

A Cowboy's Matrimonial Venture.

BY LIEUTENANT G. DE H. BROWN.

It was the old, old story. But, as a matter of introductory fact, this tale throughout is of a character very commonplace. Mr. Jacob Witman wanted a wife.

In seeking, however, for a partner with whom to share his name, liberty and other hereditaments, he resorted to the most unprecedented but somewhat unconventional method of publishing his craving in the newspapers of San Francisco. Moreover, the advertisement was not hidden away in that wearisome labyrinth of type popularly termed the "want ads," but in bold face occupied at least ten squares of display. It read:—

"I Want a Wife.

"I am a 35-year-old, a thoroughbred and square. I own 4,000 cattle, 600 horses, have 20,000 acres, and, barring blizzards, northerners and other visitations of a glorious climate, shall never tighten the cinch strap for hunger. Morally I am on the fence. I drink when I please and swear at a woman. That's all. Where is the woman? She must be under 25 and show a registered pedigree. Jacob Witman, Quemadura Flat, California."

But Mr. Witman's aspirations, proclaimed beyond all misinterpretation, was destined to be considered by an individual manifestly unsuited to its requirements. In a cozy parlor within the aristocratic limits of San Francisco it had caught the eye of one Frederick Weldon, and to that gentleman's handsome face it brought a smile of amusement. Possibly he was contrasting the advertiser's position with his own—he had been entertained by a young girl of admirable witty adaptations. And yet such was the exact trend of his thoughts. Miss Dorothy Halstead was a very pretty girl, and withal charming. Moreover, she was, at that moment seated beside him on a low sofa, and her dainty head seemed as if created by nature to rest confidently on some strong male shoulder. But San Francisco was graced with many of her kind. They were all attractive; he loved the sex.

But in Mr. Witman's announcement, which he had carelessly lifted from a table at his elbow, Fred discerned an opportunity for possible diversion, and he extended it to his companion.

"Let's apply," was his suggestion. Miss Halstead smiled.

"I am only 19," she returned. "I can wait a year or two longer before resorting to any such desperate means."

Fred was on his knees (metaphorically) at once.

"Dolly! Miss Dolly!" he ejaculated, reproachfully.

But his assumption of tender deprecation elicited only a light, rippling laugh. It is to be feared that the young girl deemed all such courteous platitudes her just tribute. Nor need it be stated with what equally specious phrases she diverted the conversational bark into other channels; suffice to say that she exhibited the skill of an adept.

Meanwhile, however, Fred retained the newspaper, and after a brief interval, he again asked:—

"Why not answer it?" I'll write the letter and you copy it. Then we'll enclose the photo of an actress—if you can find one consistent with his idea of a "registered pedigree"—and await results."

Again Miss Halstead laughed, but it was only a musical murmur, manifesting little appreciation; she even appeared somewhat bored by his persistence. Nevertheless she rose and procured the materials requisite for correspondence.

"But what name shall I sign?" she asked, when at last it had been copied. "You might use a composite;" was the reply. "Yes, that's it; make it Dorothy Weldon."

The young girl colored and lowered her eyes. But she accepted the suggestion, and over such pseudonym was the letter sent.

As an epistolary precursor of future hymeneal joys it was a masterpiece—or so, at least, Fred averred. It was to be presumed that the unknown Mr. Witman was a cattle baron—i. e., a cowboy on whom fortune had smiled; therefore, all stilted elegance of phraseology was avoided. Moreover, the gentleman appeared to desire a wife considerably his junior, and for that reason a certain maidenly coyness and naivete was necessary. But Fred was equal to the task. "Miss Weldon was ashamed, almost afraid, to address Mr. Witman. She was alone, however, with no one to advise; was what people vulgarly termed a "shop" girl. She had also been told that gentlemen in his walk of life retained much of that chivalric element of disposition long extinct in large cities. Wherefore she trusted—and believed—that he would accord her communication that confidence befitting her own sincerity.

Fred contemplated this last bit of flattery with a smile of complacency. "He'll not swear at his cattle for a week after that," he observed. Then he consigned the letter to his pocket. Quemadura Flat was isolated from railroads and ten days elapsed before an answer was received. A brief note from Miss Halstead—addressed, by the way, to "Miss" Dorothy Weldon—acquainted Fred of its arrival, and within the snug precincts of her dwelling he found that young lady considerably amused. Mr. Witman's reply was certainly in keeping with the advertisement by which it had been procured.

