

also, and which the sex can alone, or at least most effectually impart, strive to render their own homes the places above all others where their sons and brothers would most delight to be found.

#### MEMOIR OF A PAIR OF WHISKERS.

"Poor Hodgo was troubled with a broad black beard that seemed a shoe brush stuck beneath his nose."

PETER PINDAR.

"Come not between a dragon and his rage."  
KING LEAR.

DOROTHY MEREDITH was my cousin, my favourite cousin. Nay, she was most emphatically, my pet. As for Major Abercrombie Crowbar, public opinion was unanimous! A brave man, undoubtedly, but the last man in creation for a husband. He thought too much of his whiskers.

What could I do? To step between a lover and his mistress, is generally speaking, no trifle. There are cases where it is literally coming "between the dragon and his rage." But Dorothy Meredith was the finest girl in Lancashire—and my cousin.

What could she see to love in that baboon, Crowbar? Not that the major was so insufferable, apart from his whiskers. But military men are anti-social. The worst of fathers. The most negligent of husbands. They can't take a joke. Besides, there was no chance of a war, and he would make a point of not dying these ten years.

It is needless to say that Dorothy Meredith was unrivalled in accomplishments. How could it be otherwise? Six rich uncles had educated her; and she was the legatee of a round dozen of maiden aunts. Of course there was no such match in the country.

Now for me to stand still and see such a sacrifice—this was manifestly impossible. Understand me: I should not take such ground in an ordinary case, but Major Crowbar's mustaches were a foot long.

It is true the thing was not so easily done. Interference of this kind is a delicate business. Open expostulation is out of the question, and friendly remonstrance is only a declaration of war, *sub rosa*. It is surprising how a woman will stick to her betrothed "against the field." If I knew that her lover had scraped his mother to death with an oyster-shell, I should only make her a foe for life by the really friendly act of giving her the information. A woman, in such a case, will doubt the testimony of a whole regiment under oath, and the evidence of her own senses into the bargain. Besides if you could, by some miracle, convince her, you would accomplish nothing: for she forgives even more obstinately than she disobeys; and unless you can actually produce before her eyes a previous living wife and five children, (all the bona fide property of her suitor,) you had much better let her alone.

It is obvious, then, that whatever exists of interference must occur between Major Crowbar and myself. The hope to prevail with Dorothy is altogether desperate.

To be sure, the Major sings a good song; and I am told that he can split a man into three pieces with "cut one" of his broadsword; but he drinks like a fish, and his whiskers are absolutely terrific. He marry my cousin with five thousand a-year!

"Rather than so, come fate into the list,  
And champion me to th' utterance!"

What can Dorothy Meredith possibly see in that fellow? She is my cousin. If she would listen to reason for five minutes! What am I talking about? A woman in love listens to reason? Pah!

Thus situated, what could I do? To deliberate was ruin, absolute ruin, yet—I paused.

Not that I was afraid of the major. I am afraid of no man. But there was a quiet ferocity in his upper lip, which I fancy few people would contravene, just for the fun of it.

Certainly duels are things to be avoided. I have

over had but one opinion on the subject. This being shot down for another man's benefit, is all wrong. I venture to say that duels never did any good. They give rise to scandal. They disturb the passions. They make awkward gaps in a family circle. I once knew three brothers out of five killed in duels, in the single month of April. They were April fools. For my own part, I would never sanction a duel, excepting, perhaps, those very few cases, where really there's no getting away from it.

Yet it was unpleasant, very unpleasant—I acknowledge it. The wrong end of a pistol-barrel, levelled, as near as you can judge, at the fourth button, is, to say the least, no joke. And I was no shot. And I happened to know, on the other hand, that the major was no bungler. He had already been the "principal" cause of nine private funerals, and the "second" of forty-odd. Things began to look serious. But what could I do? He had sworn matrimony on my cousin, and I could devise no other way of getting at him!

In short, I decided—not to challenge him—for that as you shall presently see would have disconcerted my entire plan—but to make him challenge me. This was a nice point.

When I'm in a quandary, I always look at my watch. It was precisely half past three. "Ha! this is fortunate. The major takes soup at the Red Lion, every day, at half-past three."

I laid my plan.

I seated myself within ear-shot of his favorite corner, and called for terrapins and port.

A thought struck me. In a moment I improved my plan but said nothing. Just as I had finished, who should come in but my friend Colonel ———.

"Eh, waiter, make those terrapins for two, and double the port. Colonel, I am glad to see you."

"How are you?—how are you?" said the Colonel, straining away at his left-hand glove. "Warm day, this! what's the news?"

