

TAMING A SHREW.

I remember him passing backward and forward between his room and chapel at college. There was the same serious, injured look—a look in which, to those who knew him best, who understood his eccentric views and absurd methods, there was something comical.

He had been devoted to the stage. When a new company came to Cambridge he would be found among its audience from the first to the last. He would rather see a bad play than no play at all, and when he was not at the theatre he read plays.

Notwithstanding all his peculiarities, all of his loved him. He was kind-hearted, impulsive, generous. His face was a mirror for his feelings, and no one saw it reflect aught except what was genuine. This was the man I had parted from five years before.

Now he was a new man—a new man—and yet the same old Peter Brown. He was married. He had just entertained me at dinner. The wife, a decided-looking little woman, sat at the board, plainly its mistress. There was no wine, and when we left the table we left it altogether and without a suspicion of the odor of tobacco.

We had chatted perhaps half an hour in the drawing-room, when Peter rose and, signaling me to follow him, led the way up three flights of stairs to a little chamber with one window. All the furniture it contained were two easy chairs, a table and a cupboard hanging against the wall.

The door closed, Peter drew a long sigh. Then he went to the cupboard and took out a bottle, some glasses and a box of cigars.

"Come, Peter," I said, lighting a weed he gave me and throwing myself back in the cushions, "tell me all about it."

"About what?"

"I see that conviviality is restricted in your house. I am curious to know why."

His expression was very sad.

"Madam objects?" I queried.

"Madam objects."

He cast a rueful glance around the apartment.

"And, like a good husband, you submit."

"Yes, I submit."

"And gracefully?"

There was some hesitation.

"My submission was not exactly graceful, originally."

"Well, tell me about it."

He lit his cigar and began to relate an attempt which for originality and ingenuity had never been equalled by any of his extremely remarkable freaks while in college.

"You remember how fond I used to be of the theatre? Well, I've got over that, but it took a terrible experience to cure me. Of all the plays ever put on the stage my favorite used to be 'The Taming of the Shrew.'"

To me Petrichio's method of curing his wife's temper, by feigning to be more violent than she, was a model of cleverness; and before I was old enough to have a wife I vowed that, if she should be a shrew, I would be a Petrichio.

"I first met my wife at a tennis party. She was my partner, and looked very pretty in a loose tennis jacket, a striped skirt, and a jaunty cap."

"With me it was one of those cases when a man's heart lies right out of his bosom like a tennis-ball from a racket, and lights on the girl. We played very well together, and were neck and neck with our opponents near the end of the game, when a fault was served to my partner, which she sent back."

"That's a fault!" I exclaimed.

"What do you mean?" she asked, sharply.

"It fell out of the court."

"No such thing."

"I beg pardon," I replied, politely; "it looked so to me."

"I'll be obliged if you'll play your own game, and let me play mine, she returned, angrily."

"I beg pardon," I said, apologetically, and the game went on.

"There was something about the barefaced assurance and dictatorial manner of the proceeding that attracted my attention. Somehow I became dazzled by the girl's angry eyes. I could see nothing but a pretty face, a petite figure, a striped skirt, and a jaunty cap. I went away from the tennis party with the little termagant buzzing about my thoughts like a bumble-bee among the hollyhocks."

I secured an introduction to her father's house; quarrelled with her at my first call; made it up on the second by retracting everything I had said; found myself cut a few days later; apologized for something I had not done; tried in every way I could think of to please her, and finally found myself madly in love with a girl who promised, if I should win her, to make my life a pandemonium.

I went on a trip, to be gone a month, to try and forget her, but returned in a week thoroughly convinced that I couldn't get on without her. I proposed. She would probably have refused me had not her father told her that she wouldn't have a man for a son-in-law who 'languished under such a theatrical drawl.' That settled it. I was accepted.

There was now nothing for me but a life of misery, with a stubborn, quarrelsome woman. No man could live in peace with her unless he could break her. But could I do this? I thought of Petrichio, and sat down and read over 'The Taming of the Shrew.' For the hundredth time I noticed that Petrichio first got the lady into his power, and then commenced his training. I resolved to be married at once.

