

HOW WE GOT MARRIED.

A Curate's Story.

It is curious to reflect how the majority of married couples may be said to have drifted into the wedded state. Some chance meeting, some trifling circumstances, in many cases the commencement of an acquaintance that ripens into a life-long union.

"That not impossible she who shall command my heart and me." s rarely (save in France) introduced to us in orthodox form as our future wife. We tumble on our fate unexpectedly in nine cases out of ten; a visit to a country-house; a journey by a public conveyance—all these may be the first steps on the road that leads us into the proverbial "lane which has no turning."

We shelter a young lady from a shower of hail, at a flower show, and little thought then that she was the future Mrs. Brown. When we assisted that old gentleman and his daughter at the railway-station, nothing was further from our thoughts than matrimony; yet in another twelve months that young lady was standing beside us in the full glory of white satin and orange-blossoms. As for accidents, if I met with one by road or rail, and was conveyed to private house for recovery (people always are in novels), I should, if a single man, fully expect that a beautiful daughter of the house would undertake the post of sick-nurse, and eventually become my wife.

After all, it was through an accident I did get married. Not the orthodox fall from a horse, or injury from a train, but an accident of another kind. Twenty years ago I went to my first curacy. I was young, then, and, except for my school and university career, had never left home before. I found myself terribly lonely at first, at Martin-on-Sands. It was a dull, respectable little watering-place, on the east coast, with the usual row of white houses and green blinds, facing the sea, the usual "esplanade," the usual little shops where shell ornaments were sold. It was an intensely quiet place; its inhabitants proudly boasted that "no excursionists ever came there;" indeed, there was nothing to attract them. There are two types of English seaside resorts: the gay and the noisy, where donkeys, bands and negroes flourish, and the quiet spots, like Martin-on-Sands, where existence is peaceful, not to say stagnant.

People with large families came to us during the summer and autumn, lodging and provisions being reasonable, and the sands affording capital play-ground for the children; but the town was not a lively residence at the best of times. The vicar was an old man, greatly afflicted with gout, and the chief work of the parish devolved on his curate; but there was not very arduous toil for either of us. Most of the townspeople had realized the Wise Man's wish, and possessed "neither poverty nor riches." Except season visitors, we had few gentry among us, small lodging-house keepers, shop-keepers and fisher-folk making up the bulk of our population. At the same time we had hardly any actual poor. The fishers were, as a class, quiet, hard working people, and seemed able to earn enough to keep themselves and families in fair comfort. Of course there was the usual routine of parish work, church services and school, sick and aged people to visit, but I found my time certainly not too well filled. Mr. Gray, the incumbent, disliked anything new, and would not have permitted any additions to the usual rounds of my parochial labors; so I found plenty of leisure in which to be dull. We were a large, merry family at home, and sometimes, sitting by myself in my lodgings, evening-time went slowly enough. A few months after my installation in my new post, I succeeded in persuading a married sister to come to Martin-on-Sands with her children.

This was, indeed, a pleasant change for me, and nearly every evening I used to go round to her lodgings to enjoy a chat with her and a romp with the children, with whom I was a great favorite.

One dark autumn evening I had started out later than usual—a visit to a sick man had detained me—but I was anxious to not omit my usual call, as Helen was to return to London next day. I hurried along the neat row of houses which formed the aristocratic quarter of our town, and rapped at the well-known door. "You need not announce me," I said, passing the neat maid-servant; "I am expected; and I hurried up stairs. Just outside the drawing-room door lay a large black fur rug, which I had never observed before. As I looked at it the idea struck me that I might make a brilliant entrance into the room on this farewell visit. It was past seven o'clock; all the children would be assembled in the drawing-room after their tea. I would enter in the character of a bear. Wrapping myself in the rug, I opened the door and crawled in on all-fours, emitting sundry growling sounds. A scream greeted me—that was to be expected, but in place of laughter that ought to have succeeded it, I was terrified to hear a shrill female voice, certainly not Helen's exclaiming, "Thieves! Murder! Rose! Maria! help!"

