

Youth's Department.

A Backwoodsman's Matrimonial Adventures and Misadventures.

As to marriage, said Beasley, tearing the lead off a fresh plug with his teeth; as to marriage, I've practised it as largely as most men that don't keep a bank account, an' I can tell you it ain't no 'count in our way of life. Yer see, there's mostly two sorts of weemen—firstwise, them as has certificates gained by extr'ordinary an' eternal cleverness at college; an' that's the sort of woman as worries a man's life out. Secondwise, them as has no certificates, neither diplomas, not because they think 'em gas bags, but because they ha'n't even that small wit needed to earn 'em, that's the sort as worries a man's soul out. Their air an' other specess, ay, by thunder! nigh another sex, the sex of which our mothers were; but I've on'y met with one speci-woman of that sort. But surely, I said, among the families of the squatters there must be good hearty girls, who'd make a fellow happy on his own clearing. 'That's so,' said Frazer; 'that's so!' But Jem's right for all that. If young men went westwards for their wives; they'd find such as they could live with, an' be happy; but they go east or to eastering folk: they fall wild of a seminary diploma an' a high-bosimmed gowd; they marry the gal, an' after a while make tracks to do the whole thing over agin. Guess there's no country in the world where bigamy is so frequent as in the westering states, an' I'll swear it's not from any nat'ral immorality on the part o' the young men. Yer see, the great pint is this—men air so independant in the West. Mark here! When a young fellow's merried in Europe or in the eastering states, he merrys for good an' all; things must go on mighty bad with him before he will slope off from his home an' business, though his wife should be a right-down plague-bug. But it's not so with us. A young man thinks no more o' clearing out an' seeking a fortune a thousand miles away, than he do of jumping a ditch. What I say is—you can't lay down salted an' smoke-dried rules for the social politics of the great west. Space, an' health, an' human natur's dead agin the principle. I have always had some such theory myself. I said, 'As to bigamy, in course I have no vote for that, nor has any other man; but as we don't defend it, let's hear some of his experiences; for Jem's gizzard melts like butter in a prairie-fire or he's hitched a belt of dust round his waist, an' he sees a sheep-faced gal. 'Wal, boys, I'll tell you my first ventur' in marriage—an almighty tall ventur' that were. 'Twas in St. Louis. Her father, my ventur's father, kept a dry goods store in that city, where he kept himself balanced all day betwixt a cocktail an' a fraudulent bankruptcy. The daughter was tall an' fattish, with the most delicate expression ever you see; her dress came up tight under her ears, an' she'd a screamed out painful if her own mother had sot eyes on her feet. When I was interjuiced, she says to me, 'Air you indeed a pioneer?' My father were a pioneer, miss, said I. An' air you indeed his son, the son of a pioneer which have carried our starry flag into the wilderness, an'—fixed it up there. Guess, I am, miss, I says, father thinks so, an' mother don't say contrair. She throwed her eyes to heving, as if to fix up a new constellation, an' kind of raptured. I didn't make no remark, because I thought she belonged to some private connection, an' were holding prayer. So she brings her eyes down agin, an' says she, Oh. 'Yes,' I observes, that's all so. I kind o' sot to her after that, for I thought she was the golffiredest fool in the neighborhood, or else I were. I'm bent now to think it were rayther the latter way about, for she pioneered me into church, an' her father pioneered five hundred dollars out of my belt. About a week after marriage, we went down to a neat little farm as my father had given me to set up in. So says she when she sees the loghouse, 'Air this

the pioneer's hut?' 'No,' I said, 'this is a kind o' farmhouse, where I hope we'll live many a year together with our sons and daughters.' And so I did hope, strapped me if I didn't. Oh, don't talk so wicked,' says she, blushin' like a startled cochineal. When she got inside, an' see there was but two rooms, an' no door betwixt 'em, an' a man about the clearing, she scrimmied out like a trapped rabbit. Oh, I never, I never can—do—do—you must make a door instant, sudden. Curtain! O dear! O no! Do pioneers allus live so? 'Guess they do, all as I've known,' said I, kind o' gruffly; for my dear old mother had lived all her life in just such a shanty, an' my sisters had grown up so, an' been lotted off with five thousand dollars apiece to just like homes, an' I didn't take to such faldoodle. Don't you think, my gal, I says to her, 'as your husband'll call on you to do what's wrong. As my mother lived you can live, an' I hope you may prove as modest an' as great hearted as she was.' 'Naow, it's no use being mad, mister! I've the temper of a lamb, but my way I kind o' must have in the house. We've on'y been merried a week, but I ain't happy now, an' I can't ever be with a man as don't consider the delicatness of my feelins.' An' then she began to cry. I think now that maybe I was hard on her, brought up as she had been; but the real fact is, it were a durnation bit of folly from end to end. What business, as Frazer says, has a westering man with a Yankee wife? It's the general contrairiness of natur, I suppose. The Yankee-bred gal falls sick for the squatter's broad shoulders an' big limbs, an' the squatter falls wild of the trimness an' little delicacies of the gal. Then they merrly; and arter a while miss finds her husband's shoulders too broad an' too big for her minikin arms, an' the squatter perceives that there is not room enough in her mind for him to turn about in; an' so, some fine day he takes his rifle an' two or three dollars, may-be, an' moves out. That was the end of my first ventur. The gal began to cry, sitting on the door-jamb. Now, I hate, an' most of us hate, a woman's crying. I've heard some folk say they cannot resist tears, an' I dare say that's true enough, if they're reasonable, an' the woman knows what she wants; but as a rule one don't like them who can't keep the plugs in. Kind o' just, too, it is. A gal who cries when she's not hurt, ain't likely to make prize sass, an' a girl who don't cry till she's hurt, don't usually care to cry then. However, I didn't want to quarrel with my wife inside of a week of marriage—specially a first ventur—so I fixed up some planks for a door. But I know'd I done wrong, for the old man he said to me when I told him I was in a string, Jem my son, don't yer do it! But if yer must! says he tremenjously, 'pull down her back-hair at the altar an' curse free; hit her father in the eye, an' stamp on her grandmother's corns. With a Yankee gal, the great thing is to start fair.' I hadn't done it, for I hadn't spunk, an' she did look so eternal mild an' melting, like all natur' in a thaw. But I knew I wasn't starting fair with that gal. We lived together on the farm for nigh two years, an' I lost forty-four pound weight during that time. She was right down good about the house, I say that; neat as an egg; an' allus did the washing comfortable; but I felt cramped an' stifled with her, she were no companion for a westering man. I tried everything I could think of, from a course of Scriptur' to a hickory switch, but she couldn't be welded to our notions. She was small, that's the fact; so at last I took out a hundred dollars, an' I said to her, I'm going off, an' it's likely we shall meet no more? I give yer this old farm, which my brother an' I cleared—a good farm it is, an' I am loath to leave it; I give yer eight hundred dollars in money, an' every fixing about the place. I b'lieve you've done your best to be a good wife; but I don't think, when you come to age, as you'll lay much blame on me for my short comings; I've done my best too. But we don't weld together, an' we never shall; it's best to part, an' part friendly. She didn't believe me, but larfed provoking—her little, craking, Yankee larf—an

