

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From the London People's Journal.

MARRIED AND SETTLED.

Soon after dinner on the following day, Moon junior, in a whisper delicately calculated not to disturb the already somnolent elders of the family, proposed an adjournment to his private sanctum up stairs. I readily complied, and Theophilus having produced some capital cigars and first-rate wine, we seemed in a fair way of passing a pleasant hour or two.

My cousin, I could see easily through all the spiral wreaths of smoke in which he soon managed to enshroud himself, had something of more than common importance to communicate. I was not disposed to hurry him, and sometime elapsed before the lazy emotions struggling in his eyes found vent in intelligible words.

'Captain Herrick,' he at last murmured in his lowest, most solemn tones, 'captain Herrick, I am in a false position!'

'Indeed! still, my dear boy, that is not, I believe, by any means a novel circumstance with you.'

'True; but in the present mysterious entanglement of events, a false position is doubly, trebly unfortunate. You are aware, captain Herrick,' he added, with a slight hesitation and a faint blush, 'that certain love passages have occurred between a—Miss Sawkins and myself?'

'Of course I have, and a very sensible choice you have, in my opinion, made.'

'He-e—no—yes; I have nothing, captain Herrick, to reproach that lady with. In fact, she can be reproached with nothing, except it may be a somewhat too tender susceptibility with regard to attentions which—which—in point of fact, were in some sort a—*you understand me, captain Herrick?*'

'Quite. Go on.'

'The fatal truth is, cousin, that I have discovered—too late, I fear, for her peace of mind—that we are not suited to each other; that the divine essence within us has not been kindled at the same altar—that—'

'There, that will do. But does not this discovery come rather late?'

'It does; but who can control his fate? The overwhelming reality, captain Herrick, is, that an accidental *recontre* has changed my destiny. An angel has crossed my path!'

'The devil! What here, in Hammer-smith?'

'Yes; listen, and judge for yourself. You have, of course—all men have—your own angelic idea?'

'I am not quite sure of that. According to pictures I have seen, a pair of long, fowl feathered wings appear to be necessarily connected with that particular idea.'

'Pooh! Well, then, your notion of celestial beauty—is it not intimately associated with, colored, illumined by the pearly light of the young dawn, the clear, blue depths of summer heaven; the gorgeous hues of sunset? Well,' continued Theophilus, with a sigh that disgorged a heavy cloud of cigar-smoke, 'all those celestial attributes are to be found in the fresh young loveliness, the soft blue eyes, the wavy golden hair of the incomparable Fanny. Hallo! why what the devil—'

'Fanny! tell me, you miserable little manikin, who is it you have the audacity to speak about, or I'll throttle you.'

'Murder! let go, or you'll strangle me. Pray let me fetch breath, and I'll tell you. Fanny I have overheard her companion Miss Benton call her—that's all, upon my honor.'

'And you have never spoken to her?'

'Never orally, I assure you. I have sent her, anonymously of course, various effusions in verse. There is a copy of the last. Shall I read it?'

'No don't.' The wrath which at the mention of Miss Herbert's name had suddenly blazed up, was already extinguished by a sense of the utter absurdity of the affair. Having, however, no mind to make a confidant of the conceited jackanapes, I said, after a few moments' reflection:

'The fact is, Theffy, my boy, I know Fa—Miss Herbert, that is her name; but I am especially acquainted with Miss Benton, and I for the moment thought it possible you might be using the first lady's name as a blind—*you understand?*'

'Oh, I see! Nothing of the kind, upon my honor, captain Herrick; nothing I assure you.'

'Give me your hand upon it. That is well. Now what can I do for you?'

It was soon soon arranged that I should be the bearer of a formal declaration from Theophilus to the lady. This important missive, in anticipation of my good offices, he had already prepared in prose and verse. It was also understood that I should see Miss Mary Sawkins, and endeavor to reconcile her to the loss of her promised husband and the reversion to her hundred a year, that being the income my cousin assured me, realised by the sale and sale of the city business.

Mr Sergeant Benton received me with great frankness and unusual cordiality. After minute inquiries as to the amount of prize money I was entitled to and a perusal of the letter on service, he said, 'The gazettes taught us to expect as much. They have done you good service in other quarters than the Admiralty. By the bye, I think you will find a certain person in the drawing room. Go, and prosper.'