"My Dear Miss Weldon," it began. "Thanks for your letter. Thanks, too, for your picture. I also thank God that I have been permitted to receive them. Perhaps that sounds like a stampee of fervency, but I'm more accustomed to stampees than to writing letters. Therefore when I tell you that I like your points you can back my words."

And thus launched upon the sea of correspondence—involved in four pages of very "unfashionable" paper—he continued. He reiterated all he had previously published, and added considerable in important detail, of which reference to certain bankers in Los Angeles comprised no small part. Nor was Fred's allusion to cowboy chivalry without its effect, for in conclusion he went on:—

"As to your own right to your own brand, no further remarks are necessary. I have seen your face (on paper) and I have heard you talk—I know the yelp of a sneaking coyote, and I never yet failed to recognize the jeweled hide of a rattlesnake. That's all."

With this, however, Miss Halstead appeared less agreeable diverted. "There's a rough, Quixotic credence about it that approaches pathos," was her musing comment.

Fred laughed. "He does put it rather neatly," he vouchsafed; "but he's only a cowboy, Dolly; and, besides, this is only his first; who knows what a mine of loving tenderness we may yet develop?"

The young girl shook her head. "You, perhaps; not me," she returned. "I shall write no more."

"But, Dolly, think of the—"

"I know—the fun," Miss Halstead interposed. "But it's not 'fun' to him, and I refuse to continue."

Nevertheless, another letter was written, and in Dolly's delicate chirography, nor did Fred's subsequent expression of satisfaction arise wholly from the epistle itself, rather from the young girl's subservience to his wishes.

As before, a lapse of ten days brought the reply. So, also, did each succeeding interval for several months thereafter. And they certainly yielded no small fund of entertainment. The writer, albeit he invariably answered by return mail, was by no means of a lovelorn disposition; he strayed into anecdote, thence to humor, and with results, in a crude way, infinitely amusing. Fred, too, it has since been ascertained, soon viewed the correspondence from another standpoint; and, indeed, it did permit him to visit Dolly with a frequency prohibited by conventionality.

But it must be confessed that Mr. Witman speedily began to chafe under the restraint of confining words to a mailbox. Each letter contained its appeal that he be permitted to visit the city. Nor were his plaints without a certain element of the pathetic. His ranch was sixty miles from civilization and refinement; that sixty miles he now traversed to receive—only a letter.

"And he's scarcely to be blamed, Dolly," Fred once observed. "Think of what his longing would be had he seen your features, instead of Miss Clio's!" Then he contemplated the girl's fair face with a smile, and, turning away, hummed a bar of something about a "letter that never came."

Meantime, however, there arrived a day when the newspapers again had occasion to publish Jake Witman's name. It was only a brief notice, telegraphic, and recounting the destruction by fire of Quemadura Flat, the settlement wherein that gentleman received his mail. He had been present at the time—presumably awaiting the customary letter—and had generously donated \$500 to those rendered homeless.

As the item met Fred's eye a change came over his face, and clipping it from the paper, he conveyed it to Miss Halstead.

"I'm rather sorry, after all, Dolly, that we selected such a man for a fool," he said, with a seriousness, to him, unusual. "He certainly appears to have a heart and a big one."

Dolly smiled, albeit somewhat satirically.

"It's the dollar, not the sentiment, with you, Fred," she astutely returned. Fred made no reply. Possibly his respect for gold was a characteristic admitted no denial.

But the young girl was again perusing the report, and in the last line she encountered four words previously unnoticed: "Mr. Witman badly injured."

Her face was slightly paler as she looked up.

"He's given more than his dollars, Fred," she said, in a low tone. Fred looked grave. At the same time there was depicted in his expression a vague sense of relief.

"Well, that lets us out," he returned. "To tell the truth, Dolly, I was beginning to wonder how we could extricate ourselves gracefully."

But Fred erred, and that gravely, in believing he was to escape thus easily from the correspondence which he had begun. Three days later he was again summoned into Miss Halstead's presence, and that young lady met him with a look of blank dismay. She had received another letter from Mr. Witman and of a character vastly dissimilar to those of early date. Moreover, a small package accompanied the letter. Within reposed a ring whose glistening stone was worthy to grace Dolly's taper fingers, and the sender was following the ring.

