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THE WIDOW'S WEDDING.

A Tale of the St. Louis Masquerade.

BY RED BUNTLINE.

Woman, like the flower-clad earth, is only lovely when her face is brightened by the sunny smile of pleasure—like the earth, when the cloud of heaven's lightning charged, darkly pall the sky; so she in anger's tempest, or when the storm's reign of sorrow falls, loses her beauty.

Three years have elapsed since the scene occurred which opens this history.

In a quiet, neat cottage in the prettiest part of Illinois, stood two persons, a lady and a gentleman, who had been married only six months, who possessed ample means to command all the luxuries of life, who were each strikingly handsome, both young. They were quarrelling—Edward Belden's eye was sparkling with anger, his face was pale, his lips compressed, his form was quivering with excitement.

His young wife Josephine, (the loveliest belle of her native place was she when she won his love) stood before him with her arms folded over her bosom, which was heaving with emotion—her large full eye not liquid with the dew of love, but gleaming like the eye of the tigress when she seeks the hand that robs her of her young; her small but graceful form quivering with agitation.

"Sir!" said she, "Edward or husband, I call you no more—I will bear your intolerant jealousy no more—I will promenade when I please, go to every ball of the season, and dance with whom I please!"

"And especially with that well known libertine Werner, I suppose," added her husband in a sarcastic tone.

"I suppose so, if it suits me, sir!"

"Josephine you will drive me mad!"

"I have no objections, sir! You are better suited for a mad house than a *lady's* home!"

"Madam, this is going too far!"

"I only follow your example, sir. You have carried your authority too far. I married you to be your *wife* not a *slave!*"

"And promised *obedience.*"

"No I didn't; I skipped that hateful word."

"Josephine, if you persist in this course, we must separate."

"With all my heart, sir!"

"Do you mean this. Are you serious?"

"Never was I more so, Mr. Belden!"

"Then your cruelty shall be gratified—before night closes I will be on my way to California—I go to forget that I ever knew such a heartless woman. Josephine turn not away yet, for I have a few words which you must hear!"

"*Must*, sir!" and her beautiful lips curled with scorn as she spoke.

"Yes. Josephine, for they are the last I shall ever speak to you. This is the first time I have ever upbraided you, the first time that my lips have ever uttered a harsh word to you, or to one of your sex. I have been forced to do it by your own conduct. You have contradicted my every wish—you have permitted attentions from a man whom I detest, that no married woman ought to permit, you prefer the society of gay friends, to the quiet home I have so much loved. You—have—

"Sir, I think *you have*—said enough.—I plead guilty of all your charges, for if I denied them, you would contradict them. I thought you said you were going?"

"I did, and I will go Josephine, you will remember this hour yet, as the unhappiest of your life. Farewell and *forever.*"

He hurried from her presence. For a moment she looked after him, his name rose to her lips and was half uttered; for an instant, the *woman* in her soul seemed to impel her to call him back, to cast herself weeping in his arms, and to ask a reconciliation; but pride that chiefest demon in human souls, forbade it.

"He will come back," she murmured; "he loves me too well to leave, I will confess yet I have done him no wrong. I have been gay it is true, but it is nature, and the mere polite attentions of an agreeable man, who is well received in society, should not make a husband jealous."

An hour later, and she was still alone. Night was drawing on, but he came not. She had not left the room. She had not yet known that his luggage had been removed from the house, and that he was already on the dark waters of the Mississippi, on board the noble steamer, Ne plus Ultra, speeding swiftly from her.

Two hours passed—she paced nervously to and fro. Night came on, hour after hour went by, and really alarmed she enquired of the servants where her husband was. She was told that an hour before dark he had embarked on the boat. It required all her mental strength to hide from the servant what her heart then felt; and as she went, sick at heart, pale and trembling to her room, she murmured,—

"O, God, forgive me. He has gone, perhaps, forever. I did not mean to provoke him to this!"