"Umph! nothing special. Nothing but a little scandal about one of your professional brethren,—Major Crowbar. I hear he's in a bad way."

(There was a slight noise in the corner.)

"How?" said the Colonel, "how?"

"He lost his commission last night at brag."

(There was a sudden rap on the table in the corner, as of a man's knuckles: the waiter mistook it for a call, and said, "coming sir!")

"You don't say it!" continued the colonel.

"Matter of fact, I assure you; and that isn't the worst of it. A gentleman at the same table lost his purse in a very mysterious way, and it is whispered that some people could tell where it went."

(The noise in the corner rather increased than diminished.)

"You astonish me!" exclaimed the colonel.

"Between ourselves, colonel, it does not astonish me. I know a little of that man's history."

"Why my good sir, you do very much astonish me. I thought that he was to marry your cousin."

"He marry my cousin, the Algerine rascal! I should like to catch him making such a proposition!"

(Just here, there was a thundering crash in the aforesaid corner! I believe every atom of crockery was dashed to pieces! I raised my voice.)

"Colonel ———, if that mustached puppy should mention such a thing to my cousin I'd challenge him!"

The colonel fairly rolled his eyes in wonder. I changed the subject. Enough, thought I, is as good as a feast.

I was hardly seated in my arm-chair, when the following note was placed before me.

"Sir,—I scorn to reply to your scurrilous abuse by a superfluous word. Name your own time, place, weapons; and take the first shot at A CROWBAR."

This was just what I wanted.

My reply was equally brief, informal and pointed:

"Major Crowbar's proposition is accepted. He will do me the favor to beat Collins' Heath tomorrow, at sun-rise, without weapons, as they will be furnished on the ground."

I happened to know that the only weapon with which the major was wholly unacquainted, and with which I was perfectly acquainted, was a long rifle.

I bore the major no malice. A puppy he certainly was; and, at any risk, I was determined to oppose his marrying my cousin. But I had no weasel-like longing for his blood. If it could be so, I had much rather not shed it. But he must not marry my cousin!

The morning was chilly, even for March. The sun had just risen; cloudless, indeed, but the atmosphere was filled with a half-frozen vapour that attached itself like hoar frost to our clothes, and gave to every mortal man of us the appearance of having just emerged from a snow-drift. I shall never forget the major's figure!

His mustaches and whiskers seemed arranged on purpose to gather up this imitation snow, and it was so piled up over his visage that nothing was visible save his falcon eyes and the plentiful puffs of fog into which the keen air converted his breath.

His manner was dignified to a fraction. He evidently thought of nothing but the pleasure of submitting me to the care of an undertaker. He was quiet but he was, nevertheless, ferocious!

When he saw the ground measured—thirty paces—he smiled in downright derision.

"Umph!" said he, "some people have yet to learn that Crowbar's long shots are his best shots!"

But he laughed out of the other corner when he saw my two long rifles! This was unkind. He had no possible notion of any thing but a pistol. But it was in vain to protest. I was the party challenged. I had the undoubted right to my selection.

The seconds began to load the pieces. I watched them as a cat watches a mouse. The major's friend chose a ball that was absolutely perfect. I envied the major the luxury of firing that ball.

As Colonel ——— was adjusting my bullet, I remarked that it had a flaw; a very small flaw it is true, but still a flaw.

"Colonel," said I, "excuse me, that ball is a bad one."

And in a twinkling, I popped into the rifle a ball of my own preparation. It contained dry powder in the centre, and was bound up, tight and hard, with wet powder and tow. An odd thing to encounter that beautiful ball of the major's!—but you shall see.

In trying situations, it is a great thing for one to know one's man. I knew the major. I knew that he was a brave man, but no shot with a rifle—and he knew it too! I never saw him so cowed before.

At the word we walked to our post, and we were told to fire while my second counted one—two—three—four—five.

"One," was hardly pronounced, when my rifle gave us music. I watched the track of smoke and fire of my tow bullet—it lodged in the very midst of the major's right whisker—it blazed—it blew up—he fired—he fell—the two explosions were simultaneous, and what little he had of aim was entirely lost.

The major was, as I said, a brave man; and when he found that he really was not dead, he soon rallied and stood upon his feet.

But to a brave man, honour is dearer than life; and to the major, his whiskers were dearer than honor itself!

His whiskers, did I say? Alack! He had no whiskers! He had a part of one whisker, most atrociously singed and discolored. But his fellow was gone forever!

Not the foliage—the branches—the trunks mere; but the very roots were gone!

Had they been only shorn—no matter how close to the skin—time would have done his work; they would have grown again. As it was, the major was in the predicament of Othello, after he put the light out;