The next day I went to my lady-love and told her that, owing to business engagements which would require my absence, it would be impossible for me to claim her within a year. She informed me that unless I could find it convenient to claim her the next week I could look elsewhere for a partner. I had scored one point. I accepted the terms and we were married.

We went through the honeymoon pleasantly, for I determined not to cross her in anything, waiting till we should be comfortably settled at home in the house her father had given her in the same street in which he lived, and only a few yards away. Then I proposed to commence a modern instance of the taming of the shrew.

"The honeymoon ended and we arrived at home. I had engaged the cook myself, and by promising a large reward had secured her to my plan. It was understood that she was not to give my wife food without my permission. I didn't rely much on this part of the programme—to starve her into submission—but I thought I'd try it with the others."

"We sat down to our first dinner at home. My wife sat opposite me, looking so pretty, so exceptionally good-natured, that my heart almost failed me. After all, wouldn't it be better to wait until she should provoke me?"

"No; I had laid the plan and I would carry it out. All our future depended upon it. The servant placed before me a smoking joint. I took up the carving knife and sharpened it on the steel savagely. My heart beat like a kettledrum. Somehow it struck me that I was about to make a fool of myself; but I thought again of all that was at stake, and began my training."

"Jane, I burst out, addressing the servant, 'what's the matter with this meat?'"

"Nothing, that I know of," Jane answered, opening her eyes.

"The meat is burnt," I exclaimed, feigning anger which I didn't feel. "Take it away."

"To say that my wife was astonished wouldn't alone indicate her feelings or her appearance. She turned deadly pale."

"Take it away," I repeated.

"By this time my wife had partially recovered her equanimity. I expected every moment to feel the decoration of fragmentary glass about my brow. I was disappointed."

"Take it away, Jane," she said in a soft voice.

"I was delighted. It was plain she had seen an evidence of will power that she dared not oppose. With difficulty controlling my agitation, I rose from the table. My wife followed me into the drawing room. I passed on into the hall and, taking my hat and stick, turned toward her and said: 'I am going out. I will return at eight. We will then keep our engagement at your father's.'"

"She stood looking at me, her face betokening alternative wonder and amusement, with an occasional shade of anxiety. Then there came a sudden spasmodic little laugh, followed by as sudden a flash of lightning in the eye. Had I delayed a moment the storm would have burst. But I didn't delay. I went out and shut the door after me."

I went directly to my club. Taking my old seat in the dining room I ordered a good dinner and a bottle of wine. I felt that thus far all had gone as well as could be expected. The ball was opened. My wife was at home and no dinner. I was at the club, with plenty to eat and a bottle of excellent Margaux.

"By the time I had drained the last glass I felt quite equal to the remainder of the ordeal before me, and resolved firmly not to depart one iota from my model Petrichio. Having finished my dinner and tossed off a glass of brandy to put a capper on my courage, I returned to my work."

"I was surprised to find my wife quite calm. She was ready to go with me to her father's. She quietly took my arm and we walked slowly up the street. The full moon, rising, stood in the east, large and round."

"How large the moon looks," she remarked. "It is full to-night, I think."

"The moon?"

"Yes, the moon," I said the moon."

"It's the sun. The moon never shines at this time of day."

"Oh—is it?" Her tone didn't imply conviction.

"I tell you that's the sun," I blustered. "Do you mean to contradict me?"

"There was an ominous pause."

"Oh, no; I wouldn't think of contradicting such an astronomical prodigy. Of course it's the sun." Her tone made me shudder.

"Then I say it's the moon."

"Do you?" I knew when I married you that you weren't clever, but I supposed you could at least tell the sun from the moon."

"The conversation terminated at this point. I was not getting on, and was glad when, a few minutes later, we reached her father's house. We were received with open arms, of course. 'How well you both look! and 'Do you find everything comfortable at home?' and 'Was the dinner nicely served?' 'You must be like two kittens on a feather pillow.' I think this last remark, made by Mrs. Brown's little brother, contained a trace of irony."

"From the dining-room, separated from where we were only by a door, I heard my wife's voice mingling with the clatter of dishes."

"I leaned back in my chair, a trifle discouraged. The starvation part of my plan was surely a failure. But then I hadn't counted much on that."