Sleep came not to her eyes that night—nor peace to her heart when the sun arose at morn. She was wretched. No desire for gayety came to her bosom now; she had lost her world; for with all her faults she fondly and deeply loved him whom she had lost. Letter after letter she despatched to New Orleans, to San Francisco, and other points, hoping that he might receive them; and in these she implored him to return, asked him to forgive and come back and love her.

Six months passed away; six weary months to her. Pale—her once round and plump form, now thin—she sat where he last stood when he parted from her forever. A servant entered with a city paper. She took it, her eye caught the heading of a paragraph, "California News," one moment she gazed eagerly at it, when with a cry of agony, she sunk senseless to the floor. She had read that Edward Belden had been murdered by some robbers. For weeks she was confined to her bed, and when she rose she was so altered that no one who had known her but a year before, as a blooming bride could have recognized her now.

She disposed of her property in Quincy and departed, no one knew whither; but a rumor soon reached the city that she died in a convent in St. Louis.

* * * * * * *

It was the most brilliant night of the season. Xaupi was in his glory. His saloons were crowded with gay maskers, who, to the sound of glad music, glided through the whirling mazes of the dance. Yet, there were some who did not dance, but enjoyed the pleasure of the masquerade as much, for covered with quaint masks, and in an assumed character, they conversed with others, who were as unrecognizable as themselves.

One tall, finely formed man, dressed in the garb of a Spanish cavalier, seemed particularly to enjoy the sport, for with a permitted license of the mask, and assuming well the gallantry of the character which he personated, he addressed every lady that he met. But, at last (it was after midnight,) he grew tired. A lady whom he had more than once addressed, was seated on a sofa, and as she seemed unattended, he presumed to take a seat beside her.

"You seem to be alone, fair "Demoiselle?" said he.

"I am, sir, but not quite unattended, a lady friend and her husband accompanied me here," she replied.

"Do we know each other?" he replied, "your voice sounds familiar to my ear."

"We are unknown," she replied, "I know no one here, no one on earth; I wish to know no one; I came here by the urgent solicitation of friends, not to seek pleasure but forgetfulness."

"Forgetfulness of what? You who are young and lovely, cannot have seen that of which you would wish to forget?"

"Yes, sir, I have; but I cannot forget."

"Madam, I beg you to excuse me, I would like to see your face. I do not speak in the permitted tones of a master, but I assure you that I am exceedingly interested in you. Your voice sounds like the music of earlier days, your graceful form, that tapering hand, all cause me to believe you are very beautiful. Will you not gratify my desire to see your face?"

"Excuse me gallant cavalier of Spain, for I am unknown to all persons except the two who are with me. I wish to remain unknown."

"What a charm that very mystery throws around you? Lady do not think it idle curiosity. I beg you to answer one question. Are you married?"

"No sir, I am a widow."

"A coincidence—I am a widower. I once possessed one of God's brightest pictures, and only was happy when she was mine."

"Then you loved her?"

"Loved? the world is too cold. I loved her as the miser loves his gold—as the devoted Christian loves his God. I loved her only too well. But you seem agitated, why?"

"I too, once loved—but sir, excuse me. I feel that I ought not to talk with you—I love, honor the memory of the dead."

"Nay, stay, do not rise, do not leave at least until you promise to correspond with me, to permit me to exchange sympathies with the only one but my lost Josephine, whom I have ever felt interested in."

"Josephine?" The lady's form trembled as she spoke, "Josephine, did you say?"

"That was the name of the loveliest wife that ever blessed man. It is but lately, by the discovery of some old letters, that I found how much I misunderstood her real character. She is now an angel in heaven—I am left to mourn her. I came here this night to dispel melancholy, to try and forget myself. I am glad I have come, for in you I feel that I have found a kindred spirit. Will you not let me see your face?"

"Not now," she replied in a soft tone; "not now, perhaps in time, I may. Will you answer me a few questions?"

"Certainly, fair lady."

"Were you ever in California?"

"I have just returned from California, where I have met many strange adventures which, were your ears as willing I would relate as Othello told to Desdemona his hair-breadth escapes?" The lady's agitation was still visible, though she endeavored evidently to control it.