"Here!" the young girl ejaculated, almost tearfully. "He's coming here!" Fred knit his brow manifestly; he was disconcerted, and he took the letter from her hand. But there was no loophole for misconstruction. The writer was no longer an appealing swain, suing for favor; he had met with an accident—had narrowly escaped death, and by it was warned that delay frequently entailed disaster.

At the closing statement, however, Fred exhibited some slight relief. Mr. Witman did not intend "roping a wife" as he would a steer—unannounced. He would wait Miss Weldon's pleasure at the Palace Hotel.

"And we'll have to meet him there," Fred declared, in a tone of desperation. "We!" the young girl exclaimed. "I'm not Miss Weldon." "Well, I will, then," Fred returned. "But what will I tell him—that you're sick, dead, or have left the city?"

Miss Halstead shook her head.

"That would only mean procrastination, with an explanation still to be made," she said, doubtfully. "No; if you are going to meet him—if you dare to meet him—tell him the truth."

Fred winced. It had not previously occurred to him that an encounter with Mr. Witman might entail bodily discomfort.

"Do—do you suppose he'll fight?" he queried, half absently. "I hope so; you deserve it," was the young girl's reply. Then she paused and her eyes sparkled mischievously as she noted her companion's dejection. "No; I don't mean that, Fred," she added; "I would not like you to get hurt. But you must see him."

"And I will, Dolly," was Fred's earnest rejoinder, his love for her sex tending toward centralization. "For you'd interview that gentleman who buys his shoes at the farrier's."

But words are not actions. The following day was nearly at an end when Fred entered the Palace Hotel and glancing over the register. Inwardly he was praying that the name of Witman should not appear upon its pages; that its owner might be reposing beneath a wrecked train, shot by express robbers, intoxicated by the wayside—anything, but there it was, and at the sight of it he repaired to the bar room.

That courage, however, which is attributed to Holland appeared to have lost its potency, and he soon returned to the office. His hand trembled as he drew a card from his pocket; but it had to be done, and he tendered it to the clerk.

Mr. Witman, he said, tersely.

Five minutes later a speaking tube wheeled, and he watched the clerk. But the suspense was of brief duration. Yes; Mr. Witman was in and would be pleased to see Mr. Weldon at once.

Fred drew a long breath, then straightened up and walked toward the elevator. Hitherto he had never entered one of those elevators at the Palace without speculating on their safety, but now he wished it would fall. He even contemplated, mentally his own bruised and mangled remains, and the consequent press notice. But it reached the third floor without mishap.

The bell boy, too, seemed as if bent upon hastening the calamitous work, for he at once conducted him to the door of Mr. Witman's room and tapped loudly on the panel.

"Come!" was the cheery response that floated through the transom, and Fred shuddered. Then he pulled himself together and turned the knob.

But on the threshold he paused. Mr. Witman—the "cowboy"—was seated within, and of exterior he was not at all formidable. His features, albeit bearded, were boyish, pleasant and rather handsome, and his attire was that effected by a man of the world. But it was not with him that Fred was now concerned—Dorothy Halstead was seated on his knee.

Fred was like a man dazed by some sudden revelation; he seemed, almost, to stagger. But the "cowboy" smiled. Then lifting Dolly, he deposited her in his own seat and advanced with extended hand.

"My wife, Mr. Weldon," he observed lightly. "We have had her father's blessing; I trust we have yours."

Fred started; he was yet like one in the dark, and he scarcely noticed the hand which clasped his own.

But he was speedily enlightened, and by Miss Halstead or, rather, the former Miss Halstead—herself.

"Yes, Fred," she said with a wealth of smiles and blushes, "we must confess it a little deception. My own photo and not Miss Clio's was inclosed in your first letter, and after the second my—my husband always wrote two letters, one for us and one for me. And really, Fred, I think his appreciation of the situation influenced me—just a bit—in what has happened."

Fred bowed—very coldly; he was himself again. "It all goes to show," he afterwards averred, "that women can't be trusted, even in matters of jocular entertainment."

Pay of Preachers.