said, You won't go till you've fixed me up that new chicken-pen. 'Twere done this morning, I said, an' the fences are all in order, an' the timber drawn from the new clearing. So I took my rifle an' bowie an' started for the Prieto. And you've never seen your wife since, I asked. Nary once. I had a letter some time after, which were a moral piece of writing. She wanted me to come back, because the neighbors looked on her so. It was eternal lonely of an evening, the help didn't do his work, an' 'twould all be so much nicer if I'd come home. I wrote to her; it 'twant worth while to vacate my prospect to cowhide her help. 'That's the story of many a westering man, said Frazer, kicking up the fire; but, taking the lump of them, I expect they're the finest creatures on this side of eternity. You've been an' lived among em, sir, an' you know. Where can such men be found—such big chests, such wild-cat spunk, an' such good hearts? Itake it, they're the noblest mission of humanity to fulfil—the mission of progress and of freedom! True liberty is better understood and more heartfelt by those shaggy, rough-grained woodsmen, than by yer shirt-bosomed stor-keepers an' yer ranty legislatures. Thank God for westering men, for what would America an' the future be without em? Honest still lives in the prairie, an' virtue, an' honor, an' contentment. Rough-grained we are; a swearing, drinking, loud voiced lot of rowdies we are called; but to us has been given the revelation of liberty. For though all else perish, though our progress slacken into death, an' our civilization fall away, yet, if freedom be retained, we have lost nothing. The freedom of the West, the liberty of body an' of mind, would recreate the universe by force of manhood, an' make a noble empire out of chaos! They don't understand us, sir, down East; an' thunder! that's no hardship. The polished citizen of New York, seeing a bowie in every old wife's carving-knife, goes about among us with his greasy hands outspread, an' downright death-smitten if asked to take a hand at euchre. I wonder he don't have prayers put up in the meetin' house, an' burn a blue-light on his door-way, when he gets back safe from among those 'arfal savages.' 'I'll tell yer another advantage they enjoy out West,' said Vansten; 'they've high-prime gas laid on to every house, an' portable, turners for traveling. If it's all as yer say, how comes it the best part of yer have two or three wives belongin' to yer, not to mention Indian squaws an' cotton merriages?' 'Wal, I admit its bad, but not so bad as may seem at first sight. I guess its very rare for any Westering man, except a right-down bad egg, such as are among all peoples, to marry a gal without letting her know as he's gone through a ceremony curiously similar several times before. It's a bad business at the best, I s'pose; but, to my mind, it makes a durned sight o' difference whether a man deceives the gal by lying oaths, or whether he tells her straight out that he's a married man already, but don't downright object to going through the operation agin. She may take it, or leave it, I guess! I should like to hear more of your experiences, Beasley, I said. 'You're welcome to all my pile betwixt this an' bedtime. As to Frazer's gas, its eternal pretty hearing, an' reminds me muchly of 'Whisky Fence' talk at Christmas-time; but it aren't in my way to say whether its all true or not. 'Wal boys, I picked up a genteel plunder on the Prieto; an' after six months, I come down the mountains to look round and spend it. 'Most the foremost female gender I see in San Francisco was a little milliner gal, an' her first glance rolled me over like a buffalo calf, so golffired pretty she were! I made up to her right away; an' arter a week or two, she wed my dust, an' asked her to have me. 'Air you merried?' asks she. 'Not much,' I says. So she larfs, 'How much?' 'On'y once.' 'Once is about enough for a body, I guess,' she says larfing. 'She were only a woman, quite in the ordinary walk of natur,' I said; but I've great hopes in house-keeping from a full-grown angel. She wouldn't hear of it nobow; but she let me take care of her when she walked out, an' all