

He had not long enjoyed himself in the refreshing solitude of that sanctuary, when a loud noise was heard in the hall. He rushed out to see what new domestic convulsion had occurred: it was the "dear Augustus," brought home from the Red House at Battersea, drunk with a double charge of champagne, swallowed to console him for his losses in a match at pigeon-shooting, played and payed that day. Mr. Augustus, moreover, was brought home minus two thousand guineas, besides an annuity of twenty pounds for life settled upon the wife of a trapman, whom, in his anxiety to make sure of the last bird, he had sent, with a double charge of No. 2-s in and about him, to his last account.

"Take the brute to bed!" said Sir Peter, sternly;—"and, John, countermand the fowl, and light me to my chamber. I shall breakfast at six to-morrow, John—remember at six." Sir Peter then retired to his chamber, which was on the same floor with his lady's; for Lady P. was already fashionable enough to insist upon the propriety of the disunion of bed, if not of board.

Sir Peter waked at six, and his chocolate was punctual. He threw up the window, and as he glanced out, observed a post-chaise and pair driving with fashionable—that is, furious—speed, up Portland Place. It stopped at his door; the steps were let down, and, wrapped in a loose travelling dress, out stepped Miss Amarantha, alone. Sir Peter rang the bell hastily, and was about to give orders that she should not be admitted; but the father overcame him, and he relented. "Attend to the door, and admit your young lady, but deny me," said Sir Peter, with a countenance "more in sorrow than in anger."

In justice to the young lady it must be recorded that no marriageable karru had been done: for when the lovers had arrived half way on their route to Gretna Green, Miss Amarantha discovered that, in the hurry of her flight, she had brought away her cotton-box in mistake for the case which contained her jewels—a discovery which, by some mysterious psychological process, not thoroughly understood even by the learned in love matters, acted so suddenly on the passion of Signor Soprano, that, two hours after, he stole out of the hotel where they had put up, and left the fair runaway to "gang her gait" back again.

"Take away the chocolate—I shall breakfast this morning with your mistress," said Sir Peter. He then descended by the back stairs to his library; there shutting himself from interruption, he read Bishop Horne's beautiful sermon on "Patience" twice through; and, having stored his mind with its precepts, he heard the summons to breakfast with a proper degree of composure, considering the serious domestic duties he had that morning to perform.

The meeting between the belligerents was what in military phraseology, has been termed "imposing." Lady P. brought into the field a powerful force of frowns, glances like Parthian darts, a masked battery of words, and a well-placed ambush of allics; the whole being backed by an irresistible *corps de reserve* of tears, upbraiding threats of separation, spasms, shrieks, and sals. Sir Peter, on his part, took his ground armed at all points, from a thorough consciousness that "thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just." The disputed and despised authority of the husband, the "proud wife's contumely," had stirred all his soul to the war; and whether domestic peace should smile on him in future, and dominion be allowed him over his own little kingdom and rebellious subjects, or whether anarchy and riot were to rule, was now at issue. Sir Peter advanced to the attack with a bold front, affecting, however, no more courage than he felt—whilst it was easy to observe that Lady P. exhibited a certain flutter of preparation, which betrayed to the wary eye of the general the ill-disguised apprehensions of the enemy.

"Betty, leave your mistress alone with me," said the knight. Betty did as she was bid, and retired. And now there was a clear field for the contest, and no quarters expected! An awful pause ensued—to fill up which, or rather to inspirit himself to the war, Sir Peter, in the absence of Spartan life and drum, whistled a sort of battle symphony. As the last war-note died on the gale, Lady P. made demonstrations of a wish to parley.

"Sir Peter," said the lady, "do you take chocolate or coffee this morning?"

Not a word in reply. The silence of a settled purpose sat on the soul of Sir Peter, as he half turned away from the table. This was perhaps an indiscreet movement, for he thereby left his right wing exposed to the light artillery of Lady P., which instantly, as might have been expected, commenced a galling fire.

"Really, Sir Peter," said the Lady, "your contempt of me—your conduct towards me—your opposition to my most moderate wishes—your indifference to my comforts—I can only impute to your having grown weary of so virtuous, so conciliating, so patient, so careful a wife."

"Madam!" said Sir Peter, facing to the front.

"What am I to understand from your behaviour?" demanded the lady.