"Mrs. Brown spent the whole evening in the dining-room, and then sent me word that she would remain all night with her mother. This was an avenue that I had not thought of. I winced. There was nothing for me to do but to go home alone. I did so and went to bed—less hopeful that I had been since the commencement of hostilities."

"The next evening, when I returned from business, I found my wife at home and in the hands of a dressmaker. She had been provided with an elaborate trousseau; but one dress, designed to be worn on her reception days, had been left unfinished. She was standing before the mirror in the gown, the skirt of which the dressmaker was arranging to hang more evenly. I advanced and took the fabric between my thumb and finger."

"What rotten stuff is this?" I asked.

"It's silk, sir," faltered the dressmaker.

"This silk?"

"Costly silk, sir."

"It's a base imitation. A mixture of poor silk and cotton. And this?"

"Lace, sir."

"Do you tell me this is lace? My wife shall wear no such stuff. She must be dressed as becomes her matchless beauty."

"My wife stood staring at me in mute wonder. Was it fear or anger that first blanching her cheek, and then flushed it hot as fire? I shuddered at the first word she would speak. But it was not spoken. Beckoning to the dressmaker to follow her, she strode out of the room, and passing into the adjoining chamber, locked the door."

"I descended to the dining room. It was dinner time and I was very hungry. I waited for an hour for my wife to come down and dine. I waited in vain. At last I resolved to dine alone."

"Get me a bottle of wine, Jane," I said to the maid.

"Madam has it under lock and key, sir."

"I took my hat and went to the club and dined there. I sat alone at my table thinking over the situation."

"I went home at twelve o'clock midnight. I was tired and sleepy, but positively delayed so that my wife might have time to think—to arrive at the conclusion that she must sooner or later come to the 'vanquished and beg for terms. Then I proposed to take her to my arms, explain my strange conduct, and bid her be a dutiful wife, whereupon all such evidence of my displeasure would be avoided in future."

"When I went upstairs I found our bedroom door locked and bolted. I had especially arranged it myself for safety against burglars, and knew I couldn't force it. I must beg to be let in or stay out. The former would be fatal; the latter I did. I went to another room, it was locked. I tried another and another; all were locked."

"I aroused the servants and demanded the keys. They were all in madam's possession. I went into the library. I had turned out the lights when I went up, and it was pitchy dark. I stumbled over the coal skuttle and fell, striking my head on a sharp corner of the mantel-piece. Throwing myself on a sofa, I caught the flow of blood in my handkerchief. I lay awake all night and fell asleep after daylight."

"I was awakened by my wife in the morning opening the library windows. I saw the bloody handkerchief lying on the floor, and caught it up in time to prevent her perceiving it."

"Did you rest well, my dear?" she asked.

"There was a modulation in her voice which I dreaded more than harshness. It maddened me. I was really angry now, and it required no acting to play my part. Without noticing her I arose and went upstairs and made my toilet. Then I passed down and out of the house to get my breakfast at the club."

"As I sat eating my chop, and sipping my coffee, I made up my mind that before the day was over I must either conquer or be conquered. When I went home to dinner I resolved to take advantage of any excuse to be violent, and as violent as possible. As I opened the front door with my latch key I saw my wife standing in the parlor. She had been out, and had not yet removed her hat or gloves. I remembered Petrichio's attack on his wife's cap. Here was my chance."

"What have you got on your head?" I asked harshly.

"My bonnet, dear."

"It doesn't become you."

"I confidently hoped that, to avert the storm she must see as brewing she would at least take off the obnoxious hat and lay it on the table. She did no such thing, but stood regarding me with the same mute wonder as during my former efforts."

"Again and again I demanded the hat's removal, but received nothing in reply but a cold stare. At last, giving way to all the violence I felt, and a good deal I did not feel, I raised my stick, and, sweeping it feathery, without form and void, at the other end of the room."

"What followed was so sudden, so unexpected, so singular, that I never could distinctly remember how it occurred. At any rate, at a call from my wife, two men entered from another room and seized me by the arms. One was my brother, and the other my wife's cousin."

"What does this mean?" I asked, dumfounded.

"Take him to the next third-story back room," my wife said calmly to my captors. "We will keep him there till we know how the disease turns. If he isn't better to-morrow we shall have to send him to an asylum."