Ministerial salaries are generally higher in cities than in towns and villages. The bishops form a class of ministers by themselves. The largest Episcopal income is \$12,500, including house rent, but the lowest is \$3,000 a year, with \$300 for traveling expenses. The average income of a bishop is \$5,000 a year. The salaries of the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church average \$5,000, and those of Roman Catholic Bishops range from \$3,000 to \$5,000 and a house. The college presidents receive as incomes \$5,000 and upward. The Methodist have 16,500 traveling preachers and their average salary is \$837; though the income of some of the foremost Methodist preachers is from \$5,000 to \$7,000. The vast number receive on an average not more than \$500 a year. The Congregationalists are very liberal toward their ministers. The average salary in Massachusetts is \$1,474, and there are two churches in Boston which pay \$7,000 each. There are in the denomination thirty-six pastors who yield each \$5,000 and upward. The average salary among the Presbyterians is between \$1,000 and \$1,200 a year. They have one parish, that of Dr. John Hall, of New York, which pays \$15,000 a year and a parsonage, and as a rule their ministers are liberally provided for. The wealthiest denomination in the United States is the Jewish, but it makes no returns of its salary. The average clergy in the Episcopal Church obtain \$800 a year, but in many cases the income is \$10,000, and in a large number of instances it is \$25,000. The Baptists pay very low salaries. Probably no Baptist pastor in any of our cities receives more than \$6,000, with one exception. The Lutherans pay small salaries, but usually give in fees and other perquisites quite as much as the salary. In only a single instance do any pay \$6,000 a year.

THE ISLE OF MAN.

Its Ancient Customs, Its Government and Its Tailless Cats.

The Isle of Man is only thirty-three miles long and twelve miles wide, so that it is not great labor to get over it, and as two railroads run—one north to south, and the other east to west—you can see how convenient it is to the visitor. Douglas, Port Erin, Peel and Ramsey are the chief towns.

The Isle of Man while belonging to the British Crown, is neither English, Scotch, Irish, nor Welsh, but is a separate country, with a home-ruled Government, and a language of its own; yet with great loyalty to the Imperial Government and devotion to Queen Victoria, for everywhere you go you see pictures of the royal family. The Government is known as the "House of Keys" and consists of twenty-four members, elected every seven years, but no person has a vote unless he possesses real estate of the value of £40, or occupation of the value of £60 per year, and women are also entitled to a vote. The Court of Tynwald, presided over by the Lieutenant Governor, is composed of the Council, which embraces the Bishop, Attorney General, two Judges, the Clerk of the Rolls, Water Bailiff and the Vice General. This Council and the House of Keys are the active Government of the great Isle of Man.

There is one feature of special interest in reference to the laws, and that is that all laws passed by the House of Keys are sent for the royal assent, and when that has been secured then the law must be formally read in the English and Manx languages on Tynwald Hill in the open air, where the Council and the Keys united form a Tynwald Court, before they become laws. This form of reading the law at Tynwald is the oldest style on record; was old in 1417, and has been continued ever since. The 5th day of July in each year is the day of public proclamation of the laws passed by the House of Keys.

The coat of arms of this isle is three legs of a man in a circle. The motto, translated, reads: "Whithersoever thrown, I shall stand." The Manxmen apparently rather enjoy the three-legged crest, for everywhere you turn your face, whether at a steamboat, a railroad, a coach, a flag, or on the windows of the stores, there you see the three legs.

I had read of the Manx cats without tails, and thought it a joke; but, sure enough, the cats here are without tails, and I saw several without that graceful member. Some ladies of our party, who had not seen the Manx cat, were rather doubtful of the truth of our report, and we had to accompany them to the house, where the cat lived, and after a close examination came away believers of the tailless cat. I don't think pussy is improved by the absence of the tail. Some people say this strange act of nature extends to the dogs also.

The Manx language, like the ancient language of Ireland, is fast passing away, and in a generation it will be one of the dead languages, enjoyed only by scholars. I met an old woman on the side of a mountain selling milk, cakes and ginger ale, and after asking some questions about the locality, I learned from her that the children were not learning the Manx language, and that only the middle-aged and old people spoke it. She said her children had only spoken the English. I was anxious to get a book in Manx, but could not find one in the stores. The old woman referred to showed me an old Bible in Manx, which I tried to buy, but she said: "No money could buy her Bible." It had belonged to her father. I was sorry, but I also admired the old woman's love for her Bible, and I was glad to see that money could not tempt her, though she was quite poor, and a few shillings would have been a large sum for her purse.

For Travellers With Colds.

Nothing but travel, and extensive travel at that, will give a person a full idea of the queer ways that there are in the world. An American who was not long since journeying through the midland counties of England relates that in a small country town he once entered an inn rather pretentious for the place and called for turbot—a favorite dish of those parts.

The American had had a few days of dense fog, and his appearance and manner perhaps showed that he had become a little wheezy in consequence of the climate. He was forced to have frequent recourse to his pocket handkerchief.