"You are to understand, madam," returned the knight, "that I have come to the determination of being the master of my own house, and director of my own children, of whom I am, by the law of nature, the first protector, and by the law of society, the legal and proper guardian; and whom I am from this day, determined to guard in future from the errors into which they have fallen."

"Well, Sir Peter," returned the lady, with an air of infinite astonishment, "and who has for a moment disputed it?"

"I will do you the justice to say that you have not—"

"Your candour, Sir Peter, does you honour," said Lady Pimento, interrupting him rather too hastily.

"Hear me out, madam!—For a moment you have not, but for twenty years you disputed it, inch by inch, instance by instance, day by day, night by night."

"You surprise me!" said the lady.

"I meant to do so, madam," returned the knight; "and I shall surprise you more. Know then, madam, that from this day the firm of Lady Pimento and Sir Peter Pimento, in which I have hitherto appeared to be little more than the sleeping partner, ceases, or rather is remodelled—the oldest partner in the house resuming his right and prerogative to govern and direct its affairs."

"Never!" said Lady P., who could no longer restrain her rising spirit: "I will be mistress in my own family!"

"You shall be, madam, but nothing more!" said Sir Peter.

"But I will," said Lady P.; "I will be mistress and master too—or—"

Sir Peter sternly interrupted her, and firmly and quietly remarked. "Well, then, madam, the partners not agreeing as to who is, or who is to be the head of the firm, the partnership must be dissolved."

This he said with such a cool air of settled determination as stunned his good lady into wondering silence. Lady P. bit her lips, bit the initials out of the corner of her handkerchief, and then, bouncing from her chair, would have fled the field, and left the resolved husband to enjoy in peace the honours of war; but Sir Peter, expecting this manœuvre, had cut off her retreat, by previously locking the door, and putting the key into his pocket.

"Resume your chair, Lady Pimento."

And in this one instance the lady was obedient. Sir Peter then proceeded to deliver himself as follows, but to no very attentive audience:—

"You are my wife;—'wife' is a sacred title, and imports a sacred obligation. It is not a mere empty distinction among women, but one conferring an office, of most solemn duties. A wife should be a crown to her husband—her children its jewels. Her virtue should be his pride and pleasure, not his pain and punishment: but virtue in a wife is not the only thing necessary to make a husband happy:—there are other qualities—temper, cheerfulness, patience, forbearance—all essential. Her nature should soften the sternness of his, where it is stern—not stubbornly resist it where it is gentle. Her hand should gently retain him when he would take the wrong path—not rudely pull him back, or stand in his way, when he has made choice of the right. Her children should be as the apples of his eyes, the wine and honey of his heart, the grace and ornament of his house. They should be to him as the second spring of his own youth—the pride of his summer—the fruitfulness of his autumn—and the light and warmth of the winter of his manhood. Such should be the virtues of a wife:—I am not prepared to say, madam, that I am the possessor of such a woman. Such should be the virtues of the children—"

Here Sir Peter hid his face in his hands: Lady Pimento was silent, and apparently ashamed. He resumed, after a moment.

"—No, madam! I have a wife who would endanger the fortunes of her husband for the poor ambition of moving in a circle to which the industry and success of that husband may have lifted her, but to which her birth and habits cannot entitle her. And I have sons, who, imbibing her precepts and influenced by her example, plunge headlong into fashionable pleasures, that they may be named among the fools of Fortune to-day, only to be pitied by the wise, and laughed at by the fools they court as their companions, to-morrow. But the reign of folly, I am resolved, shall cease in my family, at least. My wife shall be a real ornament to me or nothing? my children shall serve and enrich their country, and themselves, by their industry as merchants; and be an example of prudence, not profligacy—or they are no children of mine. These, madam, are my solemn resolutions. Having acquainted you with thus much of my determination, I leave you, Lady Pimento, to your own reflections; and I trust they will be such as will bring conviction home to your bosom, and lead you to agree with me that amendment—aye, even a thorough reformation of my family is necessary to their reputation in this world, and their happiness in the next."

So saying, he rose to leave the room. He paused a moment at the door, and looked back upon his lady with more of pity than anger in his eyes: Lady P. glanced once at him, and turning herself and chair, averted her flushed and angry face. He gazed on her in silence, and almost relented from his sternness, but his just resentment and becoming pride as a husband and a man struggled with the mischievous weakness and false tenderness that fluttered in his heart; and, recovering himself, he firmly and silently quitted the chamber.

