddled into the drawing-room at that moment, asked loudly, "What are you two quarrelling about, eh?"

"Oh, what a shocking idea, my lady! We're not quarrelling at all," answered Algernon, raising his eyebrows, and smiling with closed lips. He rarely showed his teeth when he smiled, which circumstance gave his mouth an expression of finesse and delicate irony that was peculiar, and—coupled with the candidly-arched brows—attractive.

"Well, it takes two to make a quarrel, certainly," returned my lady. "But Castalia was

scolding you, at all events. Weren't you now, Castalia?"

Castalia deigned not to reply, but tossed her head, and began to run her fingers over the keys of the piano.

"The fact is, Lady Seely," said Algernon, "that Castalia is so convinced that I shall make a mess of this aria—which Lady Harriet Dormer has asked me to sing for her next Saturday—that she declines to play the accompaniment of it for me."

"Well, you ought to be immensely flattered, young jackanapes! She wouldn't care a straw about some people's failures, would you, Castalia? Would you mind, now, if Jack Price were to sing a song and make an awful mess of it, eh?"

"As to that, it seems to me that Jack Price makes an awful mess of most things he does," replied Castalia.

"Ah, exactly! So one mess more or less don't matter. But in the case of our Admirable Crichton here, it is different."

"I think he is getting awfully spoiled," said Castalia, a little less crossly. And there was absolutely a blush upon her sallow cheek.

"And that's the reason you snub him, is it? You see, Ancram, it's all for your good, if Castalia is a little hard on you!"

Miss Killinane rose and left the room, saying that she must dress for her drive.

“I think Castalia is harder on Lady Harriet than on me,” said Algernon, when Castalia was gone.

“Ah! H'm! Castalia has lots of good points, but—I daresay you have noticed it—she is given to being a little bit jealous when she cares about people. Now you show a decided liking for Lady Harriet's society, and you crack up her grace, and her elegance, and her taste, and all that. And sometimes I think poor Cassy don't quite like it, don't you know?”

“What on earth can it matter to her?” cried Algernon. He knew that Castalia was no favourite with my lady, and he flattered himself that he was becoming a favourite with her. So he spoke with a little half-contemptuous smile, and a shrug of impatience, when he asked, “What on earth can it matter to her?”

But my lady did not smile. She threw her head back, and looked at Algernon from under her half-closed eyelids.

“It's my opinion, young man, that it matters a good deal to Castalia,” she said; “more than it would have mattered to me when I was a young lady, I can tell you. But there's no accounting for tastes.”

Then Lady Seely also left the room, having first bidden Algernon to come and dine with her the next day.