"Heavens! She thought I was insane. 'My dear—I cried."

"Take him away."

"My dear, you don't mean—Arthur—Tom—"

"Don't mind what he says, he's not responsible."

"By this time I was at the first landing. I struggled; but it was of no avail. My captors were both strong men, and carried me to the third story."

"Go in there," said one of them, pushing me into the room, from which every article of furniture had been removed. 'You can't hurt yourself there. Stop, let me search you.' He took my pocket knife to make sure I could do myself no injury with it; and then shut the door and locked it from the outside."

"Locked up for a lunatic in my own house, and by my own bride!"

"I passed three hours in a state of intense mortification and disappointment, and three hours more in despondency and repentance. I began to get hungry. Nothing since lunch, and it was now 11 P. M. I peeped through the keyhole and saw my wife's cousin guarding me."

"I want something to eat," I called.

"No orders for it," he replied.

"Great heavens! was my wife going to starve me? I ran over my conduct toward her since we had returned from our wedding trip, and remembered with horror my efforts to starve her."

"It took me just one hour more under the reducing influence of an empty stomach to make up my mind to capitulate."

"Call 'Mrs. Brown,' I called to my keeper. I heard him pass the word to the maid below."

"A light step was on the staircase, a quiet but determined voice to the attendant, 'You may go now, Arthur; much obliged.' Then the same voice to me: 'What is it, dear?'"

"I've had enough of this," I replied gruffly.

"Are you better?"

"I haven't been ill."

"You seem more rational. I do hope you won't have another attack."

"Come, come," I said, trying to assume a trifle of unconcern. "Let's have no more fooling."

"I am not quite sure it would be safe to release you yet."

"I want to ask you, she continued presently, 'if you are convicted of the folly of your proceedings?'"

"Well—yes. I think I can say that I am, rather."

"And you won't do so any more?"

"Not during my present happy alliance with you."

"That's very sweet of you. And you'll attend to your business and let me manage the house?"

"Yes."

"Now promise me three things."

"What are they?"

"First, to go with me to church regularly."

"I groaned, 'I promise.'"

"Second, no wine on our table ever."

"I promise."

"Third, no smoking below the third story."

"Thank heaven, that's three. I promise."

"Now, my dear, if I let you out, will you be good and not do so any more?"

"Open the door; I've had enough of this nonsense."

"She turned the key. I stepped out and she threw her arms about my neck and covered my face with kisses. This was the end of my playing Petrichio."

"Peter," I asked, after he had finished, "Is this the room of your confinement?"

"Yes. It was stipulated at the time that I was to be afterward free only here."

"Your effort was not very wise."

"Not wise?" he asked, much hurt at the remark. "Then what has the world for two centuries seen in 'The Taming of the Shrew' to admire? Was Petrichio a fool?"

"I give it up."

RATS ABOARD SHIP.

How They Get There and Some of Their Sagacious Actions.

The habit of rats in leaving a sinking ship is well known, and has given us the phrase "to rat," often applied to a politician who leaves his party when it shows signs of foundering says an English writer. I do not know that there is anything particularly clever about the rats that do this, though it is laid to their sagacity as though they had a fore-knowledge of the disaster. The fact is they get intimation before anyone else that the ship is sinking. They frequent the bottom of the ship, lie next its outside skin, and as soon as water begins to come in, they are of course driven out of their haunts.

It used to puzzle me how it was that rats got into ships and infested them to such an extent—all ships are more or less infested with them. A visit to the Surrey Commercial Docks solved this puzzle. There I saw a rat running out from the quay side on one of the cables to a boat. This is how they get aboard in the first instance; and, once there, they find plenty of crevices to take refuge in, and have then little else to do but breed.

I next had a conversation with a sailor about ships' rats and how they got rid of them. He remembered being on an old hulk that was so overrun with rats that on discharging the cargo abroad, it was deemed unsafe to venture home again until they had cleared the rats out.

This is how they did it. They pasted strips of paper over every seam in the ship, and otherwise made its inside air-tight. Then they battened down the holds, after lighting coke fires in them. When the coke was deemed to have done its work and the hatches were opened, an extraordinary sight met them.