Three hours later I left that drawing room one of the happiest of living men. Nor when the tumult of grateful emotion had somewhat calmed, was I forgetful of the commission intrusted to me by my cousin. The peals of merriment excited in the ladies and Major Benton—a brother of the sergeant on a visit at Oaklodge, by the ardent protestations of Theophilus, had not died away when a plot was suggested, I forget by which of us, for the especial benefit of that gentleman, the details of which I undertook to arrange, the major and the ladies promising to very heartily co-operate.

I had important conferences not only with my uncle and aunt, but with the Sawkinses, before I again saw Theophilus. Our scheme was heartily relished by them all; Mary especially, confident of her influence when in actual presence of the fickle swain had not the slightest doubt of a fortunate result.

'Theophilus,' said I gravely, the first time we found ourselves alone, 'the purpose for which I sought Oaklodge has been more promptly successful than I dared to hope. Your letter, the poetry especially, affected the lady in a remarkable manner. Miss Herbert consents to be married next Monday three-weeks?'

'God bless me! you don't say so?'

'I do, indeed. But there is one indispensable condition, that of secrecy, and this chiefly for your own sake, as it is quite certain your life would not be worth five minutes' purchase should the matter unfortunately reach the ears of Major Benton, one of the lady's guardians.'

'Lord!'

'He is a dragoon officer, of a very irascible temperament, and would think no more of sending a bullet through your head than of snuffing a candle!'

'Oh!'

'I am therefore to arrange your expedition to Gretna. The lady will descend by a ladder placed in the back-yard into your arms: a post-chaise waiting outside, and if you are particularly fortunate you will get clear off; if not, why of course there will be battle murder, and sudden death.'

'Oh! again ejaculated Theophilus, in a still more dismal tone than before.'

'I have also seen Miss Sawkins,' I continued, 'she very willingly resigns any claim she may be supposed to have on you. Indeed she appears, I must say, to cast you off with something very like contempt. This however, under the circumstances, may be considered fortunate.'

'God bless me! again cuckoo'd Theophilus, 'you don't say so?'

'It is quite correct. But you don't seem very delighted at this heap of good news?'

'Oh, yes—charming, very,' rejoined the poor fellow, with one of the bluest attempts at a smile I have ever seen. Only you must acknowledge, captain Herrick, that female caprice is often, that is sometimes very strangely manifested.'

'That is true enough; and now having settled your business, I trust satisfactorily, I must be off about my own. I have numberless things to see to. Good bye.'

'Cousin! Captain Herrick!' gasped Theophilus seizing me by the arm as I turned to leave the room, 'don't you think it would be—be better under the circumstances to—to give—to give up—'

'Give up the lady? I fiercely interrupted. 'Impossible sir! Remember, if you please, that my honor is now engaged, and that the profession to which I belong, permits no stain to rest upon any of its members.—Adieu!'

I need not recount the alternate hot and cold fits exhibited by my unhappy cousin during the time which intervened between him and his promised happiness—the immense quantity of brandy and water he swallowed; the frequent inquiries he made as to the strength and security of the chain by which Mr Sergeant Benton's house-dog an animal with an ill name, was fastened up at nights; nor dwell upon the pathetic manner with which, when he was very maudlin, he would brokenly exclaim, as he looked with piteous expression in my face—

'Oh, what had my youth with ambition to do! Oh, why did Aminta I leave?'

Suffice it to say that these incidental trifles amused us all mightily, but more especially Mary Sawkins, who in the reviving tenderness of the repentant culprit discerned a fresh pledge of success.

At length the much wished for and dreaded moon—a clear, frosty, bitter cold one—dawned, and I shook Theophilus out of his troubled slumbers at a very early hour.

'Quick, quick, man!' I exclaimed, as he slowly and reluctantly commenced arraying himself in the wedding garments placed ready over night. 'Quick! you but delay your bliss.'

'The lovely Thais waits to bless ye.'

'Ah Theffy, you are happy a man!'

'I don't think, captain Herrick!' he replied his teeth chattering all the while like a pair of castanets, 'I don't think captain Herrick, that you would be quite so game-some if you yourself were going to be married this cold morning.'

I assured him that I should not be one whit less jocund on the brink of such a catastrophe than I was at that moment; and he having at last completed his toilet, we crept down stairs, sallied out into the bright moonlight, and reached Oaklodge in a twinkling. The spikes upon the large gate, over which it was necessary the happy bridegroom should climb to reach the high top-gallant of his joy, presented a difficulty, but I kindly lent him a back and a vigorous jerk sent him scrambling

down the other side in a hurry. The dog immediately gave tongue, and I as quickly as possible climbed to the roof of an outhouse from which I had a distinct view of the progress of affairs.

