

"Seriously, she has, and next Monday week, I hope to lead to the altar, Miss Polly King."

"Well! you are a fortunate man," returned the other; "the people may laugh at you for a few days, but the respect which wealth always commands, will reconcile them and you to the absurdity of the thing. But sit down; take another glass of punch, and a bite of bread and cheese, and tell us all about it."

John's courtship had made him hungry; and when he no longer beheld the homely features of his affianced, his spirits rose in proportion to the advantages which must accrue to him from the union. He told his tale with great humour, beginning at the beginning, and describing the scene with much comic effect. "The only drawback to my happiness," he said, in conclusion, "was being obliged to kiss the lady, and that she was too stingy to repay me for the sacrifice, by offering me a glass of her brandy and water."

"You will have need of it, by-and-bye," said Ben. "On the wedding day, I will keep your spirits up, by pouring spirits down!"

"You think my love will be cured, like the landlady's, with brandy," returned John; "But courage! Miss Polly is not the pig-faced lady, after all, and I heard of a handsome young fellow who married *her* for a very small consideration, when compared with what I shall get by my wife."

Taking up his hat, and thanking his friends for the interest they felt in his affairs, Andrews, took the path to his solitary home, humming to himself, in rather a dolorous voice—

"Such a wife as Willie had,  
I wadna gie a button for her."

CHAPTER V.

Pray, madam! will you take this man, your wedded lord to be?

Right gladly, sir! I only fear, he never will love me.

THAT night, John Andrews had a fearful vision; and as he had no one to tell his dream to, and he was ashamed of telling it to Mr. and Mrs. Joyce, for fear of being laughed at, it lay very heavily upon his mind.

He thought that the marriage between himself and Miss Polly was over, and that he was reposing in the neat white bed, which had been decorated by the hands of his pretty first wife, for their happy bridal. The third Mrs. Andrews was asleep, and her horrible face looked more horrible still, reclining upon the snow white pillow. John unable to close his eyes, was contemplating the spectacle in silent wonder; when he was startled from his reverie, by a soft and well-remembered voice, murmuring

in his ear, "Is she anything like me, John!" and bending over him, almost near enough to kiss his lips, he beheld the fair, bright face, of his first love.

Overcome with terror, Andrews was too much excited to speak, when she whispered again, in a sad and plaintive tone: "Tell the old witch to be kind to my poor little boys." John uttered a deep groan, and the vision faded; and he only beheld the coarse features of his bride, now doubly frightful in his eyes, reclining near him, "Oh! my dear, lost Catherine!" he cried; "how could I put this ugly toad in your place?"

"Have you forgotten me, John?" whispered a gay, blythe voice; and standing by his bed-side, dressed in a gala costume, with rosy cheeks, and sparkling black eyes, he beheld the handsome young widow—

"Who gave that angel boy, on whom he dotes,  
And died to give him—*uplan'd* in his birth."

"Ah, Maria!" he cried, starting up in his bed, and holding out his arms towards her, "are you come to upbraid me with my folly?"

"Tell that woman, who now fills my place, to take care of my motherless babe."

Andrews tried to clasp her to his heart; but his bride awakening with a loud yell, flung herself upon his breast, like a weight of lead. Down! down! down they went, to the very confines of eternal night; and the wretched man aroused himself from his horrible dream with a shriek of agony.

"This is a warning from heaven!" he cried. "May I be lost if ever I take that hag to my bed and board; though she had money enough to pay off the national debt."

But the morning came; and the gay sunlight dispelled the gloomy visions of the night. John was ashamed of his own weakness. He thought of all the fine things that could be purchased with Miss Polly's wealth; and he tried to think himself what his neighbours thought him. But for ever in his ears, he heard the soft voice murmuring, "Is she anything like me, John?" He was literally haunted by the ghosts of his former wives. He lost his appetite, and his sleep went from him.

"You look ill, Mr. Andrews," said the bride elect, with more softness in her look and manner than could have been expected from her. She was really half in love with her handsome suitor. "I must insist on your taking some of my cough lozenges; and I will send you over a basin of hot brandy *caudle*, to-night. It will do you good, if you take it the last thing before you go to bed."

Poor John's malady was one of the heart, not