

A COURTSHIP BY PROXY: AND HOW IT ENDED.

BY E. S. J.

It is now nearly five-and-twenty years since I came to the city, where an elder brother of mine, who was connected with an extensive and flourishing mercantile house, resided. Upon the retiring of the senior partner of the firm, he had just risen to the head of the establishment, whereupon he at once offered to me a share in the business, which most generous offer I as promptly accepted, and less than a week beheld me transported from the peaceful quietude of a retired country village to the scene of my future operations, amid the turmoil and bustle of a busy city life.

My brother and I were respectively the eldest and youngest of a family of five boys, and, being my senior by some eight or ten years, I allowed him to acquire a kind of parental control over me; not that he laid any decided restriction upon my movements, but by a sort of unconscious influence, natural under the circumstances, I was usually restrained from doing any thing that I felt would be looked upon by him with displeasure.

But, although in some cases I allowed myself to be swayed by the opinion and advice of my brother, (whose name, I forgot to state, is William,) yet, in one particular, I took the liberty of thinking and acting for myself; but here, *en passant*, a few words of explanation may not be out of place:—

In the first place, let me observe that my brother William, though a bachelor, was not by any means an *old* bachelor, neither was he one of these miserable, musty, crusty specimens of humanity, commonly associated with our ideas of bachelorhood: but a noble, whole-hearted fellow, who always cared more for the welfare and happiness of those around him, than for his own pleasure; and whose friendship any man (or woman either) might well be proud to own.

Now, although William had not thus far taken upon himself the holy bonds of matrimony, yet, in the case of others, he strongly favored the adoption of such a course; and, more particularly, it was his desire to have me—as he put it—take a wife and settle quietly down like a sensible man.

In fact, my brother seemed to look upon me as a headstrong, careless fellow, inclined to be a little *fast* if left to myself, and, thinking that if he could manage to saddle me with the cares and responsibilities of married life, it might have the effect of sobering me down into a steady business-like individual like himself, he

repeatedly urged upon me the advisability of seeking out among my young lady friends and acquaintances, some fair creature worthy to share my name, fame and fortune.

But, in spite of all the skill and pains he employed to accomplish the purpose he had in view, and in spite of all the trouble he took to make effective these efforts, by introducing me into a number of families where he happened to be acquainted—in any of which he judged an excellent opportunity might be afforded me of making an eligible match with some fair daughter of the household—notwithstanding all this, owing either to my perverseness or stupidity, at the end of two years from the time he took the matter in hand, he found himself about as near the perfecting of his match-making operations, as at the commencement.

Thus it was that matters stood, one bright, sunny afternoon early in the month of July, which found my brother and me seated at the office desk,—he engaged in writing some letters, which required to be posted that evening: and I employed in posting some accounts into the ledger, from the smaller blank books, which lay open before me on the desk.

When William had finished, sealed and directed his last letter, he arose from the desk and walked over to the window which lighted the office. It was a habit of my brother's, when an unusually weighty matter engaged his attention, to think it out standing before that window: as though the light, which passed through its transparent panes, might have some influence in clearing up the knotty question under consideration.

After standing in that position a few minutes, William turned towards me and said,

“Frank, I have been thinking that you are not looking as well as usual—somewhat paler and less fleshy than you ought to be. In fact, I fear you have been sticking rather closely to your desk of late.”

I looked up in some surprise, and glanced involuntarily at a small looking-glass which hung upon the wall opposite me.

“Not looking well! did you say? Why, I don't think I ever *felt* better in my life,” I replied.

“Perhaps not—perhaps not,” returned my brother, with the air of one determined not to be convinced; “but there is no use in waiting until one is actually sick to start off to the country. Better the ounce of prevention now, than the pound of cure hereafter.”