"In truth I have, lady. I have laid on a coach of suffering, for over a year from wounds received in an affray from a band of robbers—have been published as dead; have been worth a hundred thousand dollars, and within an hour have seen the scorching flames shrivel my whole fortune to ashes.

"Will you tell me your true name, sir?"

"Will you, kind lady, permit one glance at your face, or even let me see those lips that speak so sweetly?"

"Not now sir—in time you may."

"On the condition that you sign your real name, which, if I err not, is *Edward Belden?* Ah, you start, it is so—it is so."

"Lady *who* are you? How do you know me? Speak, I am lost in surprise."

"I knew her whom you have lost—I knew your Josephine, and her last words were, "if ever you see my Edward, tell him I loved him better than life, that from the hour he left me I was dead to all the world."

"Had she read the rumor of my death? I feared after I had read the mislaid letters, and heard of her removal from Quincy, that it had broken her heart and caused her death."

"She had heard the report, but something whispered to her heart that you still lived, and—I ought not to speak of it, yet I solemnly vowed to her that I would endeavor to find you if you lived, to bear your blessings, and—"

The lady paused, seemed still more agitated.

"Go on, angel of kindness, go on—your words are more than life to me."

"She bade me, who had lost a noble husband, try to win and wed you, to be to you all that she would have been, had she lived to see you."

"Lady, I am already won—yet in loving you as I feel I must, I must love her dear memory. This you will permit—you who were her friend, who closed her eyes."

"Yes, and you, if indeed we wed, must call me Josephine. I will love you as well; will strive to make you as happy."

"You can, I know you can. But now, certainly you will permit me to see your face?"

"No—a whim (for all women have whims,) has seized me. If you will not consent to it, I shall feel that you have not confidence in me, and if you do not confide in me before marriage we may be unhappy afterward."

"Before you speak your wish I consent to it. I know not why, but I feel that I love you—that with my honor, my very life, I would trust you. Ask what you will!"

"It is that until the marriage vows are spoken between us, you do not see my face. That even at the altar I stand veiled!"

"What a romantic creature you are.—I am dying to gaze upon your face!"

"You promised to accede to my wish."

"True, and I do. But when shall the happy hour arrive that will permit me to raise that envious veil, which like a cloud that obscures the face of Venus in the sky, casts a shadow on my heart."

"Whenever you please."

"Then let it be to-night—now, as soon as we can find a minister to perform the sacred rites."

"You are indeed in a hurry. Had I not been well prepared by all that dear Josephine had told me of your beauty, your noble, but rather jealous heart and your manly virtues, I should object to such haste. But as it is, assuring you that I dearly love you, Edward, I consent to whatever you propose."

"You bade me call you Josephine; I will, for it is a dear name to me. Sweet Josephine, it is not late. You have two friends, a lady and a gentleman with you, in whom you can confide. I will call a carriage, we will take them along as friends and witnesses, and drive at once to the Missouri Hotel, where I lodge. A minister shall be sent for, we will be married, and then that mask, that pretty, but to me, most odious mask, shall be thrown into the fire, and your bright eyes and lovely face, for I know you are beautiful, shall shine out like a May sun, as it rises from the flowery east.

"Perhaps you may not find me so beautiful." The lady sighed as she spoke.

"So long as I hear your sweet voice, I shall love you nevertheless. Go find your friends; be ready, I will order a carriage.

* * * * * * *

It was an hour later. In an elegant parlor of the hotel, before spoken of, stood Edward Belden still in his cavalier dress, but unmasked, and by his side the fair stranger whom he had met at the ball, but she was yet masked. His fine form and manly face now bronzed by exposure, elicited the admiration of all who were present, for he had invited the guests of the house to this singular wedding. A scar which seamed his high brow did not impair his beauty.

The minister arrived. The usual preliminary questions were asked—the ceremony proceeded and Edward Belden and his new found love were pronounced man and wife. Then all eyes were turned towards the bride. As her husband laid his hand upon the mask it trembled with excitement, her form quivering too with agitation.

He lifted the mask. Two tearful eyes, tearful with joy—gazed up in his own—a soft voice murmured Edward, my own Edward!"