With timid hesitating steps Theophilus approached the ready placed ladder, making an unnecessary wide circuit in order to avoid the dog, which, now, thoroughly roused, barked and leaped with frightful rage. The concerted signal was given; a sash was instantly thrown up, and a veiled figure in white appeared at the aperture. The lover slowly ascended, and when he had gained the top, chattered out—'Ch-a-a-r-m-i-n-g l-a-d-y, co-o-o-n-d-e-s-cend to entrust yourself to the arms of your de-e-evoted sla-a-ave.'

The business-like alacrity which the damsel tenderly and respectfully addressed complied with his request, together with the brusque decided manner in which she dropped as it were, into his outstretched arms, shook his equilibrium terribly. His hat fell off; and but for the lovely burden, who with one hand grasped his hair and with the other a rung of the ladder, he must I think have fallen. 'Beloved Fa-a-any,' murmured the agitated bridegroom preparing to descend: 'beloved Fa-a-any!'

'Don't Fanny me, you wretch!' exclaimed the lady, throwing back her veil, and disclosing in the clear cold moonlight the pretty and excited features of Miss Mary Sawkins. 'Don't Fanny me, you wretch,' she continued, shaking him by the hair at each emphatic epithet. 'It's your lawful married wife that is to be, you monster of perfidy and ingratitude; and that you'll soon find, you faithless, hateful creature!'

The lady I have said grasped a rung of the ladder. Had it not been so, down they must inevitably have toppled headlong, for the surprise and consternation of the bewildered man, whose upturned eyes gazed in utter amazement upon the charming vision, reposing partly in his arms and partly upon his left shoulder, deprived him of the little strength he usually possessed. Miss Sawkins fortunately upheld him by his flowing locks. 'Ma-ry, is it you?' at length gasped Theophilus—is it possible?'

'Of course it's possible, and proper, and right,' rejoined the lady, accenting the adjectives as before; 'and now please to make haste down, or major Benton will catch you here, and the consequences will be dreadful.'

Theophilus promptly obeyed, especially as, thanks as he believed to the horrid dog, lights were already glancing in several windows; but scarcely had he reached the ground when the furious mastiff broke his chain by a desperate effort, and Moon junior, encumbered as he was, had hardly sufficient altitude on the ladder to escape the desperate leaps of the savage animal. This was more than we had bargained for, and amidst the shouts, cries, and screams which ensued, I slipped off the outhouse, and ran round as quickly as possible to assist in extricating my unfortunate cousin and his bride from their very unpleasant position.

I found major Benton there before me. The dog had been secured; and the major, fierce as ten furies, was questioning Theophilus upon the reasons and motives of his appearance there. The poor fellow, trembling with fright and bewilderment, could afford no explanation except incoherent and contradictory exclamations, upon that afforded by Miss Sawkins.

'Pardon me, major Benton,' I exclaimed, 'this gentleman is no burglar, as you appear to apprehend. He is a cousin and a friend of mine.'

'Ye-e-s, yes,' said poor Theffy, recovering a little; 'quite so.'

'The truth, I believe to be,' I continued, looking the astonished little man steadily in the face; 'indeed, being in his confidence, I know it to be so, that this gentleman being of a somewhat romantic turn, and having long entertained a fervent attachment to this lady, who as you know has been for the last few days on a visit Miss Benton, has prevailed on her to elope with him, his parents having, I understand, an objection to the marriage on account of the bride's deficiency of fortune. This, I believe Mr Moon, is an exact explanation of this otherwise mysterious affair, is it not?'

The puzzled *Et tu Brute?* look which he fixed upon me during this speech I shall never forget. Cold as it was, he wiped a profuse perspiration from his forehead, as Miss Sawkins replied for him: 'Captain Herrick sir, is quite right. There is the licence in our joint names; is it not, Theffy?'

The glance which accompanied these words, had, I saw, a potent effect upon my cousin. The household of Moon junior would I perceived, be a strictly ordered one.

'Is this true, sir?' demanded the major, with, if possible increasing fierceness.

'Yes, sir—yes. It's a mysterious licence, a—everything is a mystery; I wish I may die!'

'Nonsense about dying and mysteries, Theffy,' broke in Miss Sawkins, 'I am no mystery am I?'

'Not in the least; quite the contrary, perfectly clear and intelligible.'