All round and facing the coke fires were thousands of rats. They sat as if they were alive, with their noses pointing straight to the fires. Sometimes even this course has failed to rid a ship of rats, and it has had to be sunk.

Another sailor told me a remarkable story. Of course, sailors are reputed to be able to spin yarns; still I do not doubt this, in the light of what I have myself seen rats do. In a corner of the ship was a box of biscuits open, so that anyone in passing might take one if needed. It was about a foot and a half high. As they went on their voyage the biscuits, of course, got lower down inside the box.

One day, when all was quiet on deck, he saw a few rats at the box, and thought he would watch their game. Ships' biscuits are pretty big and heavier than a rat can carry. Two rats jumped up on the edge of the box, leaving their tails hanging over the outside. They then, with their hind feet still on the edge of the box, dipped inside and seized one and the same biscuit. When they had got hold of it, the others began to haul away at their tails, and so helped them up with the biscuit, which fell outside the box. At this all the rats ran away and disappeared.

Stealthily, however, they again assembled round the biscuit. Two lay down at opposite sides of the biscuit and took each a side of it between their paws. The others then pulled them, thus holding the prize, by their tails. It was pushed ultimately over the edge of the deck into a hole, and then the rats went below to nibble it in safety and feed their young with the crumbs.

BORN.

Pictou, N. S., to the wife of A. C. Oliver, a son, Alma, May 29, to the wife of W. Archibald, a son, St. John, May 31, to the wife of Fred. Barr, a son, St. John, June 3, to the wife of R. D. Clarke, a son, St. John, June 6, to the wife of E. A. Powers, a son, Moncton, June 1, to the wife of Thomas Hartin, a son.

Halifax, June 2, to the wife of F. W. Doane, a son.

Parishboro, May 26, to the wife of John D. Smith, a son.

Berwick, N. S., May 28, to the wife of S. J. Nichols, a son.

Sussex, N. B., May 27, to the wife of R. D. Hanson, a son.

Bayfield, May 24, to the wife of C. L. McLeod, a daughter.

Shediac Road, N. B., June 5, to the wife of Albert Lutz, a son.

Dartmouth, N. S., June 1, to the wife of John Welsh, a daughter.

Welsford, N. S., May 28, to the wife of H. H. Kinsman, a son.

Hillsboro, N. B., May 15, to the wife of Samuel Hill, a son.

New Tuxton, N. S., May 28, to the wife of G. W. Prince, a son.

Hillsboro, N. B., May 22, to the wife of Wm. E. Steeves, a son.

Dartmouth, N. S., May 29, to the wife of Walter Faulkner, a son.

Halifax, N. S., May 26, to the wife of Watson Vidito, a daughter.

Parishboro, May 24, to the wife of Capt. John Lyons, a daughter.

Canard, N. S., May 25, to the wife of James E. McJowan, a son.

Salmon River, N. S., May 26, to the wife of Samuel Libbo, a daughter.

Waverley, N. S., May 26, to the wife of Twining Lyons, a daughter.

Tiverton, N. S., May 23, to the wife of Edgar Out-house, a daughter.

Berwick, N. S., May 23, to the wife of Miner S. Shediac, a daughter.

Shediac, N. B., May 24, to the wife of Charles R. Poirier, a daughter.

Hillsboro, N. B., May 22, to the wife of Wm. K. Steeves, a daughter.

Hillsboro, N. S., May 28, to the wife of Manasseh Halliday, twin boys.

Tiverton, N. S., May 21, to the wife of Kendrick Out-house, a daughter.

Dorchester, N. B., May 21, to the wife of Hon. A. D. Richard, a daughter.

Weymouth Bridge, N. S., May 29, to the wife of Jer. McLaughlin, a son.

Point St. Charles, N. S., May 29, to the wife of Philip Malone, a daughter.

MARRIED.

Pictou, N. S., June 1, William Cummings to Lisetta Smith.

Coverdale, N. S., May 24, Evaline Steeves to Millage Crossman.

St. John, June 6, by Rev. G. O. Gates, E. S. Gifford to May Trus.

Berwick, N. S., May 24, by Rev. J. Craig, Norman Layte to Martha Best.

Gibson, N. B., May 24, by Rev. Isaac Howie, Wm. Bradley to Lilita Snider.