"Josepine, my God! have you come down from Heaven to bless me? Are you living; is it, can it be my long-lost, long-mourned wife!"

"Edward we are married a second time; we will never part a second time!"

"No—no! Now, I am HAPPY!"

BRIEF DISCOURSE.

BY THE CHAPLAIN OF THE N. Y. DUTCHMAN.

Text—The gods destroy not.
Ye destroy yourselves.—CICERO.

This text, my beloved was furnished me by a very dear friend, and I unhesitatingly endorse it from muzzle to tail. I am aware that some of my cotemporaries deem many of you to be "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction," but it's a libel, my friends, upon our good Fathers; unless you of your own accord choose to dash out your brains against the wall. Many of you are your own enemies, and though Providence is trying hard to make something of you, like a foolish calf *you bite the teat through which you are sucking the milk of Mercy, and then complain because you are kicked into the mire of Misery, by the indignant hind-leg of Providential forbearance!*

Could the scales of Stupidity but fall from your eyes, you would see that holy angels are around you, to guard you from harm, even as sentinel thorns protect the blushing rose-bud from the ruthless finger of the spoiler.

Still you harden your hearts, as the yolk of the egg becomes indurated by boiling, and rush on in your damning folly, like rain dripping down the peaked side of a meeting-house roof! My friends, Heaven is consistent, and works by rules as infallible as the Multiplication Table: while you are free agents left to work out your own will, like stray monkeys in the top of an apple tree! It is of no use for you to argue that you are controlled by circumstances more powerful than your own will, for you will find the Book of Heaven to be regularly posted up, and a balance stricken, every day that goes over your heads. Its all very well for you to pray, and humiliate yourselves, but unless your actions are consistent, it will matter nothing whether your legs are bent in suppliance or not, and you might wear off the knees of your breeches a dozen times, without having a stroke of the pen upon the credit side of the Ledger of Heaven.

It is certain, my friends, that Providence would as willingly bring you all into the great husking of eternity as that a caught fish would be delighted to be restored to its native brook, but you know that when we are turned out like young colts into the meadow of life, it is at our own option whether we jump over the bars of Discretion, or not.

There are evils besetting the path of life, that are as tempting and inviting to you as cocoa-nuts are to a rib-nosed baboon. And you too often, my dear flock, yield to them, and fall into sin, like a boy upon skates falling through a thin spot upon the ice. You can't resist error, else you won't I don't know which it is. You sin a little, and like a cat after a dinner of raw beef-stake you lick the chops of Sensuality, and turn again to gnaw the miserable bone of Unholiness. Then, when you find that it gripes the internals, and irritates the moral stomach like unripe persimmons in the maw of an impudent opossum, don't go to lay the blame at the door of Providence, for if you do you will find a sentinel angel posted there, who will drive you away, like crows fleeting at the sight of a revolutionary musket. My friends, Heaven is merciful! Like a bantam fowl surrounded by a brood of downy chicklings, it is providing for our every want, and scratching up seeds and kernels of Love for us, even out of the dung-hill of Affliction. But, as I have already said, if you choose to reject its care, and peck at the poisonous apple of Disobedience, you cannot complain when you are afflicted by the gaps of Remorse. I would advise you all to rush into the arms of mercy—live near to your Maker: and when you are chastised for your follies, run clear into His arms, like a school boy when his posteriors are ferruled by his schoolmistress, and the blow will fall lightly in consequence of the propinquity of Him who chastens who he loveth! Be moral, my beloved, be honest and sincere. Love your fellow man, and you will love your God also, and when Death rings the bell at the ticket office of the ferry to heaven, you will have a store of treasure piled away to your credit, in the bank of Bliss, even as a squirrel lays up its herd of chestnuts, in the hollow of a sassafras tree.

And so ever be it. Amen!

☞ Messrs. Bell, Black and Tomkins, of Broadway, N. Y., have in their store a monster gold ring, which has been sent by a number of citizens of San Francisco, as a present to General Pierce. It is of pure gold, weighs half a pound, and is valued at two thousand dollars.

From the Washington Union.