Stunned for a moment, I hastily began to disengage the bear-dress; and when I got the length of my knees with my hand free, I, to my dismay, found myself in a strange room, with two strange ladies standing opposite; one young and very pretty, the other a much older one, who stood intrenched behind a chair, in which she had doubtless been peacefully dozing until disturbed by my abrupt entry. It must have been a shock to her to be awake from tranquil repose by the sight of a strange animal crawling in at the door, nor was discovery that the animal was a strange man likely to reassure her. As for myself—a German author has noted in his diary that at a certain date he "behaved as a fool"—I certainly passed a similar mental verdict upon myself. I had evidently entered a wrong house by mistake, and played what looked like a practical joke on an entire stranger. It was a dignified and pleasant position for the curate of the parish to find himself in! If the story spread to the rector's ears! Mr. Gray was a starched specimen of the old school of frigid politeness, who abominated levity of demeanor, and I am sure would not have crawled on all-fours had his life depended upon it. I was young and shy, and my absurd position was no joke to me. As soon as I could find breath, I essayed to explain matters to the frightened and irate old lady. I apologized most humbly for my intrusion, explaining my mistake; but my efforts were ill-received. I found my ally, however, in the shape of the sweet-looking girl, who endeavored to mollify the old lady's wrath, accepted my apologies smilingly, and joined me in every possible way in trying to soothe her angry relative.

"It's all a mistake, auntie," she whispered. "Don't you see it's Mr. Morley, our curate?"

"And more shame for him to play such a vulgar, ungentlemanly trick!" retorted the old dame, not to be so easily mollified.

"Madam, you cannot think I intended to alarm you thus." I stammered, wishing I could sink into the floor. "I unfortunately mistook the house; I was intending to make a little diversion for my nephews and nieces."

"Is there not a number on my door, sir? Could you not have ascertained that you had entered the right house before commencing this buffoonery? Very unbecoming for a clergyman in any case, in my judgment."

"O, auntie!" whispered the young lady, her face flushing. Then, turning to me, she said, gently, "My aunt is not strong, and this has startled her; but I am sure the mistake was quite accidental on your part."

How grateful I felt to her for those kind words!

"Sir," said the old lady, eying me severely through her spectacles, "as my niece appears to know you, and states that you are the curate of this parish, I suppose I am bound to acquit you of intentions of robbery, which your extraordinary conduct at first suggested. At the same time it is difficult to understand any gentleman in your position exhibiting himself, even to juvenile relatives, in the foolish, the undignified manner in which you entered this room. I should have imagined that Mr. Gray would have selected an assistant of less levity of character. My nerves have received a severe shock, and as you are now aware that this is not the house you intend to visit, perhaps you will leave us."

I blundered through a few more apologies, and went out terribly crestfallen, though the young lady bowed and smiled as we parted. Evidently she was not offended.

Helen received the news of my adventure with peals of laughter.

"Charlie, Charlie! that you should have selected old Mrs. Piggot of all people to play this trick upon? You are an unlucky fellow!"

"Do you know the old lady, then?"

"Only by repute. She comes here every year, and has often lodged with my land-lady. She is really a kind-hearted old soul, I believe, but has a very crusty old temper."

"I can vouch for that," I answered ruefully.

"O, if I had only been there!" cried Helen, going off into fresh peals of laughter. "Poor, dear Charlie crawling in, and old Mrs. Piggot's wrath—what an introduction to one of your parishioners! I wonder if the old lady will ever forgive you."

Doubts about my steadiness of conduct, but, although only a curate, I had a comfortable private income to offer Rose, who had hitherto been a pensioner, on her aunt, and this circumstance may have weighed in my favor.

It is a long time since our wedding-day; but as I look back I feel grateful to the accident which was so instrumental in bestowing upon me the sweetest and dearest wife that ever blessed a man's home.

At the same time I would not advise my readers to enter strange houses wrapped in rugs, on the chance of finding another Rose.

IN THE CAB.

Some Strange Shadows Under the Head-light.

There are living in Detroit to-day perhaps fifty men who have left the cab of the locomotive for some other employment, and in some cases the reasons for leaving are curious enough. It is hard to find a drinker who will admit that liquor hurts him, or a user of a weed who will agree with the doctors that nicotine slowly and surely shatters the nervous system. And it is harder still to find an engine driver who admits that the long hours, ceaseless vigils and rough riding have weakened his nerves or affected his courage.

"He was an excellent man for years," said a depot official as he pointed to a retired engineer lounging around the Union Depot, "but the time came when he saw phantoms, and we had to retire him."

"Phantoms?" "Yes. They seemed realities to him, of course, but to others they were shadows and phantoms. In the last year of his run I was on his train one night when he stopped twice in seven miles for obstructions on the track, and yet there wasn't so much as a straw on the rails. Another night he would imagine that the locomotive had struck a farmer's wagon, and he would halt the train and run back to investigate."