When the turbot was brought the guest fancied, even before it reached his plate, that it was no longer fresh; and an attempt to eat it confirmed that impression. He called the proprietor, who at once sent a waiter for fresh turbot, and removed the objectionable fish.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the innkeeper "but we had got the idea, sir, as you came in, that you had a bad cold in yer 'ead, sir."

"And suppose I had? What would that have to do with my being served spoiled fish?" exclaimed the American, somewhat indignantly. "Heverthink, sir. We has this rule in this 'ouse: Fish as is a little doubtful, like that 'ere, sir—them which has lost the savor of youth, as I may say—them we serve to parties as appears to 'ave colds in their 'eads, sir; and we finds that bein' as such parties can't smell nothink, they likes the fish just as well, sir, and hoften they prefer 'em!"

Correct!

Teacher—"If a grocer buys a basket of peaches for fifty cents and afterward sells them for forty, how much does he make?"

DUELLING IN RUSSIA.

It is Common and Has Become a Nuisance.

The new law promulgated lately by the Czar himself, according to which duelling is obligatory upon officers of the army, not only whenever they themselves fancy they have been insulted, but likewise whenever anybody else thinks they have, is, according to the St. Petersburg correspondent of the London Telegraph, already bearing fruit. Detailed accounts reach St. Petersburg every other day of duels between young officers who are intimate friends and never dreamed of offending each other, simply because, when joking among themselves, one of the party said or did something which, in the opinion of somebody else, ought to prove insulting. Thus, we read of one young man being shot by another whose best friend he is, and with whom he had no quarrel of any kind, being compelled to call him out by the officers' "Court of Honor," which has been instituted in accordance with the recent imperial law; and of another promising young fellow in the South who is now disabled for the rest of his life because forced to fight with a comrade who never said a cross word to him. In all these cases, the alternative is to fight or leave the army, and no one dares to choose the latter. At least, no one had the courage necessary before last week, when a very interesting case unfolded itself in the city of Kertch.

At a ball given by the local club there, the leader of the dance was a young Lieut. P., who took possession of two vacant chairs—one for himself and one for his partner—in the vicinity of the orchestra. He then left the room for a moment, and on his return found the chairs occupied by a young civilian and his partner. He requested the latter to vacate the chairs and have others brought in their stead. But the civilian politely but firmly refused. "I took possession of these chairs long ago," he explained, "before you came to them, and I cannot give them up. I am quite willing, however, to go and order a pair of chairs for you, which will be brought to you in half a minute." Thereupon the officers, who constituted more than half of the guests, threatened to leave the club in a body unless the young civilian was expelled then and there. The club committee refused to expel him, having no ground for such an extreme measure, and the officers forthwith left the club room and retired. Next day the commander of the regiment, informed of what had taken place, convened the Court of Honor and laid the matter before them. Among the witnesses were the young civilian and the lieutenant. Both deposed that no insulting, or even impolite language, had passed between them, and the former further declared that nothing was further from his intention than to wound the feelings or reflect upon the honor of the lieutenant. The Court of Honor, however, decided that Lieut. P. must challenge the young civilian to a duel within five days or else leave the army. The young man who was a favorite in the service, at once informed his superiors that he would send in his resignation, but would under no circumstances challenge a man who had done him no wrong. He had no abstract objection to duelling itself, which, since the new imperial ukase, had been taken under the wing of the orthodox church, but he has a decided objection to kill or maim in time of peace a man who has done him no ill whatever. The affair is causing a great sensation in military circles, where not one in a thousand would venture to imitate the example which most people admire as heroic.

She Looked Stunning.

While I was staying at a friend's house the other day, says a correspondent of the Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, her husband came home and before he had taken off his coat he exclaimed:

"Well, I wish you could have seen the woman I saw to-day."

"Why, was she pretty?" we both asked.

"Pretty? Well, I should say so, and she had the neatest little suit you ever saw. By jove! I wish you could get something that looked like that once in a while," he said, turning to his wife.

"Well, tell us what it was like and maybe I can," she returned.

"Oh, I can't tell you just what it was like, but it had those things over the shoulders like your purple dress."

"Does you mean ruffles?" interrupted his wife.

"Yes, I guess they are ruffles. It had a skirt of a peculiar color and the back was a sort of green. She wore a coat of something like most women wear, and a hat with a ribbon over it. She looked stunning, I tell you."

And his wife murmured "I should think so."

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