THE AMAZON AND THE ATLANTIC SLOPES OF SOUTH AMERICA.—No. 8.

The republic of Paraguay lies between the parallels of 22 deg. and 28 deg. south latitude. It may be said, therefore, to be *extra*-tropical.

The Brazilian province of Matto Grosso lies between the parallel of 7 deg. south and the Tropic of Capricorn. It is *inter*-tropical. Its productions, therefore, may be supposed, are different in many respects from those of Paraguay.

This province in its greatest length and breadth, measures 16 deg. of latitude by 16 deg. of longitude.

Passing midway through it on a zigzag course from east to west is the great "divido," which separates the waters of the Rio de la Plata. From one end of this ridge to the other, from the Atlantic to the Andes, gold, diamonds, and precious stones are dug from its sides or washed from its streams.

On the northern slopes of it the Tocantins, the Chinga, the Tapagos, and the Madura, tributaries to the Amazon, and larger than any of the rivers of Europe, take their rise. Also the Paranahiba, which empties directly into the Atlantic, has its sources among the northern ravines of this auriferous slope.

On its southern declivities the fountain heads of the Parana and Paraguay are found sending forth bright sparkling streams, which, like threads of silver, are seen winding their way through the most luxuriant vegetation and over sand of gold and pebbles interspersed with brilliants, to unite and swell out into the mighty "river of silver," as the Plata is called.

Let us therefore leave the country of old Francia for that of Matto Grosso and Brazil.

The traveller leaving the republic, and ascending the Paraguay to the celebrated gold and diamond region of Matto Grosso, finds on either hand as he goes up a charming country diversified with pampas and groves of great beauty and extent.

Turning up the Mendingo, which comes in from the east, and ascending the same for seventy or eighty miles, he comes to the village of Miranda.

The people in the neighborhood are industrious. They raise large herds of cattle and great numbers of horses. They cultivate in great abundance the sugar-cane, Indian corn, pulse, manioc, and cotton. The climate is salubrious and delightful—many of the inhabitants reaching the age of 100 years.

It was here that Dr. Waddell, the botanist, saw the "nicaya" with its elegant foliage, the fruit of which was described by the Indians to be of oblong form, and to contain a natural confection of which they are very fond.

Throughout this region they have immense quantities of beautiful violet and other ornamental woods, which are used for firewood; for though of great value in the cabinet shops, the people here have no other way, notwithstanding their fine navigable streams, of getting these woods to the seaboard except on the backs of mules.

Returning to the Paraguay, the scene is enlivened by the immense herds that are feeding upon the now evergreen pastures of the plains. The value of these herds consist chiefly of their horns and hides.

The village of Pocone, at the mouth of the Cuyaba, is one of the most flourishing places in the interior of Brazil. Castelnau says (and until otherwise stated, he is my chief authority for what follows) that as many as 8,000 or 10,000 head of cattle are owned by single individuals in that village.

Passing Pocone on the right, and taking the left fork of the river which retains the name of Paraguay, we reach, at the distance of about one hundred and fifty miles above it, the frontier Brazilian fork of Villa Maria.

The guns that are mounted in this fort were brought up the Amazon to the Tapajos, thence by that river up Arinas, thence by portage across the diamond regions to the head-waters of the Cuyaba into the Paraguay, and so up stream to Vilia Maria.

On the west there are several fine rivers, which, rising in Bolivia and Brazil, fall into the Paraguay above the mouth of the Cuyaba. Several of these streams interlock with the head-waters of the Madiera, which is to the Amazon what the Missouri is to the Mississippi. I shall have occasion again to speak of these tributaries, of the splendid country watered by them, and of the portage between them.

Villa Maria is in the midst of the great ipecacuanha region of Matto Grosso. In 1814 Francisco Real was sent to explore the diamond region of this province. But it turned out with him as I apprehend it would turn out with the pioneers of commerce now; as rich in diamonds as are the streams and gravel beds of this province, the riches of the vegetable were found greatly to exceed those of the mineral kingdom.