"Do all engineers become affected in the same way?"

"No. There are men on the roads centering here who are as good to-day as they were when they entered the cab fifteen or twenty years ago. It is according to the temperament. The constant vigilance and burden of responsibility are a terrible worry to some and no burden at all to others. The motion of an engine alone would break down some men. The engineer who takes out the Pacific express grows fat over his hard work, and twenty years' service would not break him down. His predecessor broke down and died before he had been at the throttle six years."

And some of them see phantoms, eh?"

"Yes; and let me tell you of an instance. Three or four years ago the engineer of a Lake Shore train began to chase a horse. One night after leaving the Junction a black horse jumped on the track ahead of him and led him a race of several miles. It was only his imagination, but he was as certain in his own mind that he saw what he did not see, as you are that you are sitting here. He did not only quarrel with his conductor about the matter, but he insisted that the Superintendent should send some official to verify his statement. I was selected to go out in the cab. Soon after leaving the Junction the horse appeared—not to my eyes but to the driver's. I saw nothing but the black rails and the smooth road bed, but he saw the horse. He identified the color, marks and other particulars, and in his eagerness to get closer to the animal ran the train past one of the stopping stations at the rate of fifty miles an hour. We had to take him off the engine and give him other work, but he did not live long. We have almost a parallel case to-day."

"Who is it?"

"It is an old driver from the Grand Trunk who left here several years ago and took an engine on the Illinois Central. He held out five or six years, and then he began to race with a phantom. It was with an Indian warrior mounted on a white horse and speeding along the prairie beside the track. In this instance the fireman's superstition was excited, and he too saw the phantom. Would you believe that they flung lumps of coal at the shadow and fired at it with revolvers? They actually did, and one night over run their time and brought up against a freight train making a terrible mess of it. The engineer of a train running out of this depot walked into head quarters the other day and asked for a lay off for three months. At first he would give no excuse, but finally admitted that he was killing too many men on his run. He was breaking down, and instead of racing with imaginary horses he was running over imaginary persons. He is the first driver I ever knew to admit his nervousness, but this admission will be his salvation. He will get a rest for three months and go back to the cab with his old nerve restored.—[M. Quad.

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Home and its Queens.

There is probably not an unperturbed man or woman living, who does not feel that the sweetest consolation and the best rewards of life are found in the love and delights of home. There are very few who do not feel themselves indebted to the influences that clustered around their cradles for whatever good there may be in their character and condition. Home based upon Christian marriage is so evidently an institution of God, that a man must become profane before he can deny it. Wherever it is pure and true to the Christian idea, there lives an institution constructed of all the nobler instincts of society. Of this realm woman is queen. It takes the cue and hue from her. If she is in the best sense womanly—if she is true and tender, loving and heroic, patient and self-devoted—she consciously organizes and puts in operation a set of influences that do more to mould the destiny of the nation than any man uncrowned by power of eloquence can possibly effect. The men of the nation are what mothers make them, as a rule; and the voice that these men speak in the expression of power is the voice of the women who bore and bred them. There can be no substitute for this. There is no other possible way in which the women of the nation can organize their influence and power that it will so beneficially upon society and the state.—Scribner's Monthly.

A Model Girl.

Do you want to read this word-picture of a modest girl? I wish more of her class existed, for the sake of society at large. She is not what is called handsome, though possessed of a quiet attractiveness all her own. Her wardrobe is chosen for quality according to her financial circumstances; the colors are selected with care suitable to each other and favorable to her complexion (you may call this taste; so it is, "modest taste"); the style must, of course, be as near the popular fashion as she dare approach, but never quite up to the height! When out calling or shopping she dresses with neatness and care; if walking, she neither moves too fast nor slow, but glides along with a natural and graceful step which is very becoming, recognizing her friends by a polite bow or welcome grasp of the hand; but there are no demonstrative embraces or gushing words. She is strictly truthful. When any question is being discussed, and her opinion is asked, she gives it hesitatingly, not doubtfully and, if not accepted, never allows herself to utter a contradiction, but calmly and quietly withdraws from the discussion, although her opinion is not lost or defeated by so doing; on the contrary it almost always carries weight and effect. Her acts and words are unobtrusive, but her influence is great in the home which it is her happiness to adorn.

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