Lady P. held out to the last, but finding her supplies cut off, and her hopes of maintaining the contest single-handed becoming weaker and weaker, she at last sent out a flag of truce; and from that day domestic tyranny ceased in the Pimento kingdom.

Sir Peter followed up his lectures on family government with Spartan rigour of resolution and vigour of action; and he succeeded as he deserved. The results were, that Mr. Augustus

merged the glory of being a first-rate shot in the glory of being a good man upon 'Change; Mr. Alfred ceased to air the exotic beauties of the Opera, and made a fortune by speculation in tobacco; and Miss Amarantha, putting off the "prima donna," and forgetting her soft Signor, nursed her own five children, and now looks to see the promotion of the excellent citizen her husband to the honours of the next year's mayoralty.

DEDICATIONS.

Some authors excelled in this species of literary artifice. The Italian Don dedicated each of his letters, in a book called *LA LIBRARIARIA*, to persons whose names began with the first letter of the epistle; and dedicated the whole collection in another epistle; so that the book, which only consisted of forty-five pages, was dedicated to above twenty persons. This is carrying literary mendicity pretty high. Politi, the editor of the *MARTYROLOGIUM ROMANUM*, published at Rome in 1751, has improved on the idea of Doni; for to the 365 days of the year of this Martyrology he has prefixed to each an epistle dedicatory. It is fortunate to have a large circle of acquaintance, though not worthy of being saints. Galland, the translator of the *Arabian Nights*, prefixed a dedication to each tale which he gave; had he finished the "one thousand and one," he would have surpassed even the Martyrologist.

Mademoiselle Scudery tells a remarkable expedient of an ingenious trader in this line—One Rangouze made a collection of Letters, which he printed without numbering them. By this means the book-binder put that letter which the author ordered him first; so that all the persons to whom he presented this book, seeing their names at the head, considered themselves under a particular obligation. There was likewise an Italian physician, who having wrote on Hippocrates' Aphorisms, dedicated each book of his Commentaries to one of his friends, and the index to another!

More than one of our own authors have dedications in the same spirit. It was an expedient to procure dedicatory fees; for publishing books by subscription was an art then undiscovered. One prefixed a different dedication to a certain number of printed copies, and addressed them to every great man he knew, who he thought relished a morsel of flattery, and would pay handsomely for a coarse luxury. Sir Balthazar Gerbier, in his "Counsel to Builders," has made up half the work with forty-two Dedications, which he excuses by the example of Antonio Perez; yet in these dedications he scatters a heap of curious things, for he was a very universal genius. Perez, once secretary of state to Philip II of Spain, dedicates his "Obras," first to "Nuestro sanctissimo Padre," and "Al Sacro Collegio," then follows one to "Henry IV," and then one still more, embracing, "A Todos." Fuller, in his "Church History," has with admirable contrivance introduced twelve title-pages, besides the general one, and as many particular dedications, and no less than fifty or sixty of those by inscriptions, and which are addressed to his benefactors; a circumstance which Heylin in his severity did not overlook: for "making his work bigger by forty sheets at the least; and he was so ambitious of the number of his patrons that having but four leaves at the end of his History, he discovers a particular benefactress to inscribe them to!" This unlucky lady, the patroness of four leaves, Heylin compares to Roscius Regulus, who accepted the consular dignity for that part of the day on which Cecina by a decree of the senate was degraded from it, which occasioned Regulus to be ridiculed by the people all his life after, as the consul of half a day.

The price for the dedication of a play was at length fixed, from five to ten guineas from the Revolution to the time of George I; when it rose to twenty, but sometimes a bargain was to be struck when the author and the play were alike indifferent. Sometimes the party higgled about the price, or the statue while stepping into his niche could turn round on the author to assist his invention. A patron of Peter Motteux, dissatisfied with Peter's colder temperament, actually composed the superlative dedication to himself, and completed the misery of the apparent author by subscribing it with his name. This circumstance was so notorious at the time, that it occasioned a satirical dialogue between Motteux and his patron Heveningham. The patron, in his zeal to omit no possible distinction that might attach to him, had given one circumstance which no one but himself could have known.

PATRON.

I must confess I was to blame
That one particular to name;
The rest could never have been known,
I made the style so like thy own.

POET.

I beg your pardon sir for that.

PATRON.

Why what would you be at?
I writ below myself you sot!
Avoiding figures, tropes, what not,
For fear I should my fancy raise
Above the level of thy plays!