This immense natural plantation includes within one field an area of 3000 square miles. The crop is perennial, and may be gathered the year round. One expert hand may collect fifteen pounds of this root in a day, which brought in Rio $1 the pound. The work of an ordinary hand is five pounds the day, and the cost of laborers from $3 40 to $4 per month.

Castelnau estimates that from 1830 to 1837 not less than 800,000 pounds of this drug were exported from this province to Rio. This abundant supply brought down its price. But here is the singular feature of this trade: this produce is taken from the very banks of one of the noblest rivers in the world, and transported by mules for the distance of 1,200 miles to the sea-cost, in spite of Nature's great highway.

The ipecacuanha delights in flat or sandy soil, and is found also in great abundance on the banks of the Vermilho, the Seputuba, and the Cataca.

Vanilla is also abundant. Its price when Castelnau was at Villa Maria was 60 cents the pound.

But I intended to follow this intelligent traveller up into the diamond country and with him to visit the "divide" between the waters of the Paraguay and Tapajos.

Ascending the Cuyaba, which is the principal Brazilian tributary of the Paraguay, about 150 miles from its mouth you come to the flourishing city of Cuyaba, the capital of the province of Matto Grosso. It has a population of about 7,000. It carries on a brisk commerce with Rio by caravans numbering from 200 to 300 mules each. This commerce consists of hides, jaguar, and deer-skins, gold-dust, diamonds, ipecacuanha, and the like. The freight to Rio is almost $15 the 100 lbs.

Here, perhaps, among all the wonderful things that are found in these great river basins of South America, is the most wonderful of them all—a city the capital of a province larger than all of the "Old Thirteen States" of this confederacy put together, and occupying on the banks of the La Plata very nearly the relative position which St. Louis occupies on the banks of the Mississippi, carrying on its commerce not by steam and water, but by the mule load, and over such a distance from the sea-cost, that the time occupied by each caravan in going and returning is from ten to twelve months.

That this state of things should in the middle of the 19th century be found to exist in the middle of South America, upon one of the finest of steamboat water-courses in the world, whose navigable tributaries are owned by no less than five separate and independent nations, and which the "policy of commerce," has not yet demanded to be thrown wide open to navigation and commerce, will in after times be regarded as more wonderful than any other reality of this wonderful region.

Nay, Brazil has, within a stone's throw of this very capital, and by easy portage, the navigable waters of her own Amazon; and yet so fearful has she been that the steamboat on those waters would reveal to the world the exceeding great riches of this province, that we have here re-enacted under our own eyes a worse than Japanese policy; for it excludes from settlement and cultivation, from commerce and civilization, the finest country in the world—a country which is larger than the continent of Europe, and in which there is an everlasting harvest of the choicest fruits of the earth.

Cuyaba is in the midst of the gold region. The metal is found in veins, among the pebbles at the bottom of the brooks, and in fine grains in the soil. After every rain the servants and children may be seen gathering it from the washings of the streets in Cuyaba.

They get in this city a drug from the Amazon called *guarana*, of which the consumption is enormous, and to which medicinal virtues the most astonishing are ascribed.

On the head-waters of the Cuyaba is the celebrated diamond district of Brazil; and though in this day of sober realities it cannot be said that the city of Diamentino, the principal village of the district, has its streets paved with diamonds, yet these jewels are found there mixed with the earth, like gold in the "diggings" of California.

Just before Castelnau was there a man planting a post to which to tie his mule found a diamond of 9 carats. The children here wash the earth in the streets for gold, and diamonds are sometimes found in the crops of the fowls.

This stone is found in the bottom of the streams; and the most celebrated for it are the Ouro, Diamentino, and the Santa Anna, in their whole length; the Areias, the San Franciscos—of which there are three; and on the Paraguay itself for a considerable distance down the main stream.

The Samidouro, which is on the Amazon side of this ridge, is said also to be exceedingly rich in diamonds.

A Spaniard, one Don Simon, with his slaves, washing on the Santa Anna during the dry season *only*, got in four years 7,000 carats of diamonds.

Castelnau estimates the whole yield of diamonds from Brazil to the end of 1849 at near $80,000,000.

It is the mineral wealth of this watershed between the La Plata and the Ama-