'I see how it is,' cried the major: 'it's quite plain—a stolen wedding. But we'll disappoint you, you adventurous young rogue you,' he added, poking his cane into the ribs of Theophilus with unmerciful gaiety, 'but we'll disappoint you. The captain here is to be married presently, and you, you sly dog, shall be noosed at the same time. There that will do; I want no further apology nor explanation, and the first man that attempts

one I'll knock him down. Come along all of you.'

Before Theophilus, judging from his looks had even partially recovered his scattered senses, the two weddings were solemnized. I and my wife set off immediately for Devonshire. Mrs. Moon junior, accompanied by two of her sisters, who had been in early attendance as bride's-maids, took her husband home to Mangolia Villa, where, I need hardly say, they were very joyfully received.

Six months afterwards some trifling business called me to London, and I of course paid a visit to the Moons. Mangolia Villa wore a very different aspect from what it did in the days of cousin's celibacy. The old people were quite sprightly again, and the abundance of sisters racing about the house gave an almost boisterous life to the place. Young Mistress Moon I found seated on a sofa in the drawing room. She appeared in rather delicate health, explainable doubtless by the tiny lace cap upon which her respectable mother-in-law was busily engaged. Theophilus was usefully employed holding a skein of silk stretched out between his hands, which his wife was leisurely winding off. Altogether the scene was domestic and edifying. Desiring of testifying its reality a little more closely, I said, carelessly: 'As I have an hour or two to spare this evening, Theophilus, what do you say to our visiting the re-union where, I have heard you say there is such capital singing? The little man gave quite a start of consternation, and his face flamed crimson as he quickly replied,

'You forget, captain Herrick, that I am now married—'

'And settled,' subjoined his wife, promptly. I was quite satisfied; and so, I perceived, was the mother of Theophilus.

From Hogg's Instructor.

LITERARY SCRAPS.

THE CURFEW.

In the year 1069, there were numerous and formidable revolts among the English against the authority of William the Norman; and on this account, the Conqueror considered it necessary to provide for the safety of his queen, Matilda and her children, by sending them to Normandy. The departure of Matilda was of course, the signal for the breaking up of the Court at Winchester; and this was followed by the most serious evils to the industrious classes of the community. The absence of the Queen, her ladies, and the nobles who accompanied her to her husband's native land, caused, in a great measure, trade to languish, employment to cease, and the horrors of popular starvation to be added to those of civil war. The result was a state of desperation, on the part of William's subjects, caused by their sufferings, such as compelled many of the best disposed of them to hold nocturnal assemblies, with the view of discussing their grievances, and acting accordingly. To prevent these assemblies, and the better to destroy every chance of insurrection, William ordered the English to *couvre feu*—that is to extinguish the lights and fires in their dwellings—at eight o'clock every evening, at the tolling of a bell. Hence, the tolling of the bell at this hour was called the *couvre feu* or curfew. Such, at least, is the origin which popular tradition assigns to the curfew. It was first established at Winchester; and Polydore Virgil is the first chronicler who mentions it. William is said to have previously resorted to the practice of the curfew in Normandy, at a period when brawls and murders were there exceedingly rife; and Ducrest informs us, that in some districts of Normandy it still prevails, under the name of 'La Retraite.'

DWARFS.

Dwarfs were formerly a race of beings much in request in great houses; and found their position there just as any piece of ornamental furniture would do. So little were they regarded as human beings—at least, as human beings entitled to the privilege of freedom of choice or freedom of action—that one king frequently sent them as presents to another. They preceded the more modern fool or jester; and were treated very much as poodles or lapdogs are in the present day. Sometimes they were petted and indulged to the very utmost extent; at others, they were kicked out of the way, like any quadruped which might have excited the anger of a master.

The custom of keeping dwarfs is a very old one—the Romans themselves being so fond of them, that, with the view of twisting them into such caricatures of humanity, they applied tight bandages to children, and even enclosed the latter in boxes. A Roman lady sister to one of the Roman Emperors, had a dwarf only two feet and a hand breadth high. As with giants, the ancient romances abound with dwarfs; and they generally figure there in as attendants on knights, giants, or ladies. One poet says:

'Fill'd with these views, th' attendant dwarf she sends:
Before the knight the dwarf respectful bends;

Kind greetings bears as to his lady's guest,
And prays his presence to adorn her feast.
The knight delays not.'

The old poem of 'Sir Cauline' notes a dwarf as in personal attendance on a gigantic monster:

'A huge giant stiffe and starke,
All foule of limbe and lere:
Two goggling eyen like fire farden,
A mouth trae ear to ear.
Before him came a dwarfe full lowe,
That